

**A RALLYING CRY FOR MEDIA ACTIVISM
FROM TWO LEADING VOICES OF THE MOVEMENT**

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IT'S THE MEDIA, STUPID

A NEW OPEN MEDIA PAMPHLET BY

John Nichols and Robert W. McChesney

Introductions by Barbara Ehrenreich, Ralph Nader, Sen. Paul Wellstone

"John Nichols and Bob McChesney are right to argue that for our democracy to be renewed, issues of media ownership, monopoly and diversity must be on the agenda. Media cannot merely reflect the narrow corporate interests of a handful of powerful media moguls. For democracy to function, media must reflect the diversity of views, viewers and values of the whole society."

—Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, JR.

Timed to be a catalyst for debate during election season, *It's the Media, Stupid* outlines the current media crisis in the United States, explains how this crisis has undermined basic democracy, and provides readers with the tools to battle from the school board level to the Congress for more diverse and responsible media.

Nichols and McChesney begin by detailing how the media system has come to be dominated by a handful of transnational conglomerates that use their immense political and economic power to carpet bomb the population with commercial messages. They reveal how journalism, electoral politics, entertainment, art and culture have all suffered as a result. Nichols and McChesney also explain how that the Internet, which many once argued would open up the media system to a cornucopia of new voices and creativity, has been lost for the most part to the corporate communication system.

It's the Media, Stupid contains proposals for making our media system more responsive to the needs of the citizenry and less dominated by the needs of Wall

Street and Madison Avenue. The authors look at how political parties, grassroots movements and popular performers in other democratic nations increasingly have made media reform a political priority in the 1990s, in response to pressures to make their media systems more closely resemble the U.S. model. The authors provide an analysis of the burgeoning media reform activities in the United States in recent years, and outline measures to improve the media system.

Their vision for change emphasizes:

- building a grassroots movement that seeks immediate change at the local level (for example, media literacy courses in the schools) while building the base for democracy that, for too long, has been constrained by the titans of what is;
- recommendations for new rules and regulations that would limit the power of commercial media, such as no paid TV political advertising, and no TV advertising aimed at children under 12;
- providing creative public subsidies for an independent nonprofit and noncommercial media sector, as well as developing a world-class, noncommercial multi-layered public broadcasting system;
- genuine public hearings to determine how the digital media age should develop in the public interest, rather than the secretive and corrupt corporate slugfest that led to the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

As Green Party Presidential candidate Ralph Nader says in the book's introduction, "You hold in your hands a key to unlocking the corporate media chains that have shackled real freedom of the press and real democracy in this country for all too long. Use it!"

PRAISE FOR *IT'S THE MEDIA, STUPID*

"Congress has become so 'safe' and 'centrist' that most issues of importance to working men and women, people of color, rural residents and urban dwellers aren't seriously discussed. Why? Because issues are condensed into 'sound bites' for mass consumption by targeting media constituencies in the broad middle

and upper-class of consumers—the people who will buy what mass media advertises. The resulting neglect of debate around serious issues and opposing options is eating away at our democracy. John Nichols and Bob McChesney are right to argue that for our democracy to be renewed, issues of media ownership, monopoly and diversity must be on the agenda. Media cannot merely reflect the narrow corporate interests of a handful of powerful media moguls. For democracy to function, media must reflect the diversity of views, viewers and values of the whole of society.”

—CONGRESSMAN JESSE L. JACKSON, JR.

“I’ve been an organizer for three decades, on every issue from economic justice to civil rights to community empowerment to health care to gun violence. It doesn’t matter what the struggle is, people always complain about the media. What John Nichols and Bob McChesney are saying to us is this: We can do more than complain about the media, we can change it!”

—HORACE SMALL, NATIONAL DIRECTOR, DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA
PAST PRESIDENT, NATIONAL FEDERATION OF BLACK ORGANIZERS

“With *It’s the Media, Stupid* we move beyond a mere list of complaints about the commercial media system as it exists; we have an institutional analysis of the system that accounts for its hypercommercial and anti-democratic tendencies. John Nichols and Bob McChesney provide a careful description of the problem’s various manifestations, and lay out a blueprint for media reform. As they show, there are multiple complementary points of intervention in which critics, activists, teachers, reporters, parents, and people who just want better quality media and less crap all have roles to play.”

—JANINE JACKSON, PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF FAIRNESS & ACCURACY IN REPORTING

“McChesney and Nichols have shown us what is possible; now it falls to all of us to realize that potential with our activism.”

—BARBARA EHRENREICH, FROM THE INTRODUCTION

“Most progressives know how bad things get when six behemoth global corporations control everything you see and hear, and everyone knows that if you can’t communicate, you can’t fight back. *It’s the Media, Stupid* demonstrates that there are better ways to get your message out than buying expensive 60 second spots on corporate television.

To build the critical mass necessary to reclaim our public airwaves from a shrinking number of global corporations, we need to get this book into as many hands as possible.”

—ERIC GALATAS, FREE SPEECH TV, INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Robert W. McChesney is a professor of communication at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is the author of six books on the media, including *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times*.

John Nichols is the editorial page editor for *The Capital Times* newspaper in Madison, WI. He covers politics for *The Progressive* and is a frequent contributor to *The Nation*. He is a recipient of the Clarion Award for newspaper column writing and Inland Press Association honors for best editorial writing on an American newspaper.

“McChesney’s work has been of extraordinary importance...it should be read with care and concern by people who care about freedom and basic rights.”

—NOAM CHOMSKY

“John Nichols is a unique political writer in this country. He digs into politics, he gets to the heart of it, and he writes about what’s going on with a knowledge and a passion—and an optimism—that is exciting.”

— U.S. SENATOR PAUL WELLSTONE, D—MN

“Robert McChesney is one of the nation’s most important analysts of the media.”

— HOWARD ZINN

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