

**Webster**  
UNIVERSITY

SAINT LOUIS - GENEVA  
LEIDEN - LONDON - VIENNA

470 EAST LOCKWOOD AVENUE  
ST. LOUIS, MO 63119-3194

the *liberating* alternative

**cem**  
cultural  
environment  
movement

P.O. BOX 31847  
PHILADELPHIA PA 19104

**CEM and WEBSTER UNIVERSITY invite you  
to the Founding Convention  
of the Cultural Environment Movement  
MARCH 15-17, 1996, in St. Louis, Missouri**

This personal invitation is addressed to a priority list of friends and supporters. It is extended on behalf of Webster University and CEM to the person whose name appears on the Registration Form, and to one guest.

CEM is a nonprofit coalition of independent organizations in every state of the U.S. and 57 other countries on six continents. It represents a wide range of social and cultural concerns united in working for freedom, fairness, diversity and democracy in media.

While supporting and cooperating with other similar initiatives, CEM's Founding Convention plays a distinctive national and international role. It is an invitational working assembly of delegates prepared to consider recommendations for a People's Communication Charter, a Viewers' Declaration of Independence, and areas, targets, and priorities for action.

Recommendations are prepared by key Conveners, paving the way for participation in Working Groups as well as for deliberation and ratification of the results. Distinguished keynote speakers and cultural events will highlight diverse areas of interest, concern and action.

Limitations of space and funding, and the demands of an intensive work schedule, make it necessary to limit invitations at this time to those on this priority list. Requests for additional invitations must be attached to the completed Registration Form and will be considered after those on this priority list have responded. Available spaces will be filled in the order of the date of response.

While you are considering your participation in the Founding Convention, let me reiterate our message. Scotch patriot Andrew Fletcher once said: "If one were permitted to make all the ballads, one need not care who should make the laws of a nation." That was at a time when "ballads"—the myths and stories of a culture—were still hand-crafted, home-made, community-inspired. Today, they are the products of a complex mass-production and marketing process.

Who tells most of the stories today? No longer home and community. No longer parents, schools, or church. In many parts of the world not even the native country. Our children are born into a cultural

*continued on back*

The Founding Convention of the Cultural Environment Movement will be held at Webster University in St. Louis, Missouri, on March 15-17, 1996. For more information call 215.387.5303.



MADE FROM 100% RECYCLED PAPER

environment whose dominant storytellers are a small group of global conglomerates that have little to tell but a great deal to sell.

This has far-reaching implications for human socialization and governance. Channels multiply but communication technologies converge and media merge. Cross-media conglomeration reduces competition and denies entry to newcomers. Fewer sources fill more outlets more of the time with ever more standardized fare. Alternative perspectives vanish from the mainstream. Media coalesce into a seamless, pervasive, stereotyped and increasingly homogenized and globalized cultural mainstream that has drifted out of democratic reach.

Other distortions of the democratic process include the promotion of practices that pollute, drug, hurt, poison, and kill thousands every day; portrayals that dehumanize and stigmatize; cults of media violence that desensitize, terrorize, and brutalize; stories that polarize and spur the growing siege mentality of our cities but ignore the drift toward ecological suicide, the silent crumbling of our infrastructure and the widening gaps in the richest country that already has the most glaring inequalities in the industrial world.

The Cultural Environment Movement was born to meet the crucial challenge of our time: to create mechanisms of independent citizen initiative and participation in cultural decision-making. We shall no longer beg for favors in an area where we have constitutional rights, human rights, and civil rights. We must mobilize as citizens as effectively as commercials mobilize us to act as consumers. That means:

- Building a broad coalition of organizations and individuals working for a liberating alternative to the repressive directions the "culture wars" are taking us
- Opposing concentration and censorship, public or private, and working for diversity of ownership, access, representation, and perspectives
- Cooperating with cultural liberation forces in other countries, working for the integrity and independence of their own decision-making and against global cultural domination
- Supporting journalists, artists, writers, actors, directors, and other creative workers struggling for more freedom from the constraints and formulas imposed on them
- Promoting critical media awareness as a fresh approach to a liberal education

The Founding Convention will launch a broad movement toward a time when all children will be born into a cultural environment that is reasonably free, fair, diverse, and non-damaging. What better holiday and New Year's gift for all than to register now for this historic occasion?

*A very special invitation, with love.*

