

For what?

Proposal Summary

DAY OF ACTION is an outreach and educational tool that will provide a unique opportunity for people to learn how media representation and their own media usage affect their lives and communities. Thousands of individuals and hundreds of organizations in Philadelphia and thirty other cities throughout the United States and Canada will participate in the day-long event scheduled for October 1999. Working with national partners through regional coalitions, CEM will help community and grass-roots organizations organize a variety of activities that encourage participation, knowledge, and dialogue.

DAY OF ACTION will forge links among CEM, supporting organizations and grass roots community groups to reinforce the compatibility of missions and strengthen an effective communications network for future projects and collaborations. CEM will establish regional roundtables to cultivate and nurture local and regional leadership. The regional coalitions will serve as supportive structures to maximize the participation of disenfranchised groups, mobilize audiences, develop communications and public relations, assess impact of the event and conduct front-line evaluation. DAY OF ACTION will be a catalyst for new structures and programs that will continue to address related issues.

In this first phase, CEM seeks funding for a full-time staff person to plan and coordinate DAY OF ACTION, and requests \$15,000 from The Philadelphia Foundation as partial support. Staff will work with a national coordinating committee of CEM board members and participating organizations to design and structure the event. Responsibilities include: recruiting organizations, distributing training information, setting-up guidelines for event organization, and designing promotional materials, acting as liaison to the media, initiating evaluation processes, and assisting with fund raising. Through its staff and volunteers, CEM will be the central coordinator of event administration. Local organizations will be responsible for the specific design and execution of their own activities.

History and Major Accomplishments

Cultural Environment Movement (CEM) is an international coalition of more than 250 organizations and 6,300 individuals united in working for gender equity and general diversity in mass media employment, ownership, representation, and perspective. An ultimate goal is to help Americans and other populations recover democratic control of their culture in the form of stories being passed from generation to generation. CEM was founded in 1991 by Dr. George Gerbner, Bell Atlantic Professor of Telecommunication at Temple University and Dean Emeritus of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania.

CEM is leading a collective movement toward resolution of systemic problems within the cultural environment. Its ability to cause social change is grounded in the merger of a variety of issues and its focus on the source, the "manufacturing" of media. Thirty years of research, CEM's Cultural Indicators project, feeds much of its knowledge base. CEM's first years have been devoted to assembling a diversified board of directors and advisors; disseminating information through personal appearances and regional meetings; developing a database of organizations and individuals; and preparing for the Founding Convention.

The 1996 Founding Convention was the most diverse representation of leaders and activists in the field of culture and communication ever convened in the United States, bringing together more than 260 delegates. Keynote addresses were given by Joan Brown Campbell, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, writer and ecologist Bill McKibben, *The Washington Post* columnist, Dorothy Gilliam, Sumi Sevilla Haru, First National Vice President of the Screen Actors Guild, Keyan Tomaselli, University of Natal, South Africa, author and cultural historian Riane Eisler, and Dr. Cees Hamelink, Director of the Centre for Communication and Human Rights, Amsterdam. Representatives from local, regional, and national groups were involved, as peers, in issue-based working groups. These groups identified twenty Action Steps for CEM and its supporting organizations to pursue. The convention also created the People's Communications Charter and the Viewers Declaration of Independence. These documents outline standards for communications rights and responsibilities to enable people to take control of the cultural environment and shape it to meet human needs. Organizations use these documents as educational and advocacy tools, holding up elements of an ideal cultural environment to help guide their own constituencies toward making the ideal a reality.

In 1997, CEM's research arm, Cultural Indicators, produced its first annual report on the Proportional Representation of Diversity (PROD) in mass media. The index reflects the limitations of "creative freedom" and equal participation for all members of society in the television and motion picture industries. It illustrates the extent to which a programming season falls short of representing the true diversity of the American population. By issuing periodic report cards of industry performance CEM is able to monitor corporate practices and stimulate steady improvements in mass media employment, ownership, representation, and perspective.

Problem Statement

Most of what we know, or think we know, we have never personally experienced. The world we think we know is erected by the stories we hear and see and tell. Once, all stories were hand-crafted, homespun and community-inspired. Values, information, and history were transferred from person to person. Today, the story-telling process is primarily the mass-produced end result of a complex manufacturing process. Using their extraordinary abilities to shape perspectives, mainstream electronic and print media maintain an authoritative hold on defining and transmitting culture. Shielded from competition, global media conglomerates sustain tremendous power in a concentrated industry. Their agendas place the integrity of our various cultures at-risk as homogenizing marketing formulas imposed on program development squash creativity and individual self-expression.

The media industry today is supported by advertisers who will purchase ad space only if the networks can guarantee an audience receptive to their products. As a result, most programming presents only the most profitable customers as characters, presenting a world that is an inaccurate and unfair reflection of the American and world scene. On television, men outnumber women three to one. Young people, old people, foreigners with accents, minorities, and people with any kind of disability are underrepresented and overvictimized. Although people with low incomes and limited education are 33% of the U.S. population, they are represented by 1.2% of the characters in the media. Too often they are cast in negative frames such as crime or welfare as victims of violence or as murderers, criminals or villains.

Mass media consumers' pervasive lack of knowledge and skills exacerbates the problem. Few individuals make a habit of evaluating what they watch or how the stories told affect their lives and communities. Few individuals know that the airwaves are publicly-owned, that television and radio broadcasters have been granted free use of the public airways by Congress, and that broadcasters are thus accountable to the public interest. Accordingly, broadcaster authority over programming content is rarely called into question. Public involvement in legislation and regulation of the mainstream media is increasingly urgent, but absent. Public discussion about the Telecommunications Act of 1996 focused on telephone rates and Internet content. The profound implications of this legislation on the democratic process and a wide spectrum of social and economic issues went unaddressed. The coming of the digital system of electronic communication in 2006, with its unprecedented diversity of channels, represents new opportunities if historical challenges can be overcome. It also presents new dangers, encouraging media mergers and consolidation, which inevitably lead to further reductions in creativity, democracy, and diversity and greater monopolization, standardization, homogenization, and sterilization of content.

Program Description

DAY OF ACTION is scheduled to be held in the fall of 1999. The overarching theme is *One for One*, promoting media representation that casts characters in proportion to the actual population, tells stories that speak the truth, and encourages public participation as active viewers and democratic citizens. The event will involve thousands of individuals and hundreds of organizations in Philadelphia and approximately thirty other cities across the United States and Canada. Activities will span three major thrusts: participation, knowledge and dialogue, but will be as varied as the participants. For example, thirty teenagers might produce their own news program in contrast to network news while 1,000 people might attend a town meeting on the media needs of their community. DAY OF ACTION is a new initiative conceived as an educational and outreach tool to have major impact on the public's understanding of the issues and on subsequent behavior. If successful, it will become a periodic effort of CEM.

Goals/Objectives

- As conceived, DAY OF ACTION has the following major goals and objectives:
- To nurture the emerging leadership of local organizations and initiatives.
 - To enhance the abilities of key constituencies to mobilize themselves and others.
 - To increase public participation in telecommunication legislation and policy.
 - To strengthen personal connections to constructive alternatives to watching television.
 - To cultivate reciprocal relationships among organizations, professionals, and volunteers.
 - To develop a functional communications network for future projects and collaborations.
 - To be a catalyst for the development of new structures and activities locally and nationally.

Activities/Strategies

It will take sixteen months to prepare for the execution of DAY OF ACTION in October 1999. Through two phases of outreach and support, CEM provides leadership for building local roundtables. Participation in the roundtables will grow and expand through recruitment of local organizations and individuals at the grass-roots level, culminating in a day-long series of activities at the local and national level.

June-July 1998 — Identification of National Coordinating Committee Leadership
Clarification of Theme and Overall Strategy

A National Coordinating Committee is formed that consists of CEM board members and other coalition representatives. The Committee eventually will expand to include representatives from organizations committed to participating in DAY OF ACTION. The Committee develops the overall design and structure of the event, a process for recruiting organizations, and guidelines for re-grants.

August 1998 — Staff Coordinator Engaged

A full-time staff coordinator is engaged to work with the Committee to organize the event. The coordinator creates a week-by-week work plan to guide event activities throughout planning and implementation, and follow-up. The coordinator will keep a journal of activities, communication links, and the progress evaluations as the project unfolds in order to develop a final report that will be available in print and on-line to serve as an inspiration and guide for future events.

September 1998 – Strategy Meeting of Expanded National Coordinating Committee
The Committee meets to produce outlines of possible programs around the general theme of *One for One* (see Appendix A: Potential DAY OF ACTION activities). Guidelines for setting-up, funding, and promoting activities are developed into Participant Kits.

Oct.-Dec. 1998 – Begin Phase I Recruitment of Organizations
Augmentation of Regional Roundtables
Distribution of Participant Kits

To initiate coalition building and ease implementation, CEM establishes regional roundtables beginning with participants of the working groups at the Founding Convention (see Appendix B: Preliminary List of Sponsoring Participants). Roundtables expand as the project develops within geographic areas. The roundtables serve as conduits for recruiting local and regional groups. CEM encourages national partners such as National Public Radio to enlist the participation of their membership. Kits are distributed to committed organizations to aid them in effectively fund raising for and planning their activities.

Jan.-March 1999 – Local Coalition and Regional Roundtable Meetings
CEM National Convention

The roundtables continue to serve as support structures to help organizations maximize the involvement of disenfranchised groups, execute public relations, and conduct front-line evaluation. Community centers, colleges, and other nonprofits are the primary organizers. At the National Convention, CEM provides additional technical assistance and opportunities for groups to share strategies and plans.

April-May 1999 – Begin Phase II Recruitment of Organizations
Augmentation of Regional Roundtables
Distribution II of Participant Kits

CEM continues to augment regional roundtables and recruit organizations. The National Coordinating Committee confirms special programming and re-grant subsidies for each city. Supplemental participant kits focusing on promotion, evaluation, and logistics are distributed.

June-Sept. 1999 – Local Coalition and Regional Roundtable Meetings
Meetings are held to secure local agendas and ensure smooth implementation of the event.

Sept.-Oct. 1999 – National and Local Promotion
DAY OF ACTION (October 1999)

CEM places a full-page, national print ad as part of a wide scale public relations campaign. Via the roundtables, CEM supports participating organizations in the customized promotion of their own activities by providing standard designs for posters, ads, radio spots, editorials, etc.

Oct.-Dec. 1999 – Evaluation and Follow-up
The staff coordinator compiles evaluation results, produces a final report and works with the National Coordinating Committee to follow-up the event and outline a plan for next steps.

More on Community Organizing Strategies

To lead community organizing strategies, CEM will hire a project coordinator as a new staff position. CEM will seek an individual who has an understanding of the cultural environment, a strong interest in furthering economic and social justice, and experience in mobilizing communities or individuals on a large scale. The staff coordinator must be able to support the needs of a diverse group of people. These talents will enable CEM to reach a wide spectrum of participants across the United States and Canada and ensure the execution of purposeful and effective programming. The National Coordinating Committee will consist of volunteers who have expressed a commitment to this project and who are willing to play a large role in recruiting organizations. Committee members will need to have strong connections either to local organizations or to national special interest groups.

Since the media's influence reaches every segment of the population, CEM's actions are designed to be far reaching and pervasive. Nevertheless, its mission most easily attracts individuals and groups whose race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion, etc. are not well represented in mainstream media. Key constituencies that will be targeted by CEM for DAY OF ACTION are those who are acutely affected by the media because of lack of power and longstanding social and economic inequities. CEM uses its expertise to enhance these groups' abilities to understand media issues so they may better mobilize themselves and others:

Educators and Child Advocates – The “diminished capacity” of children makes them attractive to advertisers eager to capitalize on vulnerabilities. Parents, educators, and child advocates are united in their desire to protect children and enhance child development. They recognize that their abilities to make meaningful input currently are limited. All are striving to become integral to programming and policy making to ensure that commercialism is not hiding behind an educational facade.

Laborers – Unions are coming to a clearer understanding of the dangers of corporate consolidation. Downsizing and restructuring have made the workforce increasingly insecure despite low unemployment. This loss of economic assurance is aggravated by the pro-management emphasis of mainstream media. There are, in fact, fewer reporters dedicated to labor issues than a generation ago. Unions are taking steps to build their collective strength, surmount disadvantages inherent in management practices, and master the full implications of media legislation that serves to reward the concentration of power.

Minorities and Civil Rights Advocates – The effects of racial misconceptions caused and/or encouraged by the media are widespread and obvious, especially to minority audiences. A prime example is the relentless depiction of African-American criminality in local news, which has economic consequences tinged with racism. Eager to stem alienation from corporate power centers, minority entrepreneurs are seeking strategies to gain footholds in media ownership. Civil rights advocates are receptive to discussions of how the media can be utilized to facilitate social justice.

Faith-based Institutions – Irrespective of ideology, there is equal concern about the content of mainstream media and the effects on culture and morality. Religious leaders focused on the “big picture” recognize this common ground and the links to their roles as community builders. They are striving to further intergroup relationships by expanding communication and participation in civic affairs. They are seeking ways to shift decision-making away from corporations back to communities.

Evaluation

Members of the regional roundtables will evaluate progress throughout planning and implementation. Standardized surveys sent to participating organizations will ask for information on attendance figures, demographics, community impact, and the effects on finances and membership. Surveys taken on the day of the event will obtain feedback from individuals about reasons for their participation and reflections on their experiences. Evaluation also will include an analysis of the type of local and national media coverage, geographic dispersion of the activities held, and type of organizations involved. It is anticipated that there will be both small-scale (30 people at a film workshop) and large-scale events (10,000 people at a rally). The National Coordinating Committee will project a total attendance goal after input from committed organizations.

At six months and twelve months after the event, CEM will make follow-up contact to assess the longer-term effects of new alliances generated by the event, level of skill development retained by participating organizations, and sustained public participation in telecommunication policy. Results will be used by CEM to refine its future agendas and strategies and help determine whether or not CEM should organize a second DAY OF ACTION in the future. Evaluation results will be shared with participating organizations to aid their own planning. They will be accessible in print and on-line along with the staff coordinator's journal of activities and communication links.

Appendix A: Potential DAY OF ACTION Activities

Although CEM will provide guidelines for participation, it does not want to dictate the specific activities that organizations will sponsor. Some organizations will hold small events. Some will create events that will attract a huge segment of the population within their areas. Others will attract people from across the United States and Canada. Still others will replicate activities within their network nationwide. CEM expects that community-based creativity and national resources will construct activities that extend beyond the brief list of activities that are provided below:

- A story-telling event at a library(ies).
- A policy debate at a university (ies).
- Teach-ins throughout a public school system discussing the current form of the cultural environment and its inadequacies.
- An outdoor concert sponsored by a religious institution.
- Day-long radio interviews sponsored by a local public access station.
- A special membership meeting sponsored by a labor union with media representation as the key agenda item.
- A production company might sponsor kids videotaping their own news program then contrasting it with the local newscast televised the same day.
- A newspaper might sponsor student investigation and reporting on news stories in their community.
- A march and rally on diversity in the media.
- A sports tournament sponsored by a crime prevention association.
- A day-long film festival with post-film workshops.
- An educational summit on media ownership and programming ethics.
- A town meeting discussing the media needs of a community.
- A job fair sponsored by alternative media organizations.
- An historical perspective on the role of African-Americans in the media exhibited by a museum.
- A theatre production around the theme of media representation scripted by participants of an after-school community center program.

Appendix B: Preliminary List of Sponsoring Participants

This list represents possible local and national partners for DAY OF ACTION.

Strategies for Media Literacy
Actors Equity Association
Advocacy Institute
African-American Men and Boys
InitiativeAlliance for Children and Television
American Humane Association
American Library Association
American Medical Association
Americans for Responsible Television
Amnesty International
Berkeley Media Studies
Canadian Teachers Federation
Center for Campus Organizing
Center for Children's Media
Center for Ecoliteracy
Center for Global Change
Center for Media and Democracy
Center for Science in the Public Interest
Center for the Study of Commercialism
Center on Speech, Equality, and Harm
Children's Defense Fund
Children's Express Foundation
The Children's Partnership
Choosing Our Future
Citizens for Media Literacy
Coalition for American Children
Coalition for a Responsible TV
Computer Professionals for Social
Responsibility
Council for Radio-Television Public Service
Foundation for Deep Ecology
Free Speech TV
Future Wave
Globalvision
Greenpeace
Infinity Dance Theater
Institute for Alternative Journalism
Intercare Behavioral Health
International Senior Citizens Organization
Join Together
Labor Council for Latin American
Advancement
League of Women Voters
Libraries of the Future
Macedonia Family Life Center
Media Action Network for Asian Americans
Media Image Coalition
MEE (Motivational Education Entertainment)
Productions
Millennium Communications Group
Minority Media and Telecommunications
Council
National Alliance for Non-Violent
Programming
National Council of Churches
National Film Board of Canada Media
Awareness Network
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Literature and Arts Society
National Organization for Women
National Political Congress of Black Women
National Public Radio
National Stigma Clearinghouse
National Storytellers League
National Storytelling Association
National Telemedia Council
Native American Indians in Film
New Mexico Media Literacy Project
New York Free Media Alliance
Northlands Storytelling Network
Nova Scotia Association for Media Literacy
Old Lesbians Organizing for Change
Peace Magazine
Philadelphia Lesbian and Gay Task Force
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Princeton Media Education Project
Project Censored
Public Media Center
Redefining Progress
Reel Women
Screen Actors Guild
The World Music Festival
Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press
Youthvision

Current Project Budget

Budget for the period: July 1998 to December 1999 *

EXPENSES:		REVENUE:	
ITEM	AMOUNT	SOURCE	
Salaries and wages (Staff coordinator)	\$41,250 FT	Government grants & contracts (specify)	\$ - 0 -
Fringe benefits & payroll taxes	\$7,425	Foundations (specify)	
		Needmor Fund	\$30,000
		New Land Foundation	\$10,000
Consultants & professional fees	\$ - 0 -	Philadelphia Foundation	\$10,000
		Surdna Foundation	\$50,000
Travel (Regional Roundtables)	\$2,500	Corporations	\$50,000
		Religious Institutions	\$25,000
Equipment	\$ - 0 -	United Way, Combined Federal Campaign & other federated campaigns	\$ - 0 -
Supplies \$3,500 (Event Kits I & II, Roundtables)		Individual contributions	\$20,675
Training (CEM National Convention)	\$10,000	Fund raising events & products	\$ - 0 -
Printing & copying (Event Kits I & II, Roundtables)	\$3,000	Membership income	\$ - 0 -
Telephone & fax	\$1,000	In-kind support	\$ - 0 -
Postage & delivery	\$2,000	Other (earned income, consulting fees, etc. Please specify)	\$ - 0 -
Rent & utilities	\$5,000		
In-kind expenses	\$ - 0 -		
Other (specify)			
National Promotion	\$50,000		
Local Events (\$7.5k/city)	\$45,000		
Special Programming	\$25,000		
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$195,675	TOTAL INCOME	\$195,675
		BALANCE	\$ - 0 -

* Note: This budget is prepared in advance of engaging a DAY OF ACTION staff coordinator. The staff coordinator will be expected to refine the budget in more detail after direction from the National Coordinating Committee and input from the regional roundtables. Budget items will be affected by the number of participating organizations within each city and the resources of local groups.