

**Dear Friend of the Cultural Environment:**

Since you last heard from or about us, we have formed a nonprofit corporation, elected a Board of Directors (below), rented a post office box (above), and begun to plan for a conference representing a wide range of interests and organizations.

The purpose of the conference would be to develop priorities, discuss proposals for broader public participation in cultural policy-making, decide on forms of coordination, and provide an occasion for the public launching of CEM.

You are one of a group of key advisors, leaders, and friends whose guidance and support we seek as we prepare for the public launching. We are starting with no staff and no funds. We need a more formal structure, a financial support group and seed money.

Our approach to next steps and to a larger public will be based on the advice and support we receive from you. The enclosed prospectus, drafted with the help of many of you, states our basic concerns. Please give us your comments and your response to the invitation to join, to advise, and to make a generous contribution to CEM.

We hope that you share our excitement and great expectations and look forward to hearing from you and working with you in the Cultural Environment Movement.

*Rita Adessa* Nolan A. Bowie  
*Paul Carton* Linda K. Fuller  
*George Gerbner* Kathleen B. Lynch  
*Louise Shoemaker*

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**Board of Directors**

Rita Adessa • Nolan Bowie, *Treasurer* • Paul Carton • Linda K. Fuller, *Development* • George Gerbner, *Chair* • Kathleen B. Lynch, *Secretary* • Louise Shoemaker

## **Prospectus**

Most of what we know, or think we know, we know from stories we're told. That process used to be hand-crafted, home-made, and community-inspired. Now it is mostly mass-produced and policy-driven. It is the end result of a complex manufacturing and marketing process.

For the first time in human history, most children are born into homes where most of the stories do not come from their parents, schools, churches, communities, and in many places even from their native countries, but from a handful of conglomerates who have something to sell.

These changes have had profound consequences. They have altered the ways we grow up, learn, and live. Channels proliferate and new technologies pervade home and office while mergers and bottom-line pressures shrink creative alternatives and reduce diversity of content. Media are coalescing into an integrated cultural environment that constrains life's choices as the natural environment defines life's chances.

The consequences are as diverse as they are far-reaching. For many people they mean an enrichment of local cultural horizons. But for many they also mean a narrowing of perspectives, homogenization of outlooks, and limitation of alternatives.

This condition did not emerge spontaneously or after thoughtful deliberation. It has been a radical departure overriding significant public opposition, a fact little noted in our history books. Its world-wide fallout and human implications have only recently been studied and are just beginning to be understood.

Ten-year-olds responding to a survey could name more brands of beer than presidents. Nine out of ten six-year-olds recognized "Old Joe" as a Camel cigarette ad. The new cultural environment blurs diverse outlooks, blends perspectives into a pervasive mainstream, and bends that mainstream to the service of those who own and pay for it.

Of course, ultimately *we* pay for it as consumers, but we pay when we wash, not when we watch. The price of a bar of soap includes money to pay for the "soap opera" that plugs the brand of soap and a style of life. And we have no choice but to pay that levy.

For citizens, this is taxation without representation. For advertisers, it is a tax-deductible business expense that buys the rights to tell the stories we hold in common. For society it is a way of preempting alternatives, limiting freedom of the press to those who own it, divorcing payment from choice, and denying meaningful public participation in cultural decision-making.

The Cultural Environment Movement is concerned with such distortions of the democratic process. They include the promotion of practices that drug, hurt, poison, and kill thousands every day; portrayals that dehumanize and stigmatize; cults of violence that desensitize, terrorize and brutalize; the growing siege mentality of our cities; the drift toward ecological suicide; the silent crumbling of our infrastructure; widening resource gaps and the most glaring inequalities in the industrial world; the costly neglect of vital institutions such as public education, health care, and the arts; make-believe image politics corrupting the electoral process.

How can we heal the wounds of all the stories that hurt and tear us apart? How can we put culture-power to liberating ends? The new cultural environment challenges us to mobilize as public citizens as effectively as commercials mobilize us to act as private consumers and to address these questions. We propose six areas:

- **Building a new coalition and constituency**

The Cultural Environment Movement involves media-oriented networks and councils in the U.S. and abroad; teachers, students and parents; groups concerned with children, youth and aging; women's groups; minority organizations; religious, educational, health, environmental, legal, and other professional associations; consumer groups and agencies; associations of creative workers in the media and in the arts and sciences; independent computer network organizers; and other organizations and individuals committed to creating mechanisms of public participation in cultural policy-making.

- **Opposing domination**

We resist censorship, both public and private; act to extend the First Amendment beyond its use as a shield for the powerful; work to reduce concentration of control of and by media and to include in decision-making the less affluent more vulnerable groups marginalized by marketers.

- **Cooperating with groups in other countries that work for the integrity and independence of their own cultural decision-making**

We need to learn from countries that have opened their media to the democratic process and oppose trade policies that make cultural development more difficult

- **Working with journalists, artists, writers, actors, directors, and other creative workers struggling for greater freedom and diversity in media employment and expression**

- **Promoting media literacy, awareness, critical viewing and reading, and other media education efforts**

We will be collecting, publicizing and disseminating information about relevant programs, services, curricula, and research and teaching materials

- **Placing cultural policy issues on the social-political agenda**

We will be supporting local and national and international media councils, study groups, citizen groups, minority and professional groups and other forums of public discussion, policy development, representation, and action, moving toward a realistic democratic media agenda

*Send comments to:*

**cultural environment *movement***

P.O. Box 31847

Philadelphia, P A 19104

**Advisors and Consultants**

(affiliation for information only)

\*Rita Adessa  
Philadelphia Lesbian and Gay Task Force  
Philadelphia, PA

Kathy Bonk  
Communications Consortium  
Washington, D.C.

Jennifer Devlin  
Susan Davis Companies, Inc.  
Washington, D.C.

Gar Alperovitz  
National Center for Economic  
Alternatives  
Washington, D.C.

Lou Bransford  
Public Service Sattelite Consortium  
New York, NY

Howard H. Frederick  
Inst. for Global Communications  
San Francisco, CA

Patricia Aufderheide  
American University  
Washington, D.C.

Peter A. Bruck  
Carleton University  
Ottawa, CANADA

William F. Fore  
World Association for Christian  
Communication, Yale Univ.  
New Haven, CT

Sr. Elvira Arcenas  
Institute of the Social Communication  
Sciences,  
Pontifical Salesian University  
Rome, ITALY

Angela J. Campbell  
Citizens Communications Ctr.  
Georgetown Univ. Law Center  
Washington, D.C.

Todd Gitlin  
University of California  
Berkeley, CA

Bernadette Barker-Plummer  
University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia, PA

\*Paul Carton  
University of Puerto Rico  
San Juan, PR and Arlington, VA

George Hacker  
Advocacy Institute  
Washington, D.C.

Ben Bagdikian  
University of California  
Berkeley, CA

Beverly J. Chain  
Office of Communication  
Unified Church of Christ  
Cleveland, Ohio

Dee Dee Halleck  
Deep Dish TV Network  
New York, NY

Richard J. Barnett  
Institute for Policy Studies  
Washington, D.C.

Jeffrey Chester  
Center for Media Education  
Washington, D.C.

Cees Hamelink  
International Association of Mass  
Communication Research  
The Hague, NETHERLANDS

Howard Berens  
Center for Psychological Studies in the  
Nuclear Age  
Harvard Medical School  
Cambridge, MA

Maurice C. Clifford, M.D.  
The HMA Foundation  
Philadelphia, PA

Nicholas Johnson  
University of Iowa  
Iowa City, Iowa

\*Nolan Bowie  
Temple University  
Philadelphia, PA

Jeff Cohen  
FAIR, New York, NY

Jean Kilbourn  
Boston, MA

Rick Crawford  
Sierra Club/Univ. of California  
Davis, CA

Robin L. Kropf  
Moraga, CA

Kalle Lasn  
The Media Foundation  
Vancouver, BC CANADA

\*Kathleen Bader Lynch, President  
Message to the Media  
Wilmington, Delaware

John E. Mack  
Harvard Medical School  
Cambridge, MA

Susan Martinson  
Harvard Graduate School  
of Education  
Cambridge, MA

Len Masterman  
Nottingham University  
ENGLAND

Kathryn Montgomery  
Campaign for Kids TV  
Washington, D.C.

Antonio Pasquali  
Former UNESCO official  
Caracas, Venezuela

Micha X. Peled  
Media Alliance  
San Francisco, CA

Michael Pertschuk  
Advocacy Institute  
Washington, D.C.

Marc Raboy  
Laval University  
Quebec City, CANADA

Marieli Rowe  
National Telemedia Council  
Madison, WI

Carlo Sartori  
University of Urbio  
ITALY

Jill Savitt  
Mamaroneck, NY

\*Louise Shoemaker  
University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia, PA

Herbert Schiller  
University of California  
San Diego, CA

Andrew Jay Schwartzman  
Media Access Project  
Washington, D.C.

Tamas Szecsco  
Market Research Institute  
Budapest, HUNGARY

Judith Thompson  
Children of War  
Brooklyn, NY

Elizabeth Thoman  
Center for Media and Values  
Los Angeles, CA

Brigitte Tufte  
Media Education  
Danmarks Laererhojskole  
Copenhagen, Denmark

Ronald J. Turner  
University of Missouri  
Columbia, MO

Kathleen Tyner  
Strategies for Media Literacy  
San Francisco, CA

Lawrence Wallack  
The Marin Institute  
San Rafael, CA

Diana Chapman Walsh  
Harvard School of Public Health  
Cambridge, MA

Elaine Wynne and Larry Johnson  
Key of See Storytellers  
Minneapolis, MN

*\* Member, Board of Directors*

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**cultural environment *movement***  
**survey**

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*Please take a few minutes to answer the questions below. Attach additional sheets if necessary. Your responses will help reflect the interests of a broad range of individuals and organizations.*

After reading the draft prospectus, what do you feel are the two major cultural/media issues facing us today?

How would you rate the overall state of the U.S. cultural environment today, compared to ten years ago?

better                       the same                       worse

Does the **cultural environment *movement*** seem like something you or your organization would be

very interested in                       somewhat interested in                       not very interested in

Could you tell us something that you like about the idea of a **cultural environment *movement*** ?

Could you tell us something that you *dislike* about the idea of a **cultural environment *movement*** ?

Do you have any other comments with regard to the enclosed draft prospectus? (If you would like to edit, mark up, or otherwise comment directly on the Prospectus, please do so and return it with this questionnaire)

**cultural environment movement**  
**survey**

Would you be interested in (check as many as apply)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> recruiting members                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> editing                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> writing information                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> disseminating information          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> organizing local <b>cem</b> meetings                     | <input type="checkbox"/> organizing a chapter of <b>cem</b> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> representing the following organizations in <b>cem</b> : |   |

*(for additional space, please use the back of this form)*

|                             |                |                     |
|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| <u>name of organization</u> | <u>address</u> | <u>phone number</u> |
|-----------------------------|----------------|---------------------|

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |
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|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Can you think of other persons/organizations who may be interested in **cem**?  
*(Please duplicate and pass on these materials to them, and send us a list of their names and addresses)*

Which of the following types of issues concern/interest you most?  
*(Check all that apply)*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> child and family advocacy issues | <input type="checkbox"/> legal issues                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> political issues                 | <input type="checkbox"/> consumer/public interest issues    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> local and national media policy  | <input type="checkbox"/> international media policy         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> physical environment             | <input type="checkbox"/> educational and school issues      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> women's issues                   | <input type="checkbox"/> religious issues                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> health issues                    | <input type="checkbox"/> labor concerns                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> violence                         | <input type="checkbox"/> peace movement                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> technology problems              | <input type="checkbox"/> minority concerns (racial/ethnic)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> gay/lesbian                      | <input type="checkbox"/> national cultures                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excessive commercialism          | <input type="checkbox"/> censorship                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> creating alternatives            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other issues (please note on back) |

**cultural environment *movement***  
survey

Which of these (and what other) activities would you like to be involved in?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> local organizing      | <input type="checkbox"/> representing your organization in <b><i>cem</i></b> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> media monitoring      | <input type="checkbox"/> alternative media production                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> electronic networking | <input type="checkbox"/> editing a newsletter                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fundraising           | <input type="checkbox"/> conference organization and management              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> publicity             | <input type="checkbox"/> desktop publishing                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> graphic design        | <input type="checkbox"/> other _____   |

Would you be interested in subscribing to a service that would provide the best of all alternative media publications, digests, and videos?

- yes       no

Would you like to attend our "founding conference"?

- as an individual       as a delegate of the following organization(s):
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Suggestions for a founding conference program:

| <u>agenda</u> | <u>speaker(s)</u> | <u>place</u> |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------|
| _____         | _____             | _____        |
| _____         | _____             | _____        |
| _____         | _____             | _____        |
| _____         | _____             | _____        |

Suggestions for potential sources of funding to help with the "founding conference:"

Have we forgotten anything important? Please note, and make any other comments and observations here (and on the back):

Join the  
**cultural environment *movement***  
as a founding member

Name \_\_\_\_\_

(  individual     organization )

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Internet \_\_\_\_\_

Bitnet \_\_\_\_\_

**Contribution**

Member (\$25)

Benefactor (\$500)

Sustaining member (\$50)

Angel (\$1000)

Patron (\$100)

Or more? \_\_\_\_\_

Please enclose your contribution and make checks payable to  
**cultural environment *movement*.**

(Contributions are tax deductible)  
mail to:

\_\_\_\_\_  
**cultural environment *movement***

P.O. Box 31847  
Philadelphia, PA 19104  
USA