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Another World Is Necessary

Tactical media is creative solidarity in the fight for justice and democracy: resistance to the rampant tendencies toward repression, exploitation, isolation, alienation and corporatization.

For the past several years I have been working with Deep Dish Television to collaborate with the Independent Media Centers, Free Speech TV, Pacifica radio producers, and local and global movements for justice and democracy. We have tried to provide information and creative response to events and situations here in the United States and around the world.

During the U.S. presidential conventions of 2000 we initiated live daily broadcasts via satellite and internet to community radio and PEG (public, educational and government) cable television stations. We provided twenty hours of live up-to-the-minute news available in a way never before: news that was not funded and/or produced by transnational corporations. The format was *Democracy Now!* A popular daily program on Pacifica network, hosted by Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzalez, now extended to television, through a network of several hundred community stations built up over the years by Deep Dish Television and the Net, especially in collaboration with the Independent Media Center movement. (www.indymedia.org)

We had planned to initiate an on-going *Democracy Now!* series in 2002, when we had raised enough money. Our first money came in August 2001 and was \$30,000 from the Threshold Foundation. We put it in the bank and planned to raise at least \$400,000 more before we started. After September 11, we decided to use those first funds to begin right away with breaking news from Ground Zero. \$30,000 is a tiny amount to launch a daily national news service. We trusted that people would value this service in a time of tragedy and terror and that this would ensure that the program would continue once it got started.

Operating out of Down Town Community Television (DCTV) within the exclusion zone in Lower Manhattan, in the midst of the dust and rubble from the tragedy, we were able to provide a two hour daily program bringing the voices and images of the tragedy to a growing audience. The U.S. public needed to get beyond the sentimental and the maudlin, beyond the harsh battle cries, jingoism and chauvinism of commercial television. We have been able to bring historians, artists, peace activists, families of victims, muckrakers, visionaries, risk-takers, academics and "just folks". In short, a wide variety of opinion and commentary has been brought to bear on this on-going global crisis. For the first time in U.S. history, there is an authentic national live progressive television network, reaching a potential audience of 30 million. Letters, phone calls, and e-mails of appreciation have proven the importance of this initiative.

This project has been possible because of the tactical media collaborative infrastructure which has been built up over the years:

- the vital local radio community (licensed and unlicensed stations)
- the embattled but surviving Pacifica Foundation's national network of radio stations in five major population centers
- the network of community television stations (PEG)
- video collectives such as Paper Tiger, Big Noise Films, Whispered Media, Headwaters Action Video Collective, Sleeping Giant Video, Video Active
- the independent media centers (IMCs/www.indymedia.org) founded in Seattle in Oct 1999, now in over eighty locations world wide
- legions of progressive computer code writers and "hackers"
- the research, data collection and outreach of media critics such as Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (www.fair.org) and Media Channel (www.mediachannel.org)
- the non-commercial DBS channels, such as Free Speech Channel, mandated through activist organizing (www.freespeech.org)

These loosely woven tactical elements depend on a variety of technologies which have made inter-connection and multi-media collaboration possible: first of all, the Internet, which, besides its usual function for list serves, research and email, can transmit packets of audio and video to be broadcast in a matter of minutes; but also powerful portable machines: cell phones which can provide up-to-the-minute information from international sources, laptops which can host entire editing studios, small still and video cameras with newly improved resolution, search engines which instantly sift through decades of facts, powerful radio stations the size of a walkman receiver, and "air" ports which can bring bandwidth to entire neighborhoods and empower collaborative offices and research centers.

For the most part we are using these electronic tools--- originally developed for corporate mass markets-- to fight capitalism. These tools are made in repressive and polluted factories by virtual slaves of global capital.

Is another world possible? Consumer electronic machines are popular because of their active inter-active connective features, creative software and handy down-home applications, much of it designed in collaborative workshops. The internet itself, despite its military origins, developed in an atmosphere of collegial sharing and collaboration. The ultimate challenge will be to make a world where the industrial production sites are as collaborative and open, as dynamic and aware, as creative and consensual as our own privileged exchanges. That is what democracy will look like.

Sites:

www.democracynow.org

www.indymedia.org

www.papertiger.org

www.mediachannel.org

<http://www.alliancecm.org>

www.fair.org

<http://www.comunica.org/cris/>