

October 20, 1998

Dear Friend:

MediaFile recently published an article of ours that explores how public debate has been re-framed in California's explosive initiative wars.

The article also offers some insights from recent experience as to how progressive voices can rejoin public debate and recapture political momentum.

WE INTERRUPT THIS MESSAGE designed the media campaign that helped defeat the anti-immigrant initiative considered by the Sierra Club's half million members this year.

That experience and others has affirmed our model for challenging right-wing "wedge" campaigns. We know what works. We can no longer cede the terms of debate — we must reclaim the moral high ground. We have to speak in shared values. We must directly challenge the lies of our opponents and we must expose the interests hidden behind these initiatives.

The right-wing started out to reshape the political landscape 30 years ago. For progressives, countering the tide and reframing public debate will be a long hard work. But, we have principles to guide us in the night.

There are ways to successfully respond to right-wing attacks. We hope this article will help people come to know them.

Sincerely,

Hunter Cutting

Kim Deterline

Advisory Board

Gary Delgado
Applied Research Center

George Gerbner
*Annenberg School for
Communication*

Anthony "Van" Jones
*Ella Baker Center
for Human Rights*

Janine Jackson
*FAIR
Fairness & Accuracy
In Reporting*

Taj James
*Coleman Advocates
for Children & Youth*

Rene Poitevin
*Center for Juvenile &
Criminal Justice*

Norman Solomon
Media Columnist

Makani Themba
Praxis Project

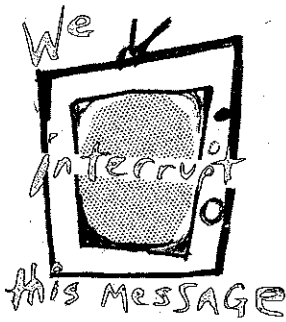
Steve Williams
*POWER
People Organized
to Win Employment
Rights*

Eddie Wong
*National
Asian-American
Telecommunications
Association*

Kim Deterline
Director

965 Mission Street
Suite 220
San Francisco
CA 94103
415.537.9437
415.537.9439 Fax
interrupt@igc.org





December 23, 1998

George Gerbner
Cultural Environment Movement
234 Golf View Road
Ardmore, PA 19003

Dear George:

Advisory Board

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Applied Research Center

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Two weeks ago, John Sipp, Jr., age 17, was shot dead in broad daylight in the city of Oakland, California. A photo of him, lying face down on the pavement with his mother crying over him, covered the front page of the *Oakland Tribune's* Local Section. This young man of color finally made the news.

All too often, tragedy is the only way our faces get seen.

Two years ago, John Sipp Jr. and 14 other young homeless and formerly homeless youth organizers from Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency set out to see if the local news was portraying an honest and "objective" picture of youth and the issues that confront them. They felt that their voices were not being heard, their faces not seen. In their place was a stereotype of gangsters and drug dealers that did not reflect the fullness of their lives. Enclosed is the result of their work, a study of a two year sample of *San Francisco Chronicle* coverage of youth and crime.

The study, entitled Juvenile Injustice, was conducted jointly by We Interrupt This Message and the BOSS youth team, UNYTE. The study documents biased news coverage that portrays youth too frequently as criminals while ignoring how often youth are victimized by adults and exploited by poverty. Also enclosed are two op-eds about the study and about the successful editorial board meeting where the youth held the *Chronicle* truly accountable for their inaccurate coverage.

As you know, distorted news coverage makes for a misinformed public and bad public policy with devastating consequences for homeless and at-risk youth. These policies decide which child goes to school, which goes to jail, and which one is sentenced to death. Whether it is a congressman, a teacher, or a cop, an adult guided by inaccurate stereotypes can destroy a young person's life. The youth of UNYTE know that accurate news coverage is imperative for their survival. In a blame-the-victim climate, where youth have become the latest scapegoats, accurate news coverage is a necessary first step to stop institutions from criminalizing youth and instead, be responsible to them as kids.

In Memorium,

Sarah Xochitl Bervera
Program Director