

The recent deaths of LaTanya Haggerty and Robert Russ at the hands of Chicago police have received widespread media coverage. The attention focused on these incidents is welcome; what's missing is the context for understanding their implications. Individually, these tragedies can appear to be the aberrations that police and government leaders would like us to believe they are. But placed in their proper tableau — against a nationwide backdrop of police brutality, unlawful searches of minorities and increasing incarceration of nonviolent offenders — these incidents paint a disturbing picture of our so-called justice system. **BY MARGARET NEWMAN**

THE CRIMINAL INJUSTICE SYSTEM

Context 101

The officer who shot LaTanya Haggerty said she mistook Haggerty's cell phone for a gun. Evidently, it is ill-advised for an African American to carry any small object. In 1997, New York City police shot William J. Whitfield III in a supermarket. Police later claimed they mistook Whitfield's keys for a gun. The officer who killed him was cleared of any wrongdoing. In the same year, a deputy U.S. Marshal shot and wounded 17-year-old Andre Burgess as he walked past an unmarked police car. The agent said he thought Burgess' candy bar was a weapon; he, too, was acquitted of any criminal wrongdoing.

Has "I thought it was a gun" become a convenient explanation after shooting a citizen — or have relations between blacks and police deteriorated so far that anything a black person now carries could justify a police shooting?

Or perhaps more cogently, when so many "accidents" happen, is it any accident? A look at the broader American criminal justice picture is in order. Consider:

- The number of inmates in our state and federal prisons has soared to an all-time high. The federal prison population has grown more than five-fold since 1970—from less than 200,000 to 1,210,000. An additional 592,000 are held in local jails.
- With 668 of every 100,000 citizens in jail, the U.S. now boasts the second highest reported rate of incarceration in the world, just behind Russia with 685 per 100,000. The U.S. incarceration rate had held steady at about 110 per 100,000 for 50 years prior to 1970. It has skyrocketed to 668 only over the last 30 years.
- These huge increases in incarceration have occurred even though the national crime rate has been dropping for seven years.
- Federal and state governments are spending \$31 billion a year on corrections.
- African Americans comprise just over 12 percent of the U.S. population—but half of our prison population.
- Almost one in three (32%) African American males in the 20-29 age group is under some type of correctional control (incarceration, probation or parole), compared to 1 in 8 young Hispanic males and 1 in 15 young white males.
- Black males have a 29% chance of serving time in prison at some point in their lives; white males have a 4% chance.
- According to the FBI, 15 of the 17 cases in which Chicago police officers shot and killed citizens in 1996 were ruled justifiable. Ten of the 15 involved black victims, and 13 involved white police officers.
- Since the death penalty has been restored in Illinois, as many people have been released from death row as have been executed. In many of the cases, police and prosecutors either falsified evidence or ignored exculpatory evidence.

Any of these statistics is sufficient to make one pause. Taken together, they offer a chilling indictment of our justice system and raise troubling questions: Questions of human rights. Questions of race and class. Questions of political power—and abuse of power. And perhaps the most troubling question of all: What are we going to do about it?

"Driving While Black"

For minorities walking and driving on our urban streets, the police are there not only "to serve and protect," but to intimidate and harass.

In college, I worked on the school newspaper. I was helping a fellow photographer—a black man who lived in a black neighborhood—to repack his gear. I noticed a stack of receipts stuck in the pocket of his bag and asked if he'd just bought his camera. "No," he said. "I've had it five years. I have to show these to the cops when they stop me and ask where I got this stuff." Does that happen often, I asked? All the time, he said.

Black people are all too familiar with "driving while black"—a term used to describe the propensity of police to stop African American drivers. Such harassment has helped create a high level of mistrust in black communities. But simple intimidation can give way to outright brutality, as documented by Amnesty International (AI) in a report that describes "a widespread and persistent problem of police brutality across the USA."

AI cites a pattern of abuse in some of the country's largest police departments, including Chicago, New York City, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, New Orleans, Detroit and Atlanta. Most frequently targeted

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are young black and Hispanic males.

"Thousands of individual complaints about police abuse are reported each year, and local authorities pay out millions of dollars to victims in damages after lawsuits," AI reports.

"Guidelines to protect the public are systematically violated, with police using levels of violence bearing no relation to the alleged threats they face," says AI. Examples include:

- Shooting of unarmed suspects fleeing from minor crime scenes.
- Suspects being fired upon after being apprehended or restrained.
- Car chases where vehicles are fired upon when drivers and occupants are unarmed.
- Unprovoked and unwarranted shootings during police stakeouts.
- Torture and ill-treatment inside police stations.
- Deaths while in police custody.

Chicago has no shortage of such abuses. In its report, "Shielded from Justice: Police Brutality and Accountability in the United States," Human Rights Watch dedicates an entire chapter to Chicago, outlining numerous examples of beatings, torture and shootings by police. A few examples:

- The 1997 beating of Jeremiah Mearday by two Chicago police officers. The police board found the officers guilty of using excessive force and trying to cover it up by filing "blatantly false reports," by the police board's own description.
- The beating of Eric Holder, an African American Chicago police officer who said he was beaten while off duty on July 10, 1997 by white officers despite having identified himself as a police

LOSING THE VOTE: WHOSE DEMOCRACY IS IT?

In many states, current and former felony offenders are disqualified from voting. The result is the increasing disenfranchisement of minorities.

Some 1.4 million African American men—13% of all black men—have permanently lost their right to vote due to prior convictions, according to the Sentencing Project, a Washington group that described itself as "an independent source of criminal justice policy analysis, data and program information for the public and policy-makers."

In Alabama and Florida, 31 percent of all African American males have lost the right to vote due to prior convictions. In seven states that deny the vote to ex-offenders, one in four black men is permanently disenfranchised.

Given current rates of incarceration, three in 10 of the next generation of black men can expect to be disenfranchised at some point in their lifetime. In states that disenfranchise ex-offenders, as many as 40% of black men may permanently lose their right to vote.

officer. Holder was later fired and convicted of resisting arrest.

- The killing of Joseph Carl Gould, an African American homeless man who was shot by an off-duty white police officer, Gregory Becker, in 1995. Becker was convicted of involuntary manslaughter and armed violence in 1997.

Add to these a two-decade pattern of torture and beatings alleged in Chicago's Areas 2 and 3, many of them linked to commander Jon Burge, who was fired in 1992 but never prosecuted. A law firm identified 65 suspects who were tortured by Burge or other officers and detectives between 1972 and 1991 in Areas 2 and 3. Many bogus confessions were extracted, some leading to death row convictions.

After the Chicago Police Department's Office of Professional Standards investigated allegations of abuse in Area 2, it reported that physical abuse "did occur and that it was systematic... the type of abuse described was not limited to the usual beating, but went into such esoteric areas as psychological tech-

niques and planned torture. The evidence presented by some individuals convinced juries and appellate courts that personnel assigned to Area 2 engaged in methodical abuse."

Aaron Patterson is one of those death row inmates who alleges his confession was beaten out of him. Currently the object of an intense campaign for a new trial, he was convicted almost entirely on the basis of a confession he never signed and has always repudiated—on the testimony of a witness who has since recanted.

Filling the Jails with "Small Fish"

When citizens go from police custody to our courts and prisons, the picture is just as grim. Increasing numbers of nonviolent drug offenders are spending time behind bars, thanks to a decade of "tough on crime" statutes handed down from Capitol Hill. And although many first-time offenders and other "small fish" are getting snagged in a net that was meant to target high-level drug dealers, lawmakers are not rushing to set things right.

Mandatory minimum sentencing laws, designed to show that politicians are "tough on crime," force judges to impose fixed terms on offenders convicted of drug-related crimes and certain gun offenses. Justice William Rehnquist described the result of these bills as "the law of unintended consequences."

"These mandatory minimums impose unduly harsh punishment for first-time offenders and have led to an inordinate increase in the [prison] population," Rehnquist said.

Even the White House's own anti-drug czar, General Barry McCaffrey, acknowledged in a 1997 speech that the war on drugs has turned our national prison system into a "gulag":

"Drugs are wrong, and you have to
(continued on the back page)

PRISONERS FOR PROFIT

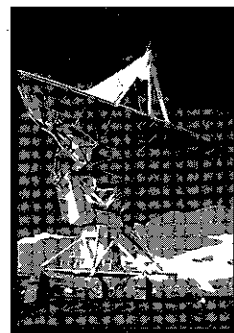
Worried about your Internet stocks? Maybe it's time to take a look at the newest growth industry—incarceration. The prison business has become big business, thanks to the combination of a growing prison population and the desire to cut costs. Contracting the management of prison facilities to private firms has become the latest budget-balancing strategy in many states.

In its report titled, "United States of America—Rights for All," Amnesty International (AI) calls private prison management "one of the fastest-growing businesses in the USA." It is generating large profits for the corporations that now house more than 77,000 prison and jail inmates.

"Many experts believe that the involvement of private companies increases the likelihood of inmates being abused and subjected to poor conditions," AI reports.

The potential for conflict of interest—between prisoners' rights and corporate profits, for example—is huge and obvious. One example: an article in *The Nation* reported that in Tennessee, guards employed by a private firm acknowledged they were encouraged to write up prisoners for minor infractions and place them in segregation. The motivation? Inmates in segregation not only lose their good time, they also have 30 days added to their sentence—which can pay off in a bonus of nearly \$1,000 for the company.

Another one bites the dust?



IN THIS AGE OF CORPORATE TAKEOVERS AND PSEUDO-DEMOCRACY, THE FATE OF YET ANOTHER RADIO STATION HANGS IN THE BALANCE. NORMAN SOLOMON PONDERES THE KPFA CRISIS.

It could become a notable media crime of the century—the killing of the strongest progressive radio station in the United States. Or it may turn out to be a case of attempted murder, ultimately averted by the determined struggle of a vibrant 50-year-old named KPFA.

With its back against the wall, the nation's first listener-supported radio station is fighting for its life. Days ago, sources confirmed what many supporters of KPFA Radio have suspected for a long time: KPFA's parent company, the Pacifica Foundation, is moving toward sale of the station. The foundation could gain \$60 million or more from such a sale. But the loss to much of Northern California—which has received the unique political and cultural offerings of the Berkeley-based station since 1949—would be incalculable.

KPFA has overcome many big obstacles. During the McCarthy era, pseudo-patriotic zealots tried to shut it down. Financial problems and internal strife often afflicted the fiercely independent station while its unabashed leftist politics and diverse cultural programs clashed with the mainstream mush dominating the radio band.

With escalating ruthlessness in recent months, the Pacifica Foundation—which also owns noncommercial radio stations in Los Angeles, Houston, New York City and Washington—has subjected KPFA's staff to repeated attacks on free speech. Journalists have been harassed and fired for the content of their on-air reports. One evening in mid-July, long-time staffers were among more than 50 people arrested for "trespassing" at the station after the management interrupted a newscast in mid-sentence and imposed a lockout.

According to a spokesperson for Pacifica board chair Mary Frances Berry,

she "emphatically denied" that selling KPFA is "an option being seriously considered." But within hours, the latest deception fell apart.

"I take no pleasure in being here today," board member Pete Bramson told a news conference the next afternoon, in late July. "But I cannot remain silent while Pacifica's national board holds serious discussions in secret about selling KPFA."

In fact, during a phone meeting of the national Pacifica board—only hours before Berry's denial—the board vice chair had proposed taking out a \$5 million loan against the value of KPFA's license. And, as Bramson noted, the proposal involved "selling the KPFA frequency, which has an estimated value of \$65 to \$75 million."

In the tradition of gutsy whistleblowers, Bramson spoke openly about the private meeting. He provided chilling details of a discussion in which leaders of the board talked about selling a precious and beloved radio station as if it were a tract of barren real estate.

"We do need our radio station back," Bramson said at the Berkeley news conference. "I call publicly on my fellow board members to do the right thing and give KPFA back to its community." Such pleas resonate with people across the country who have often lost their favorite radio stations to gradual corporatization or outright sale.

With tensions soaring still higher and a mass demonstration set to fill the streets of Berkeley, it appeared that Pacifica chair Berry was suddenly beginning to offer some concessions. The details were murky as the station's thousands of active supporters waited to see her offer in writing.

But one overarching reality remained clear: Whether or not KPFA's staff would soon be back inside the station's building

on Martin Luther King Jr. Way, the key issues of the huge dispute were sure to remain.

Can KPFA revive its tradition of free speech and fearless challenge to corporate power on the air? Can the station, after half a century, turn back the authoritarian forces eager to crush its most vibrant characteristics?

The answers that emerge from the struggle to save KPFA will reverberate far beyond the range of the station's transmitters. Several decades ago, across America, the noncommercial portion of the FM band was explicitly set aside for the public—but few of the radio stations that call themselves "listener-supported" have been willing to open their decision-making process to direct community participation.

Public radio's evocations of democratic values on the airwaves are undermined when stations treat democracy as a concept that should not intrude past their own front doors. In such a context, the governance of the medium is the message. **cmw**

P.S. Even as this Fall issue goes to print, there appears to be no resolution on the horizon for KPFA. If it can happen to KPFA—even with lawsuits and 10,000 angry protesters putting up roadblocks—could any listener-supported station be safe from the insidious encroachment of large corporations? It's no surprise that content at our public broadcasting outlets is being watered down. As Norman Solomon puts it: "What's on the airwaves is more like centralized monotony than democratic discourse." ~ CMW

Norman Solomon's latest book is The Habits of Highly Deceptive Media. He is scheduled to speak at one of CMW's Fall lectures (details on page 11).

On March 25, 1999, President Clinton unveiled the official public relations angle on NATO's intervention in Kosovo: "A moral imperative," he proclaimed. This ready-to-use rationale was immediately embraced by our nation's newspapers, which recognized how perfectly it meshed with their own time-honored tradition of reporting complex issues as simply contests of good vs. evil. They raced to defend NATO's actions, while vilifying the Serbs and their leader.

In Chicago, the *Sun-Times* called Milosevic "the Butcher of Belgrade" and "an accomplished liar." The *Chicago Tribune* said the Serbs were "loath to explore ... responsibility for the actions taken in its name by its leaders." The *Tribune* implied that unless Serbian media reports accurately on its government's activities, both positive and negative, the Serbs cannot even begin to participate in democratic decision-making.

What was not mentioned was that this is also true of the U.S. When simplified terms of good and evil form the boundaries of media coverage, issues that complicate the discussion are marginalized or excluded altogether.

One issue that poses huge moral ramifications for the U.S. barely made it to the pages of our national or local Chicago dailies, although it was reported throughout Europe: Is the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) financing its operations through the trafficking of narcotics?

Law enforcement officials in Europe and the

The newspaper also reported that this year Czech police obtained documents linking a known heroin dealer and Kosovo Albanian to arms purchases for the KLA.

As far back as 1995, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration had been reporting on Kosovo separatist involvement in the heroin market, noting, "Certain members of the ethnic Albanian community in the Serbian region of Kosovo have turned to drug trafficking in order to finance their separatist activities." The group cited by the 1995 advisory was the People's Movement of Kosovo, now the political wing of the KLA.

Of nearly 2,000 pieces on Kosovo published since January by the *Chicago Tribune* and *Sun-Times*, a single sentence buried deep in another story is all that these leading Chicago dailies have devoted to this subject. "Many Western officials are skeptical of the KLA's commitment to democratic rule and see it as an authoritarian organization that was reported to have helped finance itself by illicit drug trade," wrote the *Tribune*. But although the *Tribune* acknowledged the charges, it chose not to give readers any details of evidence or to report that high-level officials in five separate police agencies announced investigations into the KLA.

More startling and also unreported by the Chicago media is the ample evidence that the CIA and Germany may have been providing military assistance and arms that helped fuel the KLA rebound from near-defeat to continue their insurgent war against Serbian authority. This was

The KLA Drug Connection

BY JAMES OWENS

Is the Kosovo Liberation Army pushing drugs to win a war? U.S. media silence on this issue is consistent with its one-sided coverage of the Kosovo crisis.

U.S. have charged that the KLA is running an international heroin trade. While headlines like "Heroin sold in Milan serves to finance Kosovo Liberation Army" (*La Repubblica*) screamed throughout Italy, the American media remained largely silent.

The major exception has been the *San Francisco Chronicle*, which ran an in-depth piece, saying, "Officers of the Kosovo Liberation Army and their backers, according to law enforcement authorities in western Europe and the United States, are a major force in international organized crime, moving staggering amounts of narcotics ... into the heart of Europe."

According to the *Chronicle*, Interpol has charged that "Kosovo Albanians hold the largest share of the heroin market in Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, Germany, the Czech Republic, Norway and Sweden." The drug route controlled by the Kosovars accounts for 90 percent of heroin exported to Europe from Southeast Asia, says Geopolitical Drug Watch, which supplies information on illegal drug trafficking to the governments of France and Britain.

The *Chronicle* cited a KLA fundraising event in Switzerland this year that raised \$7 million. The money is said to be donated by Kosovars living in Europe, but such huge sums would seem to exceed the giving power of a largely refugee and exile population from Europe's poorest region.

The *London Times* also investigated the huge sums raised by KLA in Europe, concluding: "This represents a huge sum for ordinary Kosovans and fuels speculation that apparently legitimate fundraising activities are used to launder dirty money."

at the same time that the U.S. claimed to be negotiating for peace in the region.

In early 1997, President Clinton authorized funding of organizations for the specific purpose of ousting Milosevic. By July 1998, the KLA was secretly receiving arms and assistance from western sources, according to German ARD television program *Monitor*. Late that year, the AP and the *New York Times* reported that the KLA possessed arms such as U.S.-made rockets, anti-aircraft and tank guns and stinger missiles, even "satellite communications."

Two Albanian newspapers announced that the U.S. was making unscheduled flights into northern Albania near Kosovo. On August 13, Agence-France Press and Associated Press both reported that the CIA was present in Albania. An Albanian official admitted that operatives were "in the North, near Kosovo."

"Activation of a policy of the end of Milosevic and his power in Yugoslavia is very much on the table," the *London Observer* quoted a U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency official.

Despite the overwhelming evidence, the subject was nowhere on the media radar screen. Not a single story appeared in the Chicago press on secret CIA-KLA connections. Not even when an official admission to secret military assistance to drug-funded rebel groups in the past appeared in the CIA Inspector General's 1997 report on Iran-Contra cocaine allegations.

The *Tribune* and *Sun-Times* both reinforced the political myth of America as an unflagging supporter of international human rights. In the *Tribune* pieces like "How Search for Peace Led to War," the U.S. is painted as a negotiator, trying to avert a

war. U.S. policy at Rambouillet is described as "driving towards a negotiated settlement."

Yet, Rambouillet was universally understood to have been an ultimatum. "Sign or face NATO airstrikes," reported the *Tribune* on March 7. This was clearly not a negotiation. Nonetheless, the *Tribune's* June 6 retrospective saw only Serbia as negotiating in bad faith. "Milosevic ... pursued a sort of double-track strategy, with the military track and the negotiating track," it quoted the Austrian ambassador to Yugoslavia. However, considering the U.S. troop buildup in the area and U.S. threats of extensive bombing, the U.S. was certainly pursuing the same "double-track" tactic.

The notion that the Rambouillet document presented to the Serb envoys was fair and reasonable is presupposed by the *Tribune*. The reason the Serbs refused to sign it, concluded the *Tribune*, was that they were "opposed to, among other things, a proposal that called for an eventual referendum on Kosovo's future." This is an incredible and irresponsible simplification, and one that conveniently supports the ensuing NATO bombing campaign. The "other things" contained in the Rambouillet document but not described in the *Tribune* piece include:

- "NATO personnel shall enjoy, together with their vehicles, vessels, aircraft and equipment, free and unrestricted passage and unimpeded access throughout the FRY (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), including associated airspace and territorial waters." (Note that NATO access is not limited to Kosovo, but throughout Yugoslavia.)
- "NATO is granted the use of airports, roads, rails and ports without payment of fees, duties, dues, tolls, or charges..."
- "NATO personnel shall be immune from any form of arrest, investigation or detention by the authorities in the FRY."

Investor's Business Daily, referring to some of these exact demands, wrote, "Such 'deal-breakers' have prompted criticism that NATO did not negotiate in good faith." It cited a former Defense Department analyst, along with others, as saying "NATO's intransigence, rather than the Yugoslav's, made bombing inevitable." *IBD* also reported that U.S. State Department officials had bragged to reporters that they "deliberately set the bar too high for Yugoslavs to reach."

The U.S. media seems to suffer from a form of selective amnesia, recalling only the historical events that did not challenge their "good guy, bad guy" frame. In contrast to current depictions, 1980s press reports indicated that ethnic Albanians in the autonomous Kosovo government were suspected of covering up anti-Slavic crimes such as arson and murder. According to a 1987 *New York Times* report, "As Slavs flee the province, Kosovo is becoming what ethnic Albanians have been demanding for years ... an 'ethnically pure' Albanian region."

One significant reason for this change in reporting is the tremendous lobby and PR efforts by Croatia and Albania—designed to build U.S. support for "their side." A necessary requirement was the demonization of their enemies, the Serbs.

The Albanian lobbying efforts successfully recruited then-Sen. Bob Dole in 1986, three years before Kosovo autonomy was revoked by the Yugoslav parliament. In June of that year, Dole introduced Senate Concurrent Resolution #150, expressing concern over the condition of ethnic Albanians in Yugoslavia.

According to a February 28, 1999 report cited by SIRIUS, Dole may have been rewarded with as much as \$1.2 million raised at a May 1987 fundraiser in New York. The event was co-sponsored by then-Congressman Joseph Dioguardi, who is currently President of the Albanian American Civic League, from which Dole received \$100,000 in April 1995, as

reported by the *San Diego Union Tribune*. Dole's receipt of Albanian money is particularly troubling when it is recalled that he was assigned the role of "selling Rambouillet" to Albanian leaders.

Another crucial influence on the development of U.S. policy towards Kosovo has been the successful efforts of Washington D.C.-based PR firm Ruder-Finn, employed by Croatia and Albania. In his book *Balkan Odyssey* (Harcourt Brace, 1995), peace negotiator David Owen cited documents filed with the U.S. Justice Department that showed Croatia was paying Ruder-Finn as much as "\$10,000 a month plus expenses to 'create a positive Croatian image to members of Congress ... and the news media.'"

In August 1992, the world was shocked to learn of Serbian "death camps" in a series of stories in the U.S. press following an exposé in *Newsday*. However, the *New York Times* soon reported that U.S. intelligence officials found no evidence of systemic killing of prisoners in Serbian detention camps. A report on the subject by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) cited statements by the Red Cross that *all sides* ran internment camps and that Croatian forces were holding women and children as "a policy of forced transfers of populations." Clearly, no side can claim moral high ground.

"The Cold War had accustomed generations of reporters to analyze world events almost exclusively in terms of the bipolar confrontation, where good and evil were easily defined and identified. This mindset ... was an easy prey for the highly sophisticated propaganda machines that have characterized the conflicts in former Yugoslavia." — Sylvia Poggioli

In a 1994 interview with French journalist Jacques Merlino, Ruder-Finn CEO James Harff made incredible statements about how his company promoted the views of their clients—the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and the opposition in Kosovo. Harff said they had "outwitted three big Jewish organizations" (American Jewish Congress, Anti-Defamation League, American Jewish Committee) by garnering their support for Croatia, Bosnia and ethnic Albanians despite the World War II persecution and execution of tens of thousands of Jews by these same groups.

The goal, Harff said, was to "promptly equate the Serbs with the Nazis in the public mind." The fact that Ruder-Finn had no proof of Serbian death camps at the time was not important to Harff. "Our work is not to verify information," he said. "We are not paid to moralize."

Peabody Award-winning journalist and NPR correspondent on the Bosnian war Sylvia Poggioli, speaking directly of the Croatian PR campaign in the U.S. said, "Reporters ... were having more and more difficulty in convincing their editors that what they had seen first hand was the real story, not what was contained in the U.S.-originated faxes."

She surmised, "The Cold War had accustomed generations of reporters to analyze world events almost exclusively in

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ENVIRONMENT UPDATE

BY LIANE C. CASTEN

THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL BREAST CANCER CONFERENCE IN OTTAWA, CANADA



There is an irrefutable connection between breast, prostate and testicular cancers and the pollution that today invades our lives. This conference confirmed my own research of six years on the subject; my book was published three years ago.

These cancers are due to a group of chlorinated chemicals called organochlorines, which create excessive hormones in the human body. These cancers are caused by nuclear radiation. And they are caused by exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMF). The scientific evidence is powerful. But *they* don't want us to know this because the system as it now operates works just fine—for the polluters, the medical establishment and those who profit.

Over 1,000 concerned women, scientists and activists attended this conference. My paper on the media's role was very well received; others spoke of the science, the silence and the lies, the cover-ups and the diversions from environmental issues. In a great sense of solidarity, a group of us sat down and created a statement which we hope to spread around the world. I include it here for anyone who may be interested in signing on and joining us in this work.

A Statement by the International Coalition of the Concerned

Dear friends and colleagues around the world:

You have been suggested as a leader and a fighter in the area of protecting the environment and human health. Thus, we would like to invite you to join our Coalition of the Concerned.

As attendees of the Second World Conference on Breast Cancer, we were exposed to extraordinary and solid information concerning the environmental sources of breast cancer and other human cancers. We are concerned that positive and practical steps need to be made towards resolving these problems and reversing current trends.

We invite you to join our Coalition of the Concerned, a think-tank for strategic global action. The first draft of our mission statement follows.

We have two requests:

- 1) Please read the mission statement and, if you agree, sign on;
- 2) Feel free to suggest to us names of other concerned activists whom you feel would be a beneficial addition to the team. We would like our Coalition of the Concerned to grow.

International Coalition of the Concerned: A New Strategic Initiative

Testicular, prostate and breast cancers are largely preventable. Instead, we have cancer epidemics, threatening the fundamental reproductive cycles of humans and other species in an unnatural shortening of life.

Unnecessary, inefficient and poisonous military, industrial and agricultural practices are directly responsible for this crisis, creating a burden of toxins, radiation and other unnatural influences that our eco-system cannot tolerate.

We now appreciate the exquisite beauty and complexity of the genetic code of every living cell. We also know that the escalating toxic poisoning of the global environment is damaging the very basis of life.

The partnership between polluting corporations and governments is unprecedented, unacceptable and anti-democratic. The civil liberties of every person on the planet, which includes their health and happiness, are now fatally compromised by the disregard of human life in the pursuit of corporate profit.

Present-day industrial, military and agricultural poisonous practices destroy these rights not only for the present generation, but also for future generations. There are other ways of generating energy, creating healthy food and living conditions, and maintaining quality of life on Earth that are free from harm. This coalition is committed to healing and repairing the Earth.

THE INTERNATIONAL BOTANY CONFERENCE IN ST. LOUIS, MO



In St. Louis, 4,000 botanists convened to discuss the infinite variations of their discoveries in the plant world. They warned that "as many as two-thirds of the world's 300,000 plant species are in danger of extinction in nature during the course of the 21st cen-

tury; and in view of mankind's dependence on plants for almost every aspect of life and our expectations for using them to build a more sustainable, healthier and better life in the future," the conference called for a series of steps to halt their rapid extinction.

Ironically, St. Louis is the home of biotech giant Monsanto; the conference was sponsored in part by those very companies that have the most to gain by introducing genetically-engineered (G-E) foods into the world's food supply—companies like Monsanto, Novartis Crop Production, Dupont Agricultural, Pan American Seed Company and the Society for Economic Botany.

Not surprisingly, any discussion on G-E foods was couched in terms of their great potential to eradicate world hunger and their promise to help the farmers use less, not more pesticides.

Rarely mentioned was the indisputable opportunity to open up brave new worlds of corporate control, patents and profits for the companies supporting these new technologies.

What was also little mentioned in this corporate-sponsored gathering is that the present G-E trials are considered by many independent scientists and activists as fundamentally flawed. Despite the many years Monsanto scientists claim they have spent studying G-E technologies, they have not acknowledged the risks of pollution from pollen drift, nor the fact that basic changes in the nature of a G-E plant is capable of multiplying and mutating in unpredictable ways. The environment, people, and organic farms are at risk.

Those outside the conference—as far away as the U.K.—call corporations pushing G-E foods down the throats of the world "soulless despoilers of the earth." Sadly for American consumers, these foods are already on supermarket shelves, minus the G-E label that would allow them to make informed choices.

The battle lines are shaping up sharply. Those activists concerned that the Precautionary Principle has been ignored in the rush to get G-E foods to the marketplace are now fighting a show of support from various scientists who are enamoured of the technology. They are fighting the corporations and their

PR power. They are even fighting the federal government, specifically the USDA and the FDA.

The USDA itself helped develop G-E technology, but having spent taxpayers' money on it, literally handed it over to companies like Monsanto. Now, ever mindful of their investment, the same regulatory agencies are pushing the world to accept patented, corporate-owned G-E seeds.

This issue will be debated hotly when the World Trade Organization (WTO) meets in Seattle from November 30 to December 3 this year. Says Bill Dixon in *New Ground*, "By design, the WTO pits the most radical standard of market sovereignty against virtually anything which might diminish the rights of multinational capital to maximum profits... The sole aim of WTO is to run the planet into one big marketplace, with pro-business rules binding all nations—at all costs."

Those who wish to fight against this unprecedented effort at corporate control—and the tidal wave of G-E foods—are urged to come to Seattle.

A CONSPIRACY TO COVER UP GLOBAL WARMING



A glossy eight-page brochure I receive bi-monthly is called *World Climate Report*. As an environmental journalist, I marvel at its list of writers, many with Ph.Ds, who garnish their articles with memorable quotes like these: "El Nina and global warming [are] scapegoats for every observed weather anomaly," and "An increased level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere creates a longer, more productive growing season. It's a good thing. Carrots and radishes thrive under enhanced CO2 conditions."

The brochure's sponsors are among those who worked to ensure that the Kyoto agreement would not be accepted by the U.S.—"it would be too expensive." They ignore the growing incidence of skin and other cancers and dismiss NASA and leading scientists around the globe who have warned about the dangers of global warming.

The brochure throws in such red herrings as the chaos theory and the Pacific Decadal Oscillation (huh?) phenomenon as the causes of the extreme summer heat. It makes fun of the "environmental apocalypse that has been coming for 25 years now," and generally attacks Physicians for Social Responsibility as well as Al Gore for his "radical" stance.

Now, I'm wondering how this group of "independent scientists" are going to

explain the heat wave across the U.S. and what has been called "the worst drought in 100 years." In many areas, those carrots and radishes just aren't growing. Across the ocean, in Israel, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, water shortage is so acute that residents are experiencing massive crop loss and limited or rationed drinking water.

The brochure is published by the New Hope Environmental Services Inc., a lovely cover name. The Greening Earth Society is the publisher, another seductive name. I wonder who really pays their bills.

THE EPA KEEPS MUM ON DIOXIN




The U.S. EPA has long finished its final reassessment of that most toxic chemical, dioxin. The agency's first draft was compelling for its candor: dioxin is not only a proven carcinogen, it is capable of impairing the immune and reproductive systems, affecting even the fetus. Any soldier exposed to dioxin-contaminated Agent Orange can attest to the truth of dioxin's virulence. However, the big polluters have so much power that they have been able to prevent the EPA's release of its final draft.

In the meantime, this summer, we witnessed a Belgian food supply that was inadvertently contaminated with, yes, dioxin. Millions of pounds of contaminated food were destroyed.

On June 21, 1999, *The Wall Street Journal* turned over its editorial page to Elizabeth Whelan, president of the American Council on Science and Health, a scheme-tank supported by the chemical industry. She had launched her career as lapdog of the Alar industry, falsifying the history of that cancer-causing chemical that used to be found in apple juice intended for babies in the U.S. Eventually, the industry stopped using dioxin in 1989.

In the editorial, Whelan assured readers that there was no evidence of health-threatening toxic material in Belgian food. She even added, "No one has ever died or become chronically ill due to environmental exposure to dioxin. The problem can be explained as an example of hysterical contagion."

Whelan gets away with these lies because our own EPA has buckled under industry pressure and kept its silence. And instead of reporting this issue, the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*—still bleaching their pulp and paper with chlorine, creating dioxin in the process—are just as happy to keep their mouths shut. 

(continued from page 5)

terms of the bipolar confrontation, where good and evil were easily defined and identified. This mindset... was an easy prey for the highly sophisticated propaganda machines that have characterized the conflicts in former Yugoslavia."


This mindset still holds, as journalistic focus remains narrowly fixed on Serbia. A June 1999 *Chicago Tribune* story entitled "Serbs Revel in Status as Victims" characterizes Serbs as "clinging to a version of history in which they are always the victims, never the villains." Incredibly, this story on Serbs as victims does not find it relevant to mention that between August 4 and 6 of 1992, over 150,000 Serbs were ethnically cleansed from the Serb area of Krajina by Croatian forces. The Canadian *National Post* put the figure at 200,000.

While trivializing Serbian claims that Serb paramilitary actions against Kosovar villages did not begin until NATO withdrew hundreds of OSCE peace observers immediately before the air strikes, the *Tribune* fails to disclose that this claim is actually true. The fact that NATO policy led to an increased atrocities is ignored.

This is not to say that Serb-sponsored forces have not carried out brutalities, including rape, murder and ethnic cleansing. Rather, our media's singular focus on Serbia hides the actions of other forces in the region which have carried out the same crimes and serves to damage public understanding of the consequences and risks of U.S. policy.

The U.S. itself has repeatedly sided with forces which have committed atrocities, criminal acts and acts of great violence, such as the governments of Turkey, Indonesia and Columbia, all of whom still receive U.S. military support.

An uninformed American public is unable to act in a democratic fashion to control the dangerous and increasingly unilateral violence that our military dispenses. In the past year, the U.S. has bombed Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan and Yugoslavia, and "accidentally" bombed Pakistan, Macedonia and Bulgaria. The world's only remaining superpower faces no serious limit to the implementation of policies furthering its interests.

The future will surely hold more challenges like the one in Kosovo, and Americans need an accurate picture if they are to question what it means to allow their government to conduct a policy of violence. 

THE FCC SCORECARD

Telecommunications policy increasingly puts corporate interests ahead of public interest.

Margaret Newman and Liane C. Casten bring you up to date on recent developments.

The Federal Communications Commission has a very simple mission: to ensure that those who are entrusted with our nation's communications services do indeed serve the American people. So how is it doing three years after the Telecommunications Act of 1996? The answer depends on where you sit—and whether you stand to profit from the new telecommunications frontier.

That holy grail of deregulation—a predicted increase in competition—appears to be a long way off. Instead, consumers are paying more for telephone and cable service in many markets. At the same time, megamergers between cable, telephone, Internet and entertainment businesses are moving at a lightning pace, eliminating competition and creating entirely new industries. No one can predict what these industries will end up looking like, but concerns about monopoly control—both of the wires themselves and of the content that gets to flow through those wires—are real and pressing.

Pending as this issue of *CMW Report* goes to press is approval of one such merger, the marriage of SBC Communications of San Antonio and Chicago's own Ameritech (with a \$62 billion dowry). The deal would create the largest telephone company in the U.S. and occupy a third of the country's local telephone lines. Consumer groups predict that customers will be the losers if the merger goes forward—and that we are in fact already overpaying for residential phone service due to insufficient competition.

The Illinois Commerce Commission will begin its final deliberations on the takeover in late August, while the FCC plans to reach its decision by early September. How will they rule?

"It is the FCC's job to make sure that no merger creates a conglomerate so large and so dominant that it kills competition and undermines the intent of the Telecommunications Act," wrote FCC chairman William Kennard in a *Chicago Tribune* op-ed piece in June. And even though technology has moved into a whole new era since the FCC's founding 65 years ago, Kennard said, "What has not changed is the imperative of the FCC: to promote competition, foster innovation and protect consumers."

We at CMW would like to be optimistic about the FCC's commitment to doing just that, but there is ample reason to be wary. The Telecommunications Act was nothing less than an assault on the public's rights to communications channels, ensuring that control of the radio and television airwaves—as well as access to future digital television spectrum space—will remain in ever-fewer corporate hands. Add to that the FCC's recent decision to allow television networks to own more than one station in a market, and to permit companies to own radio and TV stations in the same market. And don't even get us started on the commission's 21-year-old ban on microradio stations.

The signals are clear: we have a regulatory system that

increasingly places corporate interests ahead of the public's. Why should it start protecting us now?

The People's Response to the FCC

People for Better TV is a growing group of concerned media activists and professionals who are alarmed that television has turned into a "wasteland." Television has marginalized minority and other voices across this country, and folks are rising up angry. Just look at some of the facts below that dominate the nation's telecommunication industry today:

Amount broadcasters spent on lobbying Congress between Jan-97 and Jul-98	\$10 billion
Amount of local programming in Nashville, TN between Feb and Mar-98 (one example)	0
Number of hours per week the average American child spends in front of the TV	28
Number of acts of violence an 18-year-old will have witnessed on TV	200,000
Percentage of people who think broadcasters pay \$100,000 or more for TV licenses	56%
Amount of money broadcasters pay for TV licenses	\$0
Value of public airwaves given to broadcasters to transition to digital TV	\$70 billion
Date scheduled to determine digital broadcaster's public interest obligations	None

On August 13, we attended the first meeting of concerned media activists called together by Marco Grimaldo, national director of People For Better TV. Grimaldo urged all of us write letters to FCC Chairman William Kennard, urging him to remember that the airwaves should not be given away without a clear understanding of what the public can expect in return. We are to ask Chairman Kennard to hold public hearings in cities across the country in order to raise a number of issues.

The White House is used to receiving letters; the FCC is not. There is strength in numbers and we can create a groundswell of support for making the airwaves more responsible to the people. Please write to the FCC and include the following information:

TV broadcasters in major cities across the U.S. have begun using additional public airwaves to broadcast digital TV signals. What is the FCC doing to require broadcasters to do public-interest and other "responsible" broadcasting?

Mention anything that you personally find objectionable, e.g. sex; violence; number of commercials, especially during children's programming; the lack of local programming to reflect local and divergent issues and opinions; added costs to us for receiving digital signals, etc.

For more information and help in writing this letter, go to the People For Better TV website at www.bettertv.org. Send your letter, with your name, address and signature, to: Chairman William Kennard, FCC, 445 12th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20554. Mail copies to the following commissioners: Gloria Tristani, Susan, Ness, Michael Powell, Harold Furchtgott-Roth. Don't forget to add to the list your Congressman and both Illinois Senators.

Remember, the airwaves belong to the people. Congress, the FCC and certainly the National Association of Broadcasters have forgotten this simple fact—thanks to the lobbying power of \$10 billion and growing. **cmw**

Drug industry vs. human lives—and where ABC stands

On July 8, 1999, ABC's *World News Tonight* aired two stories on the subject of treating AIDS in African countries. ABC's conclusion: It's better for poor Africans to die than to have access to cheap AIDS drugs.

The South African government is currently in a trade dispute with the U.S. over this issue: South Africa, which is in the midst of an AIDS epidemic, claims the right to license local pharmaceutical manufacturers to produce cheap generic versions of AIDS drugs that would otherwise be unaffordable for poor South Africans. The U.S. has taken the side of American pharmaceutical companies, who are trying to put a stop to the practice, known as "compulsory licensing."

The ABC stories were largely a brief for the drug industry. Peter Jennings started out by framing the debate: "Should the wealthier nations provide AIDS drugs to those countries..." The debate over compulsory licensing has nothing to do with wealthy nations providing drugs; it's about whether poor nations should be allowed to produce their own generic drugs, as they are authorized to do under international trade laws.

In the first segment, ABC news correspondent Jackie Judd claimed that "many health professionals agree" with the drug industry's claim that "cheaper drugs alone are never the answer," since AIDS "patients need to be closely supervised, which the South African medical system cannot provide." But Judd presented no

evidence that anyone has ever argued that "cheaper drugs alone" are the "answer." The only "health professional"

Judd used as an on-air source for this claim was Thomas Bombelles, a spokesman for PhRMA, a consortium of large pharmaceutical companies.

Before her story aired, Judd had in fact contacted James Love, a health economist who directs the Consumers' Project on Technology in Washington, and a leading expert in the U.S. on compulsory licensing for AIDS drugs. Love told Judd that the industry's spin was wrong—that compulsory licensing would have a positive effect on public health in Africa. But

neither Love, nor his concerns, was mentioned in Judd's piece.

Judd also could have quoted Mark Biot, who oversees AIDS programs worldwide for Doctors Without Borders. He told the *Chicago Tribune* that "clinics in most of the larger cities of the developing world would be fully equipped to handle AIDS patients if they had access to affordable drugs."

The *Tribune* reported that physicians who treat AIDS in developing countries call the drug industry's warnings about resistant strains a "false issue."

The second segment was by ABC reporter Richard Gizbert in Zambia. After introducing a Zambian AIDS patient named Veronica, Gizbert says, "The newest [AIDS] drugs are hard to get here as well. But even if they were available, Zambian officials believe it is better to let someone like Veronica die than to give the drugs without the proper supervision. Because in Zambia, they agree with the drug companies, that anything less than a full course of treatment with the right drugs could result in the HIV virus mutating into something even more deadly."

Again, ABC stressed that Zambian officials "agree with the drug companies." In fact, the Zambian health official quoted in the broadcast merely says that "supportive services" are needed for AIDS patients—hardly a startling position.

Gizbert concludes, "Zambia is letting its people die today so that thousands, maybe even millions can be saved tomorrow." No evidence is shown that the Zambian government is choosing to allow people to die. As Gizbert himself reports, Zambia does not have the resources to provide drugs to its AIDS-stricken population even if it wants to.

After the segments, anchor Peter Jennings added "one final note about the drug companies: Glaxo Wellcome that makes the AZT drug has cut drug prices to some African countries. And Bristol-Myers Squibb, the makers of three of the AIDS drugs, says it is spending \$100 million in Africa on AIDS-related programs."

Jennings did not mention that AZT normally sells in the U.S. for more than 10 times the cost of production—or that the drug was invented by the U.S. government, not by Glaxo Wellcome. Nor did ABC note that much of Bristol-Myers Squibb's money will go into training doctors to do research for the company in Africa. As Dan Berman, also of Doctors Without Borders, told *Time* magazine, "A lot of the companies are using the cheaper labor costs and the lack of ethical codes in developing countries as a way to get the trials done more cheaply and quickly." ~ FAIR

media
knots

Get it, read it, whack someone with it
Robert McChesney, one of the speakers on CMW's lecture series this Fall, has a new book everyone is talking about. Here is what people said.

Ralph Nader, consumer activist: "Here it is—the comprehensive story of how giant corporations are taking control of the mass media on a global scale, even though the American people legally own the public airwaves.

This corporatist grasping for ever more profit, power and content determination stifles the people's reach of their First Amendment rights and debilitates a weakening democracy with trivia, cheap entertainment, and low grade sensuality at eye-blinking velocities.

Rich Media, Poor Democracy (Univ. of Illinois Press) is more than a prolonged wake-up call; it shames those who do nothing and motivates those who are trying to build a more democratic media that reflects the all-important non-commercial values which forge a just society."

Barbara Ehrenreich, author of *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class*: "With *Rich Media, Poor Democracy* anyone can become an expert on our profit-driven, celebrity-obsessed, schlock-soaked media and what needs to be done to repair them. It's a rare book that combines such a wealth of data with such fearlessly sweeping analytical thinking."

Jeff Cohen, co-author of *Wizards of Media Oz* and founder of FAIR: "Professor McChesney is... the outsider who knows the media business as well as the moguls do... He shows how participatory democracy is shrinking beneath the weight of federally sanctioned media conglomerates that are laughing all the way to the bank. And he tells how to

THANKS AGAIN!

CMW would like to thank the
Crossroads Fund and Nancy Myers
once more for their generous
contribution. Thanks to caring
benefactors like them, we're able to
keep up the good work we've started!



reverse the process—to revitalize both journalism and democracy.”

Jim Hightower, radio commentator: “Don’t just read this book... If nothing else, whack some politicians over the head with it to get their attention to this growing crisis in our democratic dialogue.”

The book is coming out this October. Order by 9/30/99 and get 20% off: \$25.95. Mention code “MRP.” Call toll-free 800-545-4703.

News that should have made the news

Did you know that the same company responsible for your breast cancer may sell you drugs to cure it? Or that recently declassified documents suggest the fluoride in our water might kill you? Or that our government repeatedly failed to comply with the UN’s comprehensive test ban treaty on nuclear weapons? Thanks to corporate censorship and greed for profit, we have had more buzz about Monicagate in the past year than about these issues that impact our lives.



Censored 1999 (Seven Stories Press) reveals the top news stories that have been ignored by major networks and newspapers. Compiled by the Project Censored staff, it is a must-read for the American public.

The stories include: Luke Hiken with the National Lawyers Guild on the First Amendment and pirate radio stations in the U.S.; Steve Wilson and Jane Akre on Fox News and the controversial bovine growth hormone story; and “Junk Food News”—the most over-covered, least newsworthy stories that dominated the media at the expense of real news. The book also features censored stories from previous years that have since received mainstream coverage.

Bravo, R.C. Longworth!

In his *Chicago Tribune* article on July 5, 1999, entitled “Activists On Internet Reshaping Rules For Global Economy,” Longworth gives an evenhanded account of the activists working for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the issues of economic globalization, an issue that ultimately impacts everyone.

Longworth wrote, “Depending on your point of view, people such as Lori Wallach, Mark Weisbrot and Charles Arden-Clarke are noble warriors fighting to bring the benefits of the global econo-

my to the average person, or they are a band of hazily financed ‘vigilantes,’ as the *Financial Times* of London called them, out to torpedo globalization... These activists are baffling and often infuriating the business groups, government officials and global experts who until now have had this rule-making all to themselves.”

There are some 30,000 international NGOs, ranging in size from CARE, Oxfam, Doctors Without Borders, Save the Children, Amnesty International and the World Wildlife Fund, to one-person operations. As their influence rise, they are winning access to the rule-makers. Recently, 600 NGOs worked together to defeat a foreign investment treaty. Longworth said, “The NGOs charged that the proposed global treaty, seemingly a technical exercise, would override local and national laws on the environment and the rights of women and minorities.”

The role of the NGO ostensibly is to inject democracy into the workings of unelected global institutions, like the World Trade Organization who often keep negotiations secret but, as Longworth pointed out, “they themselves are non-democratic groups, privately financed and answerable not to voters but to their funders.”

“NGOs can swing votes back home,” he added. “Arden-Clarke, Wallach and others said this is the point at which NGOs plug into democracy, by telling political parties and elected officials in individual countries what’s happening at global levels.”

Corporations take over universities

Bravo to the *Chicago Tribune’s* story of August 22, 1999 by Cindy Schreuder!

Staff writer Schreuder wrote on a major concept that those in the field of the environment and science already know: the growing and potentially dangerous relationship between giant funding corporations and universities.

While proponents state that universities cannot possibly pay for some of the studies on their own, and that the potential for matching of intellectual wits from both academia and business can be powerful and profitable (giving patents as gifts to the university and tax breaks for the corporations), others argue that there will be problems: a loss of independence; corporate demands to design curriculum; a compromise of intellectual integrity; skewed research priorities.

“Universities are selling their souls by little bits at a time,” lamented one Northwestern professor. **cmw**

CMW FALL LECTURE SERIES

**Thursday, September 23:
Laura Ticciati and Robert Roth**

Roth is the author of *A Reason to Vote*. He will be discussing the poverty of our two-party system, focusing on genetically engineered (G-E) foods as a defining issue. Ticciati is the executive director of Mothers for Natural Law, who want to put the G-E issue on the nation’s map. Mothers for Natural Law managed to get 500,000 signatures to the U.S. government, demanding mandatory labeling of all G-E foods. It was no small feat, considering that the environmental community across the country—outraged by the deceptive attempt to change organic standards—could only get 275,000 signatures to the USDA.

**Thursday, October 28:
Norman Solomon**

Solomon is one of the nation’s most respected media critics and columnists. He is also the author of *The Habits of Highly Deceptive Media*, which has been hailed as featuring “some of the best press-bashing, honest sleuthing, news-consumer tips and happy hell-raising with the powers-that-be.” Hear him speak about the latest excesses and failures of America’s self-censoring mainstream media.

**Thursday, November 18:
Jane Akre and Steve Wilson**

Akre and Wilson are the two reporters who were fired from Fox TV in Florida—thanks to Monsanto pressure—for refusing to change the focus of their report on bovine growth hormones in milk. They are currently going to trial over the firing, which should wrap up by November, and will talk about the public trial and their personal trials working at Fox TV.

**Thursday, December 9:
Robert McChesney**

McChesney is a professor at the Institute of Communications Research and the Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois. He is also the author of *Telecommunications, Mass Media and Democracy: The Battle for the Control of U.S. Broadcasting*, and has just published a new book, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy* (review on left).

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CHICAGO media watch report

Chicago Media Watch
P. O. Box 268737, Chicago, IL 60626



MISSION STATEMENT

Democracy requires open channels of communication. Chicago Media Watch aims to ensure that this region's media remains open, honest and responsive to the needs of its people.

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(The Criminal Injustice System, continued from page 2)

uphold the law... but having said that, I also believe we have created an American gulag," McCaffrey said. "Probably two-thirds of those in the Federal system are there for drug-related crimes."

After sentencing a 20-year-old to 10 years in prison for a drug offense, one judge expressed his outrage: "The sentence is one of the unfairness I have ever had to impose. I don't excuse your conduct. You deserve to go to jail. But 10 years is absolutely outrageous, and I resent the fact that Congress has forced me to do this," said Connecticut Judge Alan Nevas.

Finally, as prison populations have exploded, the status of human rights inside the jails has become increasingly desperate. AI reports, "Every day in prisons and jails across the USA, the human rights of prisoners are violated. In many facilities, violence is endemic. In some cases, guards fail to stop inmates assaulting each other. In others, the guards are themselves the abusers, subjecting their victims to beatings and sexual abuse."

So whom do we blame for this system-wide tragedy?
Do we blame voters, for electing "tough on crime" politicians and demanding harsher treatment of offenders?
Do we blame the police and prison systems, for allowing egregious human rights violations to go unpunished?
Or do we blame ourselves—for failing to challenge an unjust system because the people who are being harassed, beaten, jailed, tortured and killed are not us? **cmw**

Emile Shepers contributed information and ideas for this story. For more information and to find out what you can do:

- Amnesty International's Campaign on the USA, www.rightsforall-usa.org
- The Sentencing Project, www.sentencingproject.org
- Human Rights Watch, www.hrw.org