

WOMEN'S TWO-LEVEL COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

WIFP sees two levels of communication operating for women.

1. The first level is in our women-owned media where we raise our issues for discussion initially among ourselves, formulating and reformulating them as we bring in all our perspectives and first-hand experience from our many cultures and the full range of our economic and social lives. We articulate and develop our multi-faceted positions on each of our issues, including violence to women, political representation, health, discrimination, child care, employment opportunities, reproductive choice, sexual harassment, equality under the law, and many more.

All forms of communication can be (and are) "women's media" -- when we use them to communicate our experience, concerns, needs and perspectives to each other and to the public: from print to broadcast, film, art, and music and other forms of media. Also communication through conferences, demonstrations, lobbying -- and our many organizations (a very important means of communication for women) and now the new electronic media, the internet, world wide web, and fax networks.

2. At the second level, those of us who work in male-owned mass media can then point to these issues now made visible, showing their demonstrated support, and urge coverage of them for the necessary wider dissemination, discussion, and public debate.

We are able to press editors, news directors, and management not only for better news coverage but also for the fullest possible reflection of women's diversity on each issue. We can help the public to hear as directly as possible from the women themselves to make the news information be more authentic and accurate.

The two levels operate independently but are interdependent. Those of us at the second level need the women at the first level to raise the issues loud and clear so that our male editors and news directors can see that the subject is truly "news" and "an issue" to which coverage should be assigned. Those of us at the first level, with our more limited outreach need the help of women in the large-circulation media to increase the public knowledge and understanding of our issues.

At both levels we share a common goal: to increase the power to bring change and progress through making known the many new options for women and girls from which they may select what best suits their abilities, interests, and needs. Thus by reaching an ever-larger number of people and increasing the public's knowledge of additional viewpoints, perspectives and options, the public's decisions become more viable, peaceful and respectful, and the decision-making is more democratic.

WIFP'S SEVEN REALITIES FOR A RESPECTFUL AND PEACEFUL COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

A NEW PHILOSOPHY OF COMMUNICATIONS

1) People make their judgments on the basis of the information they have at a given time. This reality is respectful: it says people are rational. It is peaceful: if you disagree, don't attack; instead, think, "If I had her information, I'd come to the same conclusion." And it suggests a constructive course of action: offer your information.

2) Each person is the best judge of his/her own best interest. Don't force your judgment on others by implying that you know more about their self interests than they do. That person has to live with the results, not you. Again, a constructive course of action: offer your information.

3) Media owners give us the information they think it is important for us to know. Respectful: this is just what you do in your own media or would do if you had their media. Peaceful: don't attack; it is not unlawful to own media and tell what you think important. Alternative: work for equal ability to communicate to the whole public.

4) Media do not mirror society. They represent only the owners' views. (When they tell about us, they are not giving our information but their information about us, reflecting their view of us.) Media mirror only their owners -- a tiny segment of society.

5) For the public to obtain the information of the majority, people must be able to speak for themselves. Respectful: lets people make their own case direct to the public. This assumption provides a basis on which the communications system may be restructured to yield the information the nation needs to govern itself.

6) Our political power is based on the number of people we each can reach with our information. If you own media and I do not (or your media reach more of the public than mine), you can portray my viewpoints to people I cannot reach with my corrections. You have more political influence and effect than I. *Possession of a means of communication is thus the source of political power.* The size of one's media outreach audience measures the *amount* of political power one has.

7) Democratically equalizing political power among us would require that we all have equal means of reaching the public -- when we wish and in the way most suitable to our message -- to communicate the information we each want the public to take into account in its political decision-making.

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The Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press

is a network of over 700 primarily media women and media-concerned women exploring ways to restructure the world's communication systems so that women -- and all people, rich or poor, male or female -- have equal access to the public for their viewpoints, speaking for themselves, so that the perspectives of everyone can be taken into account in the political decision-making -- as democracy requires.

After thousands of years of male domination of every form of communication, women's viewpoints and experiences are at last beginning to be heard. They are at last beginning to shape public policy.

Thanks to new communications technology, we can now envision for the first time in modern history the political equality that is the definition of democracy -- and even hasten its arrival by vigorously expanding our use of the new media technology.

MEDIA OUTREACH IS POLITICAL POWER AND MUST BE EQUAL IN A DEMOCRACY

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THE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE FOR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

was founded in 1972, a nonprofit, tax-exempt research, educational, publishing and networking organization, to increase communication by women -- so the viewpoints and experience of the majority can be heard by as many of the public as can now hear male opinions and experience.

A FEW OF WIFP'S ACTIVITIES. . .

- Published *Media Report to Women* for 15 years, 1972-1987, on what women are thinking and doing---reported directly by women themselves---to make the world's communications media more democratic. Fully indexed in 150 subject categories, with annotations for each story.
- Published 15 annually-updated editions of the *Directory of Women's Media*, 1975-1989, edited by Dr. Martha Leslie Allen, to increase communication among women nationally and internationally, in 19 different media forms such as print, broadcast, music, film, art, theater & more.
- Formed the WIFP Associates network of over 700 primarily media women and media-concerned women, united on the Associates Statement.
- Conducted seven annual conferences at the National Press Club on "Planning a National and International Communications System for Women."
- Held two international satellite teleconferences from the UN World Conferences of Women of the UN Decade for Women, in Copenhagen in 1980 and Nairobi in 1985.
- Member of Council of Presidents and its Women's Vote Project and Affirmative Action Task Force.
- Sponsoring member of Women Organizing for Change, Project of Women Leaders Online.
- Accredited United Nations representation, Department of Public Information.
- Conducts an active internship program the year around.

WIFP ASSOCIATES STATEMENT

For "freedom of the press" to be meaningful, there must be a realistic way to exercise it - for all of us, not just the multi-millionaires among us. . . . It is undignified to have to "beg" or "demand" access to media that belong to others, happy to be mentioned even if inaccurately. Women are increasingly becoming dissatisfied with the inadequacies of the present structures. We seek improvement both through expanding women-owned media and through our equal presence in other media at all levels -- in employment, in news coverage, and in the accurate reflection of our abilities and our political, economic, and social options. . . .

We are working together to register our unity, to aid each other's media efforts, and to increase the resources allocated to constructive changes that move us toward equality between men and women in our ability to reach the whole public. . . .

For women to continue to make progress, it is essential that we expand the outreach of women's information. . . .

RESTRUCTURING WORLD COMMUNICATIONS IS WOMEN'S WORK. . .

WE ARE THE MAJORITY of the population (and the majority of every race, creed, color, ethnic and personal identity). **IT IS THE MAJORITY'S JOB TO MAKE DEMOCRACY WORK.**

COMMUNICATION IS THE WAY WE PARTICIPATE IN DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING -- by being heard so our information will be taken into account by the voting public. **Communication must be equal** -- if our political decision-making is to be democratic.

By building our own media and by advocacy, we can bring about the restructuring of media. Acting nation by nation, and locally, we can help communications systems emerge that enable women to speak for themselves with universal outreach equal to the outreach extent that men have.

By democratizing media we can democratize society -- and thereby bring equality.

JOIN WITH US. . .

•In helping to build a strong two-level women's communication system to increase the outreach of women on all issues to assure that women's contributions to society will be heard and taken into account in the world's decision-making.

•In helping to reshape the world's communications structure on the basis of people speaking for themselves with equal outreach to the whole public.

YES! I want to be a part of the WIFP network to work with other women concerned about these goals and action toward a communications system more equal in outreach to the public, nationally and internationally.

Enclosed is my contribution of \$_____.
(\$25 recommended, more if you can, less if you can't.)
Contributions are tax-deductible.

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The WIFP Booklet Series Looking Toward a Radical Restructuring of the Communications Media

— *The Media Technology Road to
Democracy and Equality* by Dr. Donna
Allen. 1995. \$5 plus \$2 postage & handling

In a little over two decades we changed thousands of years of accepted male myths about us. This booklet shows on 3 major myths how we did it by creating our own media -- and the way to more such progress in the future.

— *What's Wrong With Mass Media for
the Women Half of the Population --
Re-building the System* compiled by Alison
Hardin, WIFP Associate. 1993. \$2 plus
50 cents p&h.

This booklet illustrates the issues on which we made and are making progress: the survival issues (health, safety, peace), the economic issues for our independence, the political issues for assuring our progress, and the media issues by which to continue the progress.

The Other Booklets

No. 3 *Media Without Democracy And What To
Do About It* for \$5;

No. 2 *A National Citizens' Network of Radio
and Television* for \$2; and

No. 1 *The Source of Power for Women: A
Strategy to Equalize Media Outreach* \$2.

— Copies of this brochure. \$1.00 for 10.

— WIFP Publications List.

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