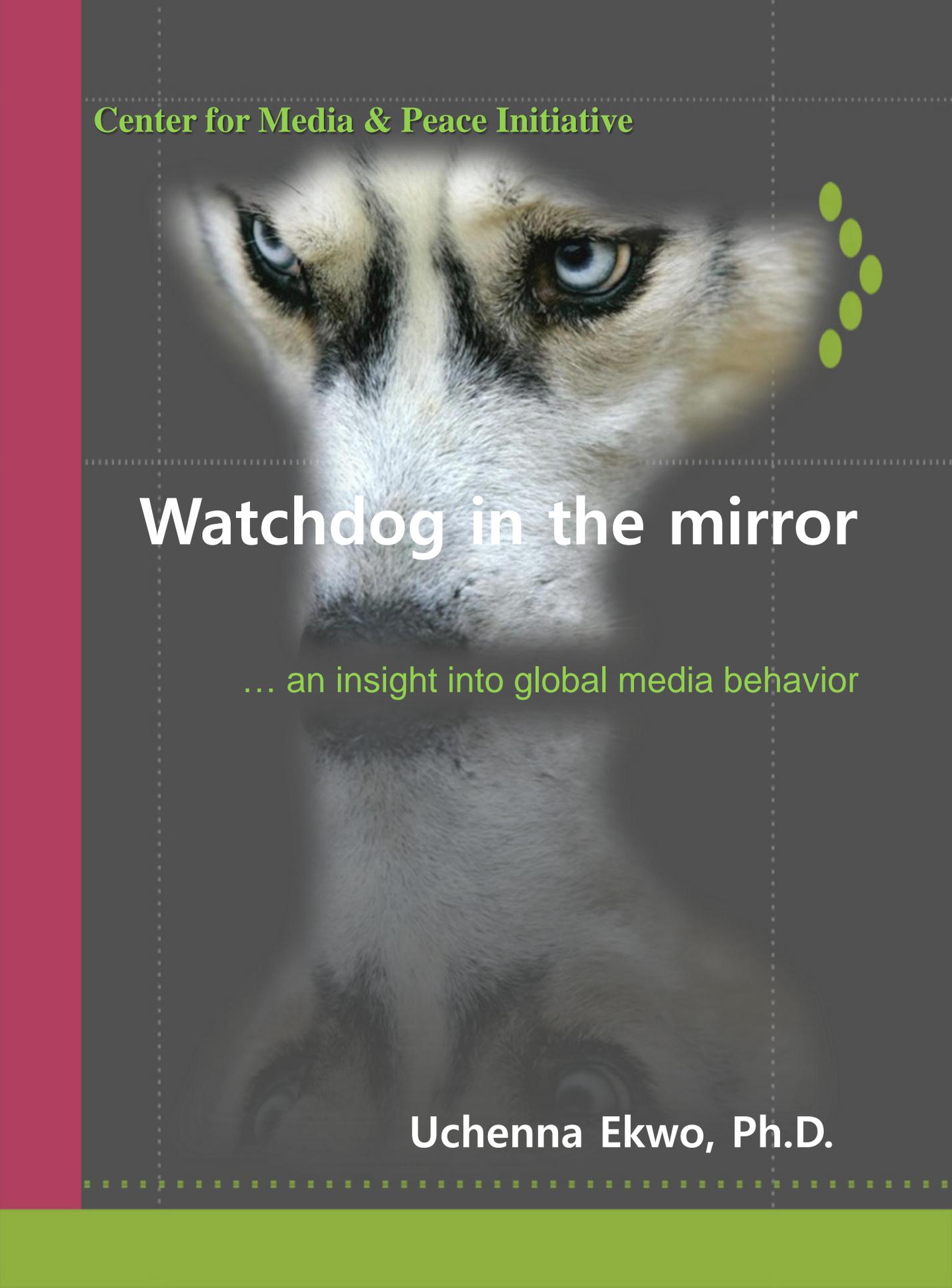


Center for Media & Peace Initiative



# Watchdog in the mirror

... an insight into global media behavior

Uchenna Ekwo, Ph.D.

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# Watchdog in the mirror



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## WikiLeaks and 'US media war' in South America

*The outcome of the release of US diplomatic cables by whistle-blowing outfit WikiLeaks still reverberates around the world. In this analysis, Nikolas Kozloff examines the impact of the diplomatic cables in relation to the struggle for public opinion in Latin America.*

In an effort to deflect and counteract leftist regimes in Latin America during the Cold War, Washington attached great political importance to its propaganda efforts. From Cuba to Chile, the US sought to promote friendly media while cultivating the support of right-wing reporters. Ultimately, such propaganda efforts proved not only economically wasteful but also politically self-defeating as Washington antagonized the Latin left, leaving a bitter residue for years to come. In light of the Cold War experience one might expect Washington to learn from its mistakes, yet in 2006 Voice of America started to broadcast toward leftist Venezuela. Originally founded in 1942, the Voice of America is overseen by the Broadcasting Board of Governors (or BBG), a quasi-independent company in charge of

US "public diplomacy" which in turn beams radio and TV programming to countries such as Cuba.

### Media war

Recent diplomatic cables disclosed by whistle-blowing outfit WikiLeaks underscore Washington's high stakes media war in Latin America. Though Cuba had been an earlier focal point of US propaganda efforts, in more recent times it is Hugo Chavez, Venezuela's president, who has sounded the alarm bell over at the state department. In a 2007 cable disclosed by Argentine paper *Página/12*, US diplomats speak candidly about the need to counteract media initiatives launched by the firebrand leftist leader from Venezuela.

As I discuss at great length in my recent book, Chavez has done much to promote state-sponsored media in South America in an effort to counteract traditional, conservative media tied to the US. After right-wing forces allied to the Bush administration and Venezuela's right-wing media failed to dislodge Chavez in a 2002 coup, Caracas stepped up its

information war, first by promoting domestic media and later by spurring the growth of more innovative pan-South American outlets. Though US diplomats expressed concern about left-leaning media in general, it was Telesur which most raised the Americans' ire.

A satellite news network sponsored by Venezuela and leftist allies such as Argentina, Uruguay, Cuba and Bolivia, Telesur was the "main source to broadcast anti-US propaganda", running "particularly slick" documentaries about CIA meddling in Latin America. US officials wrote that they would continue to recommend different measures to counteract Chavez, who posed a threat to American interests.

#### Voice of America

Washington, diplomats declared, "cannot expect the region's leaders to rally to our defense; rather we need to more proactively make the case for and implement our transparent strategy for the region". As it turns out, officials at the State Department were not the only ones growing concerned about the growth of pro-Chavez media. On Capitol Hill, Republican representative Connie Mack of Florida crafted an

amendment to a State Department Foreign Appropriations Bill designed to expand radio broadcasting to Venezuela. Earlier, Mack had sounded the alarm bell after Telesur concluded a content-sharing agreement with Al Jazeera. The move, Mack charged, would surely serve to create "a global television network for terrorists". Mack's proposal, which passed the House, included a request to supply the BBG with additional resources to extend the entity's broadcasting reach through the Voice of America.

When he got wind of the measure Hugo Chavez was predictably none too pleased, remarking that the proposal was a "preposterous imperialist idea". Fortunately however, tensions have cooled down somewhat since the Bush era, as Washington has adopted a somewhat less abrasive approach to Latin America. It's unclear, however, whether the Obama administration continues to place great importance on its propaganda efforts in private. Hopefully, WikiLeaks will continue to release its cables on such vital matters so the public

may form a clearer idea of the Obama White House's true political priorities in the region.

### Honduras coup

It would be instructive, for example, to get access to more WikiLeaks cables relating to the 2009 coup d'etat in Honduras and the role of the media. The right wing military coup, which overthrew democratically elected president Manuel Zelaya, was an early blot on Obama's foreign policy record. A maverick who challenged Washington, Zelaya was a key Chavez ally in Central America and needless to say Hillary Clinton's state department was less than forceful in pushing for the Honduran president's reinstatement. What is less known, however, is that Telesur played a key role in covering the coup, even during the darkest days of the military clampdown? At one point, the network even broadcast a live interview with president Zelaya as the ousted leader swooped over Tegucigalpa in a jet. Telesur threw a lot of resources toward its coverage in Honduras, and at times during the first week of the coup the South American network was the only channel with a live feed from the Honduran capital. Hardly amused, the Honduran army

cut off Telesur's local broadcasts while soldiers rounded up the network's journalists in Tegucigalpa. What was the Obama administration's take on the media politics surrounding the Honduras coup? Was Washington concerned about Telesur's growing profile throughout the region? Without a clearer view from WikiLeaks cables, it's difficult to say though recent developments suggest we may be headed straight back to the future: recently, BBG Chairman Walter Isaacson remarked that the US could not afford to be "out-communicated" by enemies such as Telesur. Two years ago, a freshly inaugurated Obama spoke of the need for an equal partnership between the US and Latin America during the Summit of the Americas in Trinidad. Yet, when officials like Isaacson make dated and inflammatory type statements which hark back to the Cold War, such lofty aims are severely hampered. In the final analysis, the US will have to ratchet back its long-standing propaganda machine if it wants to ease regional tensions and improve relations with the likes of Chavez.

*Nikolas Kozloff is the author of Revolution!  
South America and the Rise of the New Left.*

## **Wanted: Collaboration among Diaspora Media in the US**

***Seminar participants call for action to  
provide timely information to diaspora  
communities***

From April 11 -14, 2011, the Center for Media & Peace Initiative, convened a conference of Diaspora media organizations based in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut to explore the changing media landscape as it affects information production and consumption. The conference examined how immigrants in the US can utilize Diaspora media to bring about positive social change in their homelands and improve global understanding in an era of extremism and intolerance. An important outcome of the conference was a decision to strengthen collaboration, multiculturalism, and information sharing among journalists in different Diaspora media organizations, civil society, and Diaspora communities in the United States. In a ten-point communiqué at the end of the conference, participants noted the urgent need for collaboration among proprietors of different diaspora

media outlets in the United States to enable them serve the diaspora communities more effectively.

Diaspora media organizations, the communiqué said should be conscious of the challenges posed by institutional discrimination and act as watchdogs of diaspora communities as immigrants in the United States aspire to realize the American dream. Participants also emphasized the need for democratization of information and increased involvement of audiences in content creation. To this



*From R-L: Dr. Michael Schudson, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, Dr. Uchenna Ekwo, Executive Director, Center for Media & Peace Initiative, New York, and former Minister of Gender and Youth Affairs, Uganda, Hon. Zoe Bakoru-Bakoko at the 2011 Diaspora Media Seminar*

end, journalists in the diaspora media must endeavor to protect the identity of citizens who provide vital information that may be unacceptable by undemocratic regimes. The communiqué enjoined editors and reporters of diaspora media organizations to take extra responsibility in presenting news and views in ways that convey meaning to their audiences even if it means communicating to them in languages other than English. Participants noted that digitization of information, and the Internet have changed information gathering, dissemination, and consumption with far reaching ramifications for both the mainstream media and diaspora media especially on advertising revenue. To cope with these changes, diaspora media organizations should be innovative, set up interactive websites, and



*From L-R: Dr. Michael Schudson of Columbia University, Carla Trigueros, Editor Diario de Mexico, Ms. Zoe from Chicago, and Gloria Zhang of NTD Television*

utilize text messages to capture more audiences and connect younger generations with the old.

Immigrants in the United States are under great pressure from their homelands as well as their country of settlement. It is therefore the duty of the media to educate their audiences about the challenges of living in America, providing civic education, media literacy, and financial literacy to diaspora communities.



*Danielle Zhu, Producer New Tang Dynasty Television, Canada and Newton-Isaac Kinitty, Human Rights Activist, Connecticut*

Diaspora media organizations should continue to emphasize common concerns of immigrants in the US such as unemployment, poverty, adoption issues,

inequality, healthcare, and legal documentation. It is also the responsibility of the media to collaborate with advocacy groups to help vulnerable immigrants. While participants recognized the importance of sustenance, they urged proprietors of diaspora media organizations to strive to balance the desire for profit and the imperative of professionalism.



*From Extreme L – R: Dr. Rhemy Alapo of Institute for Peace and Transformational Leadership, Mr. Wale Ajibade, Director of Research & Strategy, African Views, Mr. Lansana Koroma, President of International Forum for the Rights of Black People, and Gloria Zhang, Regional Director of Development, New Tang Dynasty Television*

Diaspora media networks should work to earn the trust of its audience, provide leadership to diaspora communities, and collaborate with civil society more

frequently to address the common aspirations of immigrants in the US.



*Mr. Ernest Opong, Editor-in-Chief of New Jersey based Amandla Newspapers presenting a group report on Day 3 of the seminar.*

Participants emphasized the need for a platform that enables diaspora organizations and relevant professionals within the diaspora communities to share information relevant to the aspirations of immigrants in the United States. Participants expressed gratitude to the Center for Media & Peace Initiative for organizing the seminar and requested that there should be regular forums for practitioners in the diaspora media to update their knowledge.



*Connecticut-based Human Rights activist and President of Kenya Diaspora Movement, Hon. Newton Isaac-Kinity makes a presentation at the seminar while Gloria Ngofa and Ernest Opong watch with rapt attention.*

Participants at the four-day seminar confirmed their experience at the Pocantico Center of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, venue of the event to be memorable. The quality of speakers, participants, and adventure at the Pocantico Hills made the difference. In addition to the intellectual stimulation, the guided tour of historical sights such as the Kykuit (a collection of four generations of the Rockefeller family, Stone barns Farm (sustainable agricultural farming), and the Phillipsburg Manor in Sleepy Hollow, which takes you back to 1750 where African Slaves were kept in New

York during the dark ages of man's inhumanity to man. Above all, the camaraderie that participants developed at the end of their stay provided a platform for intercultural dialogue among different civilizations.

## Use of anonymous sources declines, Study finds

- By Steve Myers

Newspaper ombudsmen and media critics complain often about excessive and unnecessary use of anonymous sources, and yet the press uses them less frequently now than in the so-called —golden age|| of journalism. The use of unnamed sources peaked in the 1970s in the wake of Watergate. By 2008 it had dropped to the same relative frequency as in 1958, according to a paper presented at AEJMC conference. "Going into this, I really did think that I was going to find that anonymous sourcing was used more than in the past," said Prof. Matt J. Duffy, a professor at Zayed University in Abu Dhabi who worked on the study with Prof. Ann E. Williams of Georgia State University. The other key findings:

- Nowadays journalists almost always describe anonymous sources in some way rather than simply calling them "reliable sources." In 1958, 34 percent of stories with unnamed sources used such vague language; that dropped to under 3 percent in 2008.

- Reporters are doing a better job of explaining why they grant anonymity. In 2008, about a quarter of stories offered some explanation. While Duffy said that's still low, through 1998 such explanations were provided in fewer than 10 percent of stories.

- Journalists haven't changed their practice of independently verifying all information from anonymous sources. They do so in most cases, but not all.

Duffy and Williams' study is the first to track anonymous sourcing over such a long time with the same methodology. They did it by analyzing a representative sample (14 days) of front-page stories in The New York Times and The Washington Post, looking at one year each decade. (Focusing on just those two papers has its weaknesses, but others have used the same method to judge the overall performance of the press.)

Because half as many stories appeared on 1A in 2008 than in 1958, the rates are presented as a percentage of all front-page stories for that year. So at the peak

in 1978, almost half of all front-page stories included anonymous sources. In 1958 and 2008, the figure is about 25 percent.

Andy Alexander, former ombudsman of the Post, said he wasn't surprised that the rate has dropped. —Over the past few decades, I think there's been a greater awareness throughout the news industry that excessive use of anonymous sources damages credibility,|| he told me via email.

"But before we celebrate, let's keep in mind that the study - correctly, in my view - said the use of unnamed sources remains unacceptably high."

Len Downie, who was executive editor during part of the period studied, said he was pleased at the progress. Twenty-five percent "probably feels like it is so high, but again, we're constantly battling the convention in Washington," he said. The paper quoted Bill Keller, executive editor at the Times, in which he said that in 2005 he hoped his reporters would see the use of anonymous sources "is not a routine, but an exception." He told me via email that he was "heartened" by the improvement noted

In the study, although since 2005 "I suppose I've come to feel more like Sisyphus. Excessive anonymity is one of those things that simply require constant vigilance." In the absence of identification, Keller said, readers deserve to have enough information to judge whether a source is believable or has an ax to grind.

The study notes improvement in describing sources and explaining why they aren't named, which can help on both counts. But it didn't judge the quality of the description or the merits of the explanation. And as Clark Hoyt noted while ombudsman, in some cases those reasons are pretty thin. (Hoyt, who now works for Bloomberg, declined to be interviewed for this story.) Among the questionable examples Hoyt cited in a 2009 column:

In an article about the decoration of New York apartment building lobbies, a woman was granted anonymity to describe a particularly edgy one as 'a den of hell.' She had been visiting a friend in the building and would not give her name, the article said, 'for fear of offending the hostess.'

Columbia University journalism students found that the paper didn't follow its own guidelines on anonymous sourcing in 4 out of 5 cases, according to Hoyt. Hence the images of Bill Keller pushing that enormous boulder up the hill, only to have it roll back down. Alexander also concluded that the Post often didn't follow its own policies, in print and online. "I found that unwarranted use of anonymous sources often occurred in stories played inside the paper."

"In many cases," he continued, "it's not sufficient to say simply that a source was granted anonymity 'in order not to offend' or so they could 'speak more freely.' Those are reasons, but they're often not very good ones. As The Post's internal policies say, granting anonymity 'should not be done casually or automatically.'"

Though he found the study encouraging, Post Executive Editor Marcus Brauchli acknowledged shortcomings in meeting the paper's standards, saying in an email, "We're not perfect at this – many days, we fail to keep from using the noun 'source' to describe someone who has spoken to us –

but our editors are pretty harmonized on the need to use anonymous sources only when there is no other way to get information."

In another paper, Duffy challenged news outlets and the Society of Professional Journalists to raise their standards for anonymity. The paper identifies Watergate as one reason for the rise in unnamed sources in the '60s and '70s. Downie, who was involved in that coverage, agreed.

"There was a period when reporters, especially young reporters, were tempted to use anonymous sources with that vague reference ["informed sources"] just because it sounded good," he said. "We had to break them of those habits."

The problem, Duffy said, is that journalists use "idealized" examples such as Watergate to defend the practice." But I think in reality the pedestrian, day-to-day use of anonymous sourcing is pretty far away from that ideal.

Source: Poynter.org

## **Trump: The con apprentice and the media**

For more than three months, New York City based real estate mogul, Donald Trump held the media hostage and dragged them to believe he was going to replace Barak Obama as president of the United States and the leader of the free world in 2012.

As an apprentice to the job of president, Trump utilized all manner of tactics to ascend to the premier position in the opinion polls among other Republican prospective contenders for the White House.

He exploited the doubts the media fed into the right wing fringe of the Republican Party over the citizenship of the current US president, Barak Obama. Every day throughout the duration of the Trump circus, he (Donald Trump) took the entire media for a ride and made the demand for Obama's birth certificate a signature issue of his yet -to -be formed campaign for the president.

While Trump complained that the media was protective of Obama, he ignored the fact that he coned the entire media world

while he scooped with both hands free publicity to boost his other businesses notably his TV show: The Celebrity Apprentice, and sale of his condos in Manhattan, Las Vegas and Florida.

How could the media have been fooled by Donald Trump?

The Trump side show was probably fuelled by the conservative press whose hatred for anything Obama or immigrant blinds it from common sense and professionalism. Come to think about it. Is it possible in the 21st century for someone to manipulate his way to the exalted position of the presidency of the United States with the knowledge that he or she is unqualified constitutionally? I am inclined to think that those who peddled the show-me-your -birth certificate mantra must be dumb, myopic, and racist. It is an insult to the collective intelligence of all Americans to suggest that someone can deceive everyone, manipulate the system, and catapult himself into the Oval Office in one swoop. What is the possibility that a 21- year old white American woman could have given birth in Kenya, manipulated several

newspapers in Hawaii to report the birth of her son in anticipation for the child's eventual contest for the most important office in the land?

While Trump may not be smart enough to be the president of the United States, he is smart enough to dribble the media like the Argentine soccer legend Maradona did with the football in his days as a player.

Trump appeared on all television networks and responded to many questions from journalists with aggression and incomplete answers. In his frenzied demand for Obama's birth certificate, he announced he had appointed a search team of investigators to get the facts about the president's true citizenship. Pressed by reporters about the make up of this team, he refused to divulge the investigators' names or the nature of their findings. In one moment, he said he had never filed for bankruptcy but later admitted to filing for bankruptcy a few times. The few times turned out to be by his admission 30 times "to save his business like all business men do." In the rush to report Donald Trump, the media ignored some important signs of seriousness of a presidential wannabe. For

the period Donald Trump's circus lasted, there was not campaign committee or campaign office or staff. He did not have a Political Action Committee (PAC) neither did he set up an exploratory committee. What about fundraising? May be the media excused him on fundraising because he calls himself a billionaire even though he refused to disclose his real worth in American dollars. He also refused to make public his tax papers and predicated the release of such a document on Obama releasing the full evidence of live birth in the United States.

Now that President Obama released his birth certificate and issued a death certificate to Osama bin Laden few days later, Americans are yet to see Trump release his tax papers as he promised earlier. The media should demand from Trump that he should release his tax papers because a deal is a deal. Those who call for equity must come with clean hands.

Trump's announcement that he would not contest the presidential nomination should not prevent him from making good his promise of making public his

worth. Those pundits in the media who either supported him or criticized him during his con apprenticeship for presidential aspiration should not let him off the hook. They must demand explanations for some of his business practices especially those that are inconsistent with the laws of the land, equity, and good conscience.

When Trump announced his exit from the presidential race, he made it clear that he wanted to concentrate on his business and TV show to make "lots, lots, lots of money." Without mistakes, Trump's soul lies with money and cannot sacrifice money to serve Americans as president. He cleverly used this campaign season like he did in the past to exploit unsuspecting members of the public to boost his popularity and business.

Trump's love for money reminds me of the debate over how government is the problem of America. Former President Ronald Reagan may have been right in his now famous quote that "government is the problem" but I also think in this day business men with Trump's conscience are the problem of America. He admitted to filing bankruptcy to save his business

thereby cheating on the public. If he had become president, it is possible he could sell America to remain rich.

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## **The rise of citizen photojournalism**

*The era of ubiquitous media creation is helping average people across the world make a real difference*

Twenty years ago, on March 3, 1991, a media shock wave hit Los Angeles and the nation: the Rodney King video. As a bystander captured the incident with his home video camera, several Los Angeles police officers beat King repeatedly while other officers stood by and watched.

The video, or more accurately its broadcast across America, set in motion consequences that have reverberated through the years since the beating. Among them: the Los Angeles riots, after the acquittal of police charged with assault, and the poisonous relations between Los Angeles police and many of the city's citizens.

Another impact, of course, was the recognition - which grows more and more prevalent - that anyone with a video camera could become more than a witness to the events of our times. The camera-bearing citizen, in this case a man named George Holliday, was becoming an integral

part of how we remember these events.

Holliday's act was one of citizen journalism. It was not the first, however, even though it was a milestone.

## **Citizen photojournalism in history**

Indeed, people have been witnessing and taking pictures of notable events for a long, long time. The old-fashioned movie camera captured the most famous pictures in the citizen-media genre: the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas on November 22, 1963. Abraham Zapruder, the man pointing the camera that day in Dealey Plaza, sold the film to Life Magazine for \$150,000 - over a million dollars in today's currency.

In Dealey Plaza that day, one man happened to capture a motion picture - somewhat blurred but utterly gruesome nonetheless - of those terrible events. Zapruder's work, by any standard we can imagine, was an act of citizen journalism. But the Rodney King video was a turning point. By 1991, home video gear was

becoming common, heading toward today's near-ubiquity. When people saw that video, they realised a number of things, not least of which was the possibility that average citizens could hold powerful people - the police in this instance - somewhat more accountable for wrongdoing they committed in public places. Witnessing was being transformed into action, we all understood.

Today, many of us carry around still and video cameras that are part of our phones. In the US and around the world, people are capturing events, routine and horrific, that mark our times. The mobile-phone video of Neda Soltani's death by gunshot in the aftermath of Iran's rigged 2009 election became a rallying point for opposition to the regime.

### **Capturing reality**

In recent days, the grim videos and photos coming out of Libya have been testament to people's desire to bear witness to cruelty and oppression. Around the world, dictators have learned that even if they kill their people they can not ultimately stop the

world from seeing what crimes they commit. Yes, they can use technology to stifle freedom, and they do. But media from average people can make a real difference, too, and it does again and again.

Imagine where we will be a decade from now in a technological sense, and then let us return briefly to November 22, 1963. Dozens or hundreds of people in Dealey Plaza would have been capturing high-definition videos of the Kennedy assassination, most likely via their camera-equipped mobile phones as well as single-purpose digital cameras and video recorders. They'd have been capturing those images from multiple perspectives. And - this is key - all of those devices would have been attached to digital networks.

If the soon-to-be-ubiquitous technology had been in use back in 1963, several things are clear. One is that videos of this event would have been posted online almost instantly. Professional news organisations, which would also have had their own videos, would have been competing with a blizzard of other

material almost from the start - and given traditional media's usually appropriate reluctance to broadcast the most gruesome images (e.g., the beheading of the American businessman Nick Berg in Iraq), the online accounts might well have been a primary source.

And think about this: We would also soon have a three-dimensional hologram of the event, given the number of cameras capturing it from various angles. Which means we would probably know for sure whether someone was shooting at the president from that famous grassy knoll. In the future, government commissions will still issue official reports, but the documents will be created with much more input from citizens, who, because of digital media tools, are playing increasingly direct roles in governance as well as elections. The prospect of actually making policy, or at least having an impact on it, can offer a serious incentive to be a citizen journalist.

### **An era of ubiquity**

Another famous picture of our times is the single image that we will most remember from the July 2005 bombings in London. It

was taken by Adam Stacey inside the Underground (London's subway), as he and others escaped from a smoky train immediately after one of the bombs exploded. The production values of the image were hardly professional, but that didn't matter. What did matter was the utter authenticity of the image, made so by the fact that the man was there at the right time with the right media-creation gear.

Stacey's picture, like the other material I have highlighted here, made its way to wide viewership largely because traditional media organisations gave it a push. That will be less and less necessary as social media become the news-access tools of choice for a new generation that consumes, produces and shares news in varying ways. Big media will always have a role, an important one for some time to come, but it's no longer clear that they'll be as overwhelmingly essential even in the "distribution" arena.

The era of ubiquitous media creation tools has been dawning for some time. It is almost here now. It will bring some alarming consequences, notably a further

erosion of personal privacy; for example, even if you do not want the world to know that you were falling-down drunk at that party, there's a growing chance that someone else who was there will post a picture of you in that condition on Facebook.

We will be better off, in the end, as more and more journalistic media creation of this sort becomes part of the mainstream. This isn't good news for professional spot news photo and video journalists, who are much less likely to be at the scenes of newsworthy events than their "amateur" fellow citizens. But we will have more genuine media than before, as in the authenticity of the London image, and that is a good thing for us all.

***Dan Gillmor is the director of the Knight Centre for Digital Media Entrepreneurship at Arizona State University.***

***This article was first published by Mediactive and Al Jazeera.***

***The views expressed in this article are solely that of the author.***

## **The future of transnational journalism**

### **- *As Diaspora Media Forum takes off in New York***

A professor of public administration at the Rutgers University School of Public Affairs and Administration, Dr. Michael Gershowitz has challenged journalists in the Diaspora to undertake strategic initiatives to support good governance and professionalization of journalism in emerging countries.

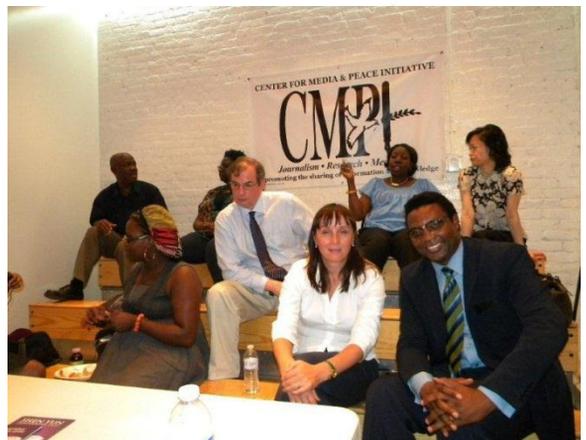
Dr. Gershowitz told the newly established Diaspora Media Forum (DMF) in New York that transnational journalists occupied unique positions to effect positive social change in both their countries of origin and settlement.



***Dr. Michael Gershowitz of Rutgers University (R) and Dr. Uchenna Ekwo, President, CMPI***

He expressed the hope that the Forum would find it necessary to collaborate with Rutgers University's School of Public Affairs to explore ways of strengthening democratic governance in different countries of the world.

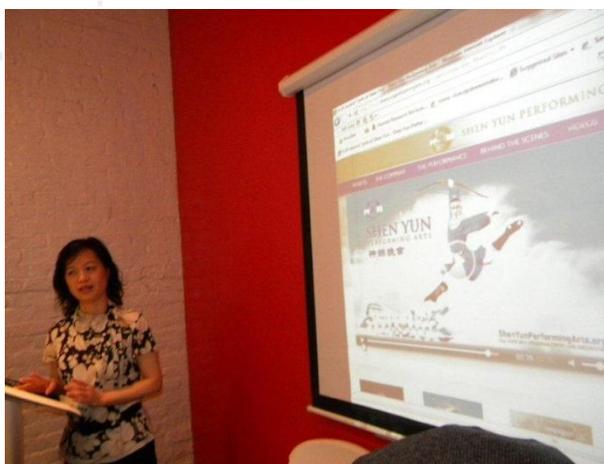
In his opening statement, the President of Center for Media & Peace Initiative, Dr. Uchenna Ekwo explained that the Forum was a CMPI initiative that involves journalists, civil society activists, and independent organizations that are committed to the genuine aspirations of all those in the Diaspora.



***A cross section of members of Diaspora Media Forum***

It is clear, Dr. Ekwo said, that "what unites humanity is more than the things that divide us" and as such journalists should utilize their skills to promote global understanding and solidarity.

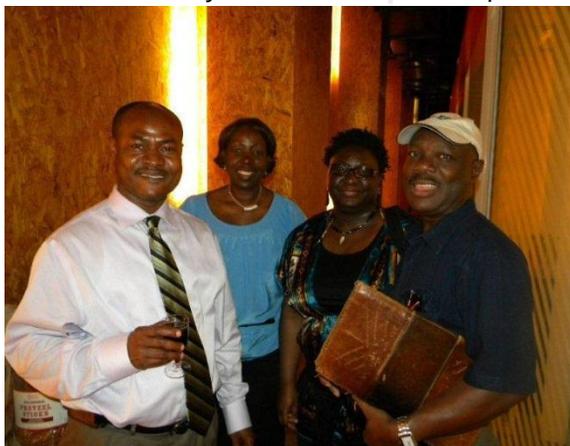
Award-winning television journalist, Danielle Zhu of the Chinese satellite channel, New Tang Dynasty Television based in New York made a presentation about how her station is using performing arts to convey messages of love, freedom, propagation of authentic Chinese culture, and protection of human rights.



***Danielle Zhu of New Tang Dynasty Television making a presentation at the DMF meeting***

The highlight of the inaugural session of the Diaspora Media Forum was the unveiling of the Forum's *Magna Carta* which inter alia states that members shall dedicate themselves to the growth and sustenance of news media outlets operated by journalists and proprietors focusing on immigrants in the United States.

The Forum shall be a platform for exchange of views among all journalists and civil society activists in the Diaspora.



***From R-L: Mr. Ernest Opong, Ms. Remi Alapo, Ms. Lorna Byfield, and Dr. Uchenna Ekwo***

Members of the Forum affirmed that "whatever affects one Diaspora media outlet or journalist affects all members of the Forum and deserves urgent attention and remedy."

The statement of principle stated that members shall mobilize, sensitize, and support Diaspora communities to be conscious of their rights, privileges, and obligations as lawful residents of the United States.

In addition, members urged Diaspora media networks to earn the trust of their audiences, provide leadership to Diaspora

communities, and collaborate with civil society more frequently to address the common aspirations of immigrants in the US while at the same time upholding basic ethical principles enshrined in established codes of conduct for journalists and related professions.

While the Diaspora Media Forum held its inaugural session, another eminent Diaspora journalist, Mr. Richard "Tony" Best, an immigrant from Barbados received a Life Time Achievement Award from the Caribbean-American Chamber of Commerce in Brooklyn.



***Richard "Tony" Best speaking after receiving a Life Time Achievement Award***

In his acceptance speech, Mr. Best, a journalist for half a century, expressed

appreciation to the chamber and the entire Caribbean community in New York for the honor.

The keynote speaker at the awards ceremony and former New York City Mayoral candidate, Bill Thompson spoke of Governor Andrew Cuomo's administration's plans to ensure better access to capital for immigrants in New York State.

As the Chair of the task force to improve access to capital to all those in Diaspora, Thompson who is also Chair of Battery Park City Authority emphasized that their target of 20% must be met within a specified time frame.



***Former NYC Mayoral candidate, Mr. Bill Thompson and Dr. Uchenna Ekwo of CMPI exchange pleasantries***

Among those who attended the ceremony include the Brooklyn borough

President, Mr. Marty Markowitz, his deputy  
Ms. Yvonne J. Graham, and the President of  
Caribbean - American Chamber of  
Commerce and Industry.

## **Struggle for press freedom, far from over — Dr. Bosch**

Center for Media & Peace Initiative on May 3 joined the rest of the world to commemorate the World Press Freedom Day. Journalists mostly from Diaspora media outlets, activists, and students gathered at CMPI's auditorium in New York City to share thoughts on the significance of the day. Special Guests Dr. Tanja Bosch, Senior Lecturer in Media Studies, University of Cape Town, South Africa and Mr. Obiora Ani, Manager, News, Voice of Nigeria (VON) joined the audience via Skype.

In his opening remarks, the Executive Director of Center for Media & Peace Initiative, Dr. Uchenna Ekwo noted that the idea of World Press Freedom Day was actually hatched in Africa.

He recalled that 3rd of May was proclaimed World Press Freedom Day by the UN General Assembly in 1993 following a Recommendation adopted at the twenty-sixth session of UNESCO's General Conference in 1991 that took place in Windhoek, capital of Namibia.

The center, Dr. Ekwo said, was therefore focused on the significance of World Press Freedom Day as it affects Africa.

Below are excerpts of Dr. Bosch's and Mr. Ani's presentations as well as vital reports from Freedom House and Committee to Protect Journalists.

Dr. Bosch prefaced her conversation with the strategic role of the media in an era of rapid change and information abundance.

The media are among the key forces that shape and define the establishment of democracy, with democratization and journalism influencing each other's advances and setbacks (Suarez, 1996). This remains a controversial claim and "the issue of whether mass media lead or follow change, whether they mirror or mould society, and whether they should be conceptualized as agents of change or of the status quo have yet to be resolved" (Jakubowicz, 2002). However, the issue of press freedom is critical particularly for Africa where serious change in terms of press freedom only started in the 1990s

after the passing of the Windhoek Declaration for the promotion of free and pluralistic media.

The commemoration of World Press Freedom Day 2011 takes place against the backdrop of significant international developments which have direct implications for the future of press freedom in the Southern African region. The emergence of WikiLeaks and social network sites indicate significant shifts in terms of power relations with citizens increasingly reclaiming their power over office bearers.



*Dr. Tanja Bosch making a presentation via Skype. Dr. Bosch is also on the board of CMPI*

*"In Malawi, a professor was recently arrested for drawing examples from Egyptian and Tunisian uprisings in a lecture."*

There are numerous examples of these tensions in state-media relations, with journalists not reporting favorably on their governments frequently subject to harassment or imprisonment. There is continued state dominance in the broadcasting sector in Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Angola and to some extent Botswana. In Malawi, journalists and civil society leaders face persistent threats and harassment from President Bingu wa Mutharika's increasingly autocratic government, and a professor was recently arrested for drawing examples from Egyptian and Tunisian uprisings in a lecture, leading to protests from fellow academics and the subsequent closure of the University of Malawi for about a month.

### **Media freedom in the digital age**

New media, in particular the internet and online social networking sites such as Twitter have been celebrated for heralding a new era of citizen journalism and press freedom. Often cited examples

are the protests against the disputed victory of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad following the 2009 Iranian election. Named the „twitter“ revolution, protestors relied on Twitter and other social networking sites to communicate and organize themselves, and consequently mobile phone networks and newspapers were shut down. Similarly during the recent uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, online social networks played a key role in organizing and mobilizing protestors despite moves by government to shut them down (Serag, 2011). More recently, when Osama Bin Laden was killed by US forces during a raid on his compound in Pakistan on 1 May 2011, the entire incident played out via twitter; and Sohaib Athar@ReallyVirtual tweeted the attack without being aware of the significance of the events.

The release of thousands of leaked diplomatic cables through WikiLeaks at the end of 2010 also demonstrates the possibilities of new media as key tools for whistle-blowers, and also in aiding investigative reporting. The rise in social media has also led to journalists using sites for research and to organize themselves; but most relevant to issues of press

freedom is the rise of citizen journalism and the ability for citizens to engage with the mainstream media through online or SMS comments, as well as to post their own news stories, often in reaction to perceptions of the biased nature of mainstream media. The vast majority of mobile phone subscribers live in the developing world, with Africa the fastest growing market in the world. Today there are ten times as many mobile phones as landlines in sub-Saharan Africa, though it has some of the lowest levels of infrastructure investment in the world; 60% of the population has mobile phone coverage (Aker & Mbiti, 2010). Increasingly large numbers of people are able to log on to the „global information superhighway“ via the mobile Internet.

There are various stages in the democratization process and Becker & Connell (2002) argue that the media are most supportive of democracy in the early period after the previous regime has fallen, as journalists and other citizens enjoy new freedoms; but that as the transition process moves towards consolidation, „the media as well as the public can become more cynical,

particularly in the race of continued political wrangling” (8). Although many countries have constitutional provisions for press freedom and/or freedom of expression, this does not always translate into the existence of these rights in reality. Many African countries still have laws on official secrecy, defamation, insult to the president and several others, which limit the rights of the media to freely access and disseminate information.

While there have been many gains (particularly on the continent) in terms of press freedom, it is an area that needs constant monitoring. The continued media freedom violations in countries such as Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Angola are an indication that the struggle for press freedom and access to information is far from over. The killing of two journalists in Angola in 2010; the continued arrests, harassment and torture of journalists and threats to media houses in Zimbabwe; and the arrest and torture of journalists in Swaziland during the April 2011 demonstrations are typical examples of brutal media freedom repression in parts of the region.

New media frontiers of online social networking provide new opportunities in terms of circumnavigating censorship and increasing media access, but while we celebrate the gains made in terms of press freedom, we should start being pre-emptive and put in place strategies for guarding these new frontiers of freedom of expression from capture and control by political and business elites.

Mr. Obiora Ani of Voice of Nigeria surveyed the media terrain in Nigeria and concluded that whereas there are instances of freedom, the media in Nigeria was still in chains resulting from poor economy, poor media infrastructure, and poor salary for journalists. All these problems, according to Mr. Ani had conspiratorial effect on media freedom.

In a reaction to a question from a member of the audience, Mr. Ani admitted that journalists in Nigeria are influenced by gratifications from news sources, a situation with potential harm

to the dissemination of truth and accurate information to citizens.

Compared with the situation in South Africa, Dr. Bosch noted that the greatest challenge for the media in most countries in southern Africa was that of censorship.

The presentations of Ani and Bosch were interrupted repeatedly by technical problems, an evidence that connection technologies are yet to attain a satisfactory level especially in Africa.



***Mr. Obiora Ani of Voice of Nigeria, Abuja speaking to participants at CMPI forum***

## **2010 report about state of media freedom**

According to Freedom House, the overall level of press freedom has declined. Of the 196 countries and territories studied by the organization in 2009, 69 (35 percent) were rated Free, 64 (33 percent) were rated Partly Free, and 63 (32 percent) were rated Not Free. This represents a move toward the center compared with the survey covering 2008, which featured 70 free, 61 partly free and 64 Not Free countries and territories.

The survey found that only 16 percent of the world's inhabitants live in countries with a free press, while 44 percent have a Partly Free press and 40 percent live in not free environments. The population figures are significantly affected by two countries—China, with a not free status, and India, with a partly free status—that together account for more than two billion of the world's roughly six billion people. The percentage of those enjoying free media in 2009 declined to the lowest level since 1996, when Freedom House began incorporating population data into the findings of the survey.

The overall level of press freedom worldwide, as measured by the global average score, worsened slightly in 2009, contributing to an eight-year negative trend. The averages for the legal, political, and economic categories all worsened as well, with the political and economic categories showing the largest declines.

The most significant region wide declines were seen in the Americas and sub-Saharan Africa, while smaller negative trends were apparent in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, the Middle East and North Africa, and Western Europe. The Asia-Pacific region represented the only bright spot, with parts of the South Asia sub region driving an improvement in the average regional score.

In a related report entitled Attacks on the Press in 2010, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) provided a worldwide investigation of the health of the media and journalism practice.

In the report, CPJ surveyed all regions of the world. It gave an account of a number of African countries: "From Cameroon to

Kenya, South Africa to Senegal, government reprisals have resulted in imprisonments, violence. Below is a snapshot of the report's findings:

**Angola:** 2 journalists killed in 2010, one a Togolese sports reporter killed in soccer team ambush.

**Cameroon:** 4 journalists jailed for leaked document. One dies in custody, a second alleges he was tortured.

**Democratic Republic of Congo:** 2 journalists held for weeks by intelligence agents

**Ethiopia:** 7 hours that two newspaper editors were interrogated as President Zenawi gave speech on freedom of choice , threats, and legal harassment."

**Nigeria:** 2 journalists murdered; 7 journalists kidnapped in restive southern region and later freed.

**Rwanda:** Critical newspaper editor assassinated; government frustrates Kinyarwanda language newspaper out of business before presidential polls.

**Somalia:** Two journalists killed in 2010;  
Somali journalists in exile

**South Africa:** ANC pushes proposal to create state media tribunal to monitor, sanction press: 25 years of imprisonment for disclosing classified information, as proposed in the Protection of Information Bill.

**Uganda:** 5 journalists assaulted during clashes between security forces and members of Bugunda kingdom. Electronic surveillance measure enacted; court strikes down sedition law used against critical journalists.

**Zimbabwe:** Press makes incremental gains as five private publication licenses are granted; police, ZANU-PF loyalists harass, assault independent journalists.

## Social Media and Politicians

*Rep. Anthony Weiner, Democrat of New York is the latest victim of the social media's power over politicians' habitual lies and deceit.*

If there is anything politicians in America and indeed the rest of the world should fear, it is the phenomenal influence of social media. The fear of Facebook, Twitter, and SMS messages is the beginning of wisdom should be the new mantra for politicians in the United States. And as the Chief Executive Officer of Google Eric Schmidt presciently warned last year people should be careful about what they dump on the Internet because it may come to hunt them later on in life.

At 45,000 Twitter followers, Rep. Anthony Weiner (D) of New York is ranked first among his fellow congress men and women followed by Rep. Michele Bachmann (R) of Minnesota. More than 70 percent of the current Congress tweets – 156 Democrats, 229 Republicans, and two independents, according to *TweetCongress*.

Congressman Weiner has dominated the

news cycle for the past two weeks as he boxed himself into a web of lies, deceit, and unexpected lasciviousness. Characteristic of politicians, he took the media for a ride and could not provide clear answers about a lewd picture on his Twitter account that showed his waist down of a boxer-clad man. He said he did not send it and has hired an outside firm to help find out how his Twitter account was hacked or spammed.

"I didn't send this photograph," Weiner told reporters who converged on him just off the House floor. "I was tweeting about a hockey game at the time. I deleted it." "Maybe it will turn out that this is the point of Al Qaeda's sword," he quipped about the mysterious origins of the tweet. How ludicrous can one associate this to Al Qaeda, playing on the fixation of Americans on the terrorist network?

When more pictures of the congressman surfaced, it became obvious he could not

sustain the lies and debauchery, Weiner convened a press conference to admit his indiscretion. Like the former South Carolina Governor, Mark Sanford whose email chats with his Argentine lover was exposed; Weiner also shed crocodile tears to give the impression that he was sorry for deceiving the media, friends, and country.



***Representative Anthony Weiner...tears up for Twitter***

Americans should be used to this drama of tears following exposure of salacious behavior of their leaders. It is not known whether the tears are signs of remorse for their actions or that they will miss their indulgence. Either way, the electorate should indeed learn to see these politicians as regular folks who exhibit behaviors

consistent with the social milieu of a polity. On the other hand politicians should stop presenting themselves in sanctimonious ways. If they purge themselves of the holier-than-thou posture, the electorate will stop seeing them as hypocrites.

For members of Congress, many of whom have embraced Twitter in the wake of President Obama's success with social media; it is a potentially sobering lesson.

"After all the enthusiasm from the 2008 election about the new social media, this is the kind of thing that will put a little chill into the atmosphere for members who are using this," says Julian Zelizer, a congressional historian at Princeton University in New Jersey. "It's a reminder that technology can very easily be turned against them."

"If it is a hacker, it will show to legislators how easy it is to put a politician in a media frenzy by tapping into someone's account and sending out a picture, a statement, who knows what else," adds Professor Zelizer. "When there is a

scandal like this, politicians tend to remember it. They will think twice about this.”

The seven-term lawmaker has a reputation for his fiery rhetoric on the floor of the House of Representatives especially during debates about the landmark health care debate.

Weiner follows the path of his colleague, former Rep. Christopher Lee (R) of New York who resigned just hours after a shirtless photograph that he posted on a dating website went public. He later apologized to his wife, family, and constituents for “profound mistakes.” His successor, Rep.-elect Kathy Hochul (D) of New York, was sworn in Wednesday.

***Analysis by CMPI with additional reporting from Christian Science Monitor***

## Diasporic Media

- Michael Schudson,

April 11, 2011 Center for Media and Peace Initiative Conference

I am happy to address this gathering and grateful to Uchenna Ekwo for inviting me to be here today. Media theorist David Morley defines diasporic publics as those “who belong to more than one world, speak more than one language (literally and metaphorically), inhabit more than one identity, have more than one home [and] have learned to negotiate and translate between cultures<sup>1</sup>”. This includes some 50 million Americans who regularly speak a language other than English at home, about one of six Americans. If we relax the requirement of literally speaking another language, we would quickly have to ask who among us is NOT part of a diasporic public? Who does not have to translate between 2 cultures? Who does not connect to some media that aim at a specific identity group that would exclude most Americans – Catholic, Muslim, or Jewish ? LGBT? And many of us, perhaps a majority of Americans, find that the homes we grew up in are not the places we feel comfortable any longer. “For me,” writes

American Prospect editor Ann Friedman, “going home for the holidays every year is a reminder of the limits of rational political discourse. It’s not that I descend into arguments with my family – which is, on the whole, much more conservative than I am – it’s that we’ve long since learned to not even bother....Best for all of us if we just tuck into the mashed potatoes and make friendly small talk <sup>2</sup>.”

Our identities are national, religious, regional, local, sexual, familial. We have occupational identities, generational identities. We feel emotionally attached to schools we once attended or to schools our children attend now. We identify with books or we identify with the Internet. And different media reach us through and in relation to these different identities.

A study of “Noticiero Univision,” the main nightly news program on Univision compared to ABC’s “World News Tonight” puts some numbers on what anyone could easily observe: 45% of each Univision newscast is about Latin America, compared to less than 2% of ABC’s news. On Univision, 48% of the lead stories

1) David Morley, *Home Territories* (London: Routledge, 2000) p. 207.

2) Ann Friedman, “What’s Civility Worth?” *The American Prospect* (March 2011) p. 11.

come from Latin America – essentially none on ABC<sup>3</sup>).

This will not surprise you. But it is interesting, nonetheless, because U.S. immigrants from Latin America rarely grew up in something called “Latin America.” They grew up in Mexico or Argentina or Peru. They grew up in Venezuela or Ecuador or Brazil. They became Latino or Hispanic when they moved here, just as generations earlier people from County Cork or County Galway or County Kilkenny became Irish when they arrived in Boston or Baltimore. Univision, as media scholar America Rodriguez has observed, constructs its audience as “residents of a hemisphere” or what Univision journalists call “el continente Americano.” They are not reporting on a “home” that viewers experienced when they lived in it; ““Home,” too” she writes “is an imagined community<sup>4</sup>.”

This is a very important point. Diasporic media do not offer simply a connection with a homeland to people who are strangers in a strange land. They offer a particular construction of a complex life that rethinks and reimagines an audience

with unsettled identifications.

Let me take another example from the experience of Spanish-speaking immigrants. Regina Marchi has written a fascinating study of what she calls the making of a U.S. holiday, Day of the Dead. Immigrants from many Latin American countries celebrated in their home villages Dia de los Muertos. For them, it was a local affair. Since everyone they knew took part in it, it did not have any ethnic association for them. But in the U.S., it became an emblem of an ethnocultural identity. It was built into a self-conscious Latino holiday by Chicano activists in California in the 1970s. It became a point of pride. But it became also a point of contact and communication across cultures. Its celebration welcomed participation from Anglos as well as Latinos. It became a celebration in which recent immigrants, less fluent in negotiating U.S. life than more settled immigrants, could teach the older immigrants and older generations about contemporary Latin American Day of the Dead practices. It also became an occasion for expressing an ethnic political solidarity and for raising publicly political

3) America Rodriguez, *Making Latino News* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1999)

4) America Rodriguez, *Making Latino News* p. 100. .

issues in a safe, visible, and legitimate ways). We should recognize that holidays, festivities, and rituals are themselves, even today, vital media of communication.

In the early United States, apart from the mainstream English newspapers, the most visible diasporic media were German-language newspapers. Ben Franklin published a German-language newspaper in Pennsylvania. Joseph Pulitzer, a Hungarian immigrant, published a German-language newspaper in St. Louis before he made his way into the mainstream English language press. In the years leading up to the Civil War and in the century that followed it, the African American press was the most widely read and prominent of alternative media. Much weakened and reduced from the civil rights movement on, African American newspapers endure in all cities with a substantial African American population.

A 2005 study found ethnic media reach 51 million U.S. adults, a quarter of the population. In 2010, there were 2500 ethnic media organizations in the New America Media directory. Whether those 2500 organizations contribute anything to public affairs discourse is another matter. Federico

Subervi notes that in central Texas, there are 24 Spanish-language radio stations "and not a single second, not one second, one minute of local news. What political role do they play? Absolutely none." (breaux 2010 p 23).

This is an important point, especially when in this country we so often picture the black press as the model of all ethnic media. One black newspaper, *The Weekly Advocate*, later renamed *The Colored American*, gives you a good sense of the centrality of political advocacy when it wrote in 1837:

The *Advocate* will be like a chain, binding you together as ONE. Its columns will always be the organ of your wishes and feelings, and the proper medium for laying your claims before the Public." Why, the editor asked, does the paper exist? "Because our afflicted population in the free states are scattered in handfuls over nearly 5000 towns, and can only be reached by the Press – a public journal must therefore be sent down, at least weekly, to rouse them up. To call all their energies into action – and where they have been down-trodden, paralyzed and

worn out, to create new energies for them, that such dry bones may live.”<sup>6)</sup>

That was the diasporic media then. The diasporic media now have grown infinitely more complicated. In 2006, a Kenyan lawyer with a Harvard law degree, Ory Okolloh, created Mzalendo.com to be a watchdog on Kenya’s Parliament like OpenCongress.org in the U.S. and TheyWorkForYou.com in the UK. It began slow and against considerable odds, but Okolloh built a following and MPs began to contribute and join in on the site’s debate and discussion forums. Then after disputed national elections in December, 2007 and in the wake of post-election violence around the country, Okolloh’s blog became a vital information center. She posted a message asking for help from people on the ground in documenting death and damage around the country. In the U.S., Erik Hersman and other programmers developed quickly a Google mashup to do just that – leading to the establishment of Ushahidi.com. This is the Swahili word for “witness” or “testimony” and Okolloh wrote: “Kenyans have demonstrated their capacity for selective amnesia time and time again. When this crisis comes to an end, we don’t want what

happened to be swept under the rug in the name of „moving forward” – for us to truly move forward, the truth of what happened needs to be told – Ushahidi is our small way of contributing to that.”<sup>7)</sup>

Ushahidi.com’s website shows a multi-racial, multi-national team, funded by a wide variety of foundations and tech corporations primarily in the U.S. Okolloh is not listed there. According to Wikipedia, she is Google’s policy manager for Africa and lives in South Africa. The online institution that her efforts launched is centered in Kenya but with substantial involvement of Kenyans and other Africans in the U.S. and various U.S. citizens with a strong interest in Kenya, and it has drawn interest in Europe, other parts of Africa, and other parts of the world as well. It is hard to know what is the center and what the diaspora. It is not a medium designed to keep a diaspora informed about a homeland but an interactive medium designed to keep a diaspora communicating with the homeland and actively engaging with its political and cultural life. It serves to inform people in the homeland, too, about their home. It

6) The Colored American, Mar. 4, 1837, cited in Michael Schudson, *The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life* (New York: Free Press, 1998) p. 123.

7) See Micah L. Sifry, *WikiLeaks and the Age of Transparency* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2011) pp. 91-94.

is almost as if Ushahidi is the virtual homeland of the people in Kenya who are, though at home, in some measure part of an informational diaspora.

Hibah Hussain, a Columbia doctoral student, an American born to Bangladeshi immigrants, observes that much academic writing about the transnationalization of identity made possible by satellite television and the Internet, while exciting, does not presage the end of the nation-state or the importance of legal and political definitions of citizenship as long understood. She writes about "state-sponsored initiatives to incorporate diasporas into political life." She cites Bangladesh's recently created a Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (EW&OE), which aims to maintain links with a burgeoning Bangladeshi diaspora. Noting that remittances from Bangladeshi workers account for a third of the foreign exchange reserve of the country, Hussain shows that this Ministry focuses on the potential cultural and economic links between white collar Bangladeshis abroad and national development at home.

Hussain also notes that new media have

created diasporic communities of Bangladeshi that would not have been possible a generation ago. She cites the website [Drishtipat.org](http://Drishtipat.org), a virtual community started in 2001 "as a response to an increasing feeling of helplessness faced by expatriate Bangladeshis at the human rights violations in Bangladesh." Growing from a small group of like-minded activists, the organization's "strong online presence" has allowed it to mobilize diasporas in the USA, UK, Canada and Australia. Hussain writes that "the organization is most popular among younger, second generation South Asians, many of whom have only spent the odd vacation in Bangladesh and consider themselves to be full members of the communities in which they were born and raised." The [Drishtipat](http://Drishtipat.org) website allows for the establishment of an imagined community of like-minded activists, all of whom feel strong ties to a geographical location that they may or may not have spent much time in. The website's organization attests to the transformative nature of online activity; clicking on the "get involved" button leads to the subscription page for the site's newsletter,

while the "act now" button leads to an online donation form to help victims of a damaging cyclone.

The organization's current project, a campaign for child domestic workers, features three key ways to help out. In addition to donations, the site urges members to "contribute through [their] words" and "participate in the discussion – through news articles, talk shows [and] local discussions," noting that "the importance of public awareness and opinion cannot be stressed enough" (Drishtipat.org). Furthermore, the site encourages members to volunteer their time in Bangladesh. "Ultimately," Hussain argues, "by facilitating civic engagement, cultural loyalty, and political mobilization cross boundaries, the imagined co-presence fostered by sites like Drishtipat allow us to understand the messy ways in which deterritorialized citizenship both challenges and reinforces the nation state."<sup>8</sup>)

Diasporic media are important, increasingly important, expanding both their reach and their capacities. This is worth celebrating, but Hussain wisely urges us not to oversell the phenomenon nor to expect from it

more than it can reasonably deliver. The Arab spring we are witnessing in North Africa and the Middle East teaches that the media can be powerful catalysts of social change, but it teaches equally that political and military battles continue to operate within the framework set by nation-states, their accumulated power, their armies and their police forces. We live in a moment of remarkable change in the powers and processes of communication. They draw attention to themselves like magnets. But no one should mistake their real importance for an exclusive importance that overshadows everything else.

8) Hibah Hussain, "Between Publics and Communities," unpublished paper, Columbia University, 2010.

## Public radio

National Public Radio has again played into the hands of its critics thereby arming conservative activists and Republican Congressional leaders who want the demise of public radio. On Tuesday, political activist James O'Keefe's released a videotape of Ron Schiller, a top executive in NPR where he (Schiller) described Tea Party members as "racist." The flak prompted the resignation of NPR's CEO and president, Vivian Schiller, who is not related to Mr. Ron Schiller. Already, the chairman of NPR's board of directors, Dave Edwards, said the board had accepted Vivian Schiller's resignation "with deep regret." In a statement, Edwards said: "I recognize the magnitude of this news — and that it comes on top of what has been a traumatic period for NPR and the larger public radio community,"

## Federal funding

NPR officials have been scrambling to contain the damage caused by this development in the wake of calls to stop federal funding of the public broadcaster O'Keefe, a Republican filmmaker who is well known for his undercover stunts targeting

various organizations helped to undercut ACORN, an organization committed to community organizing. His undercover activities exposed ACORN that resulted in cutting federal funding of the organization. On the videotape, Ron Schiller was seen during a luncheon with men who were posing as members of the fictitious Muslim Action Education Center.



***Eric Cantor...No Federal dollar for public radio***

At one point, he said Tea Partiers were "xenophobic, I mean basically they are; they believe in sort of white, middle-America gun-toting. I mean, it's scary. They're seriously racist, racist people." Ron Schiller also stated that NPR "would be better off in the long run without

federal funding," a comment that is in conflict with the organization's position. After news of the videotape broke Tuesday, NPR issued a statement from Vivian Schiller that said his remark's were "contrary to what NPR stands for and deeply distressing to reporters, editors and others who bring fairness, civility and respect for a wide variety of viewpoints to their work everyday." On Wednesday, speaking by telephone to The New York Times' Media Decoder blog, she said she was sorry to be leaving NPR.

"I think it's an extraordinary organization, and while the organization is on the right track, there's much work to be done. I regret I'm not going to be part of it," she said, praising NPR's journalists as "heroic and uncompromising in their work." She added that when she arrived in January 2009, NPR was "in terrible financial straits," but now it was "in the black and expanding its journalism."

In October, NPR fired Juan Williams after he said on Fox News that he got nervous when he got on a plane with people wearing clothes that identified them as Muslim. At the time, Williams complained he was

ousted because he appeared on Fox and because "I'm not a predictable, black, liberal."

In January, NPR said Senior Vice President for News Ellen Weiss, who fired Williams, resigned, but no reason was given. Vivian Schiller kept her position after the Williams' incident, but the NPR board voted against giving her a bonus because of "concern over her role in (Williams') termination process." Some members of Congress have called for cutting off federal funds for public broadcasting.

Majority Leader Eric Cantor, R-Va., said the video proved that tax dollars should stop going to NPR. "This video clearly highlights the fact that public broadcasting doesn't need taxpayer funding to thrive, and I hope that admission will lead to a bipartisan consensus to end these unnecessary federal subsidies," said Cantor in a statement.

Ron Schiller, who was hired in September 2009, had announced last week that he

would be leaving NPR for a new job. NPR said Tuesday that his departure was "effective immediately".



***Ron Schiller of NPR***

## **Prof. Tapio Varis joins CMPI Board**

The former Rector of the University for Peace in Costa Rica, Professor Tapio Varis has joined the board of the New York based Center for Media and Peace Initiative to advance the cause of conflict resolving media practice around the world.

In a statement, the President at the Center for Media & Peace Initiative, Dr. Uchenna Ekwo expressed the hope that Professor Varis' experience and expertise would be invaluable to the achievement of the center's goals. With the polarization of the media along ideological lines and the world threatened by extremist elements, said Dr. Ekwo, there could not be a better time for the center to have a peace advocate and media expert become a member of its board.



Professor Tapio Varis brings unique expertise in e-learning solutions, media studies, and peace building. He is the Chair of Professional Education, with an emphasis on global learning environments, at the Research Centre for Vocational Education,

University of Tampere, Finland, and the UNESCO Chair in Global E-Learning. He is a Principal Research Associate at UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, and a member of the Governing Board of the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education, the European Commission Media Literacy Expert Group, and the Digital Literacy Expert Group. He is also the acting President of Global University System (GUS) and a Media Scholar at the Universities of Helsinki and Lapland as well as the University of Art and Design in Helsinki. He is media education expert of the Finnish Board of Film Classification, and the Ministry for Education, and a contributor to the Media Literacy Education activities of the Alliance of Civilizations Forums of the UN.

Prof. Varis has held various posts throughout his career, including Rector of the University for Peace (created by the UN) in Costa Rica; Chair of Media Studies in the University of Tampere, Finland; and Director of Tampere Peace Research Institute. He has been visiting professor in many parts of the world, including

Mexico, Venezuela, United States, Spain, and Austria. Prof. Varis has authored approximately 200 scientific articles on topics such as "Global Peace through the Global University System," "The New Media, Cultural Identity and Integration in the New media World" and "Values and Limits of the Global Media in the Age of Cyberspace." He contributes to scholarly publications as well as to print and broadcast media. He holds a Masters and Doctor of Social Science from the University of Tampere, Finland.

## **Out of Africa: Western Media Stereotypes Shape Images**

- By Ezekiel Makunike

As a graduate student just arrived from Zambia to study at Syracuse University in 1968-9, I developed the habit of scanning the local papers for news from my home continent.

It was a pretty futile search. I was increasingly dismayed at the near-total lack of news from any part of Africa being presented to Syracuse readers. I also soon discovered that the little African news that occasionally found the light of day and trickled into the Syracuse Herald and Journal was almost always negative. This inspired me to spend some of my free time embarking on a more serious investigation of news selection.

I requested permission from the news departments of those two daily newspapers to glean through their wastepaper baskets for telex sheets from wire services containing stories transmitted from Africa. I conducted this search for most of an entire week. While indeed not much was offered

by the news services, I was nevertheless surprised to find that much of the little that came in was either "killed" or simply spiked for a more suitable publication date that never came.

When I asked an editor to explain these decisions, he told me that stories on Africa are routinely ignored because of a presumed lack of reader interest. "You see," he said, "America does not know Africa well. It never had a colony on that continent. Thus, unless the story has a strong human interest potential, there is no point using it, since no one will read it."

Of course, the editor was both creating a self-fulfilling prophecy and ignoring an obvious fact. The prophecy was simple: White Americans would never become aware of Africa unless they could learn enough about it to be interested, a process the media has a lot to do with.

### **American Colonialism**

The fact, at once more complicated and highly relevant to contemporary events, was this: American colonialism against

Africans was practiced in the American South in the form of hundreds of years of slavery and second-class citizenship. At the time — the late '60s — millions of descendents of those slaves (over 12 percent of the U.S. population) were beginning to rediscover their African roots. Many of them were (and are still) highly interested in events in Africa. Their history and African background has much to do with current events in the United States.

The 1960s period of my study also coincided with the height of Cold War politics, with the United States then heavily involved in the Vietnam War. Africa was not of the highest concern in the super-power politics of the time. Nevertheless, news from Africa seemed essential to forming a complete picture of important happenings in the world, and this was lacking.

About the same time a lengthy newspaper account of an official visit to Africa by Chou En-Lai, then prime minister of the People's Republic of China appeared in a major paper. The Chinese had promised technical assistance for the construction of a railway line between central Zambia to the Tanzanian seaport of Dar es Salaam, on the

Indian Ocean in Southeast Africa. It read something like this:

"Communist China has promised to build a railway line from the black-ruled and land-locked Republic of Zambia to the port of Dar es Salaam, capital of socialist Tanzania. This is meant to reduce dependency on trade routes with and through their southern neighbors, white-ruled Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and South Africa. The two black-ruled African countries train and harbor terrorists fighting to overthrow these white-ruled governments."

The implication was that Tanzania and Zambia were being taken for a ride because China didn't possess the necessary technology to execute such a feat of engineering. The promise was seen as simply an example of Communist propaganda.

A few years later, after I had returned to Africa and become the director of the

Pan-African Literature Center in Kitwe, Zambia, I was reminded of this conclusion. My journalism students and I attended the inaugural ceremony of the Tanzania-Zambia Railway Line (Tan Zam Railway). We actually were passengers on the initial trip of this "will never-be-built" line, riding safely for over 1,000 kilometers from Kapiri M'poshi near Kabwe in central Zambia to the seaside in Dar es Salaam. With the help of the "technically backward" Communist Chinese, the feat had actually been completed well ahead of schedule!

Influenced first by colonialism and then by Cold War politics, this contemptuous tone has long shaped and fashioned Western media perceptions of Africa. As I learned very quickly in the U.S, for American readers or viewers to be interested, news out of Africa must be negative. It must conform to the traditional stereotypes in its spotlight on grotesque and sensational events. It must show misery, corruption, mismanagement, starvation, primitive surroundings and, as in the case of Somalia, chaos and outright anarchy. In Somalia and elsewhere, news reports show white people feeding black people. You never see Africans helping themselves.

Foreign correspondents in African capitals and their superiors in the media gate-keeping chain seem to have these perceptions ingrained in them. From newsgathering in Africa to publication and broadcast thousands of miles away, stories about Africa are looked at with these negative lenses. Even more unfortunately, reporters and editors with a broader vision run the risk of having their stories disbelieved and unused. Little wonder they learn to toe the expected line.

This dynamic explains why the life of Africa's varied and diverse countries is missing. We hear about famines and coups, but not the rejuvenation of its cities and the cultural vitality of its village life...about oppression and massacres, but not education, economic self-help and political development... about poaching and habitat destruction, but not ongoing active efforts at conservation, reforestation and environmental awareness. Most telling of all, in Somalia and elsewhere, news reports show outside white people helping the black people. They never show black people helping themselves.

As a journalist I understand that "news" is still defined as a usually negative departure from the norm. I also recognize that in the eternal media race for larger circulations and higher ratings, profits and the bottom line dominate concerns about values and ethics.

As in Somalia, the "hit-and-run" mentality of Western media makes it easy to briefly light up trouble spots, while the years of exploitation and deterioration that produced them are left in the dark. The "here today, gone tomorrow" nature of much international reporting, with star newsmen briefly crowding each other at media feeding troughs, then jetting on to the next venue, doesn't help.

By definition such journalists know little of the language and less of the cultures they cover. They certainly never appreciate the subtleties and nuances of local history and interactions that take years to learn. They are neither accustomed or equipped to observe, understand or explain developmental situations that may change slowly over time.

As a Zambian, my observations are necessarily "out of Africa." But these observations of Western media shortcomings could be applied to many parts of the developing world. Admittedly, the negative patterns of coverage I've described were often conditioned by colonialism and Cold War politics. Unfortunately, they reinforced a pattern of ignorance and distortion that has not changed with the changing political systems. In the case of this news blackout at least, it is still very much a dark continent.

*Ezekiel Makunike, a former Director of Information in the government of Zimbabwe, is a journalist and a teacher. At the time of writing, he was a senior staff writer for New World, the mission magazine of the United Methodist Church.*

**Opening Statement by Executive Director,  
Center for Media & Peace Initiative,**

**- Dr. Uchenna Ekwo,**

at the 2011 Diaspora Media Seminar held at  
The Pocantico Center of the Rockefeller  
Brothers Fund, Tarrytown, New York April  
11-14 2011

It is with great pleasure that I welcome participants, guests, and speakers to this important seminar. To have travelled from far and near to this serene and beautiful environment in the Pocantico Hills underscores the value to which all of you accord the search for knowledge, multiculturalism, information sharing, and coexistence of different peoples of the world.

We couldn't have chosen a better venue for intellectual stimulation, sharing of experience, and learning opportunity. As you can see the tranquility of the environment naturally lends itself to deep pedagogical inquiry and professional soul searching.

This seminar is indeed timely. At a time

when the immigrant population in the US continues to increase, it is critical that media outlets that target this growing segment of the population periodically embark on self reflection. The 2010 US Census report has confirmed that the color of America is ever changing, reflecting significant demographic shifts. For example, we now know that the population of Hispanics has The Hispanic population in the United States grew by 43% in the last decade, surpassing 50 million and accounting for about 1 out of 6 Americans (US Census Bureau). Other minority groups are also growing: Indians, Chinese, Koreans, Italians, Iraqis, Bangladesh, Pakistanis, Nigerians, Libyans, Egyptians, Ghanaians, Ivoirians, Russians, and immigrants from all countries of the world. While politicians are calculating the electoral implications of this trend, we should be concerned about its significance in terms of information gathering, packaging, and dissemination. As civil society groups, we should also be interested in mobilizing immigrants to be active participants in governance processes in both the US and their homelands.

In the next three days, participants will focus on how the news media reports diaspora communities in the US; examine how immigrants utilize the media, and explore how Diaspora media can improve global understanding in an era of extremism and intolerance. The 21st century is a period of rapid change in the realm of politics, economy, information dissemination, and indeed technology. The digitization of information has wide ranging implications for media practitioners and civil society as they struggle to mobilize for positive change in an era of globalization and rapid technological advancement.

I am confident that editors, reporters, publishers, diplomats, journalism educators, civil society activists, and students in this conference room will discuss the responsibilities and challenges of diaspora media in the digital age and evolve effective media and communication strategies unique for the knowledge age.

We hope to make this seminar an annual event to provide a platform for different media organizations, news professionals, civil society, and other professionals to share ideas on changes that continue to

define the industry. It is also our hope that we would be able to invite more participants next year.

Apart from the intellectual engagement, we have also planned this seminar in such a way that we mix learning with fun, networking, and tours of the Pocantico Center. As indicated in the program, participants will have the opportunity to tour the home of the famous Rockefeller family as far back as the fourth generation. We also have opportunities for relaxation at the end of each day. If you have questions please don't hesitate to communicate with our staff for answers.

I want to assure you that CMPI will continue to design, produce, and manage innovative programs of high quality seminars and conferences which promote the sharing of knowledge and information, create opportunities for learning, and contribute to the development of people and organizations at all levels. In this connection, let me invite all you to join us on Tuesday May 3 to celebrate the World Communication Day in our office in Manhattan. It will

feature an interactive session among professionals as they try to answer the question: Is the media a threat to democracy?

On that note ladies and gentlemen, I want to express our gratitude to the Rockefeller Brothers Fund for their support in making this day a reality. Let me also thank all of you again for coming to the seminar. I wish you a successful and fruitful stay at the Pocantico Center.

**Uchenna Ekwo, Ph.D.**

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## **NTDTV: The future of media freedom in China**

The occasion, in a clear Thursday evening on fourth of August, was a party to celebrate its ten-year anniversary in the New Tang Dynasty Television, NTDTV. The Tang (唐) Dynasty (618–907 AD) was one of the strongest empires of all Chinese dynasties. Like the name suggests, NTDTV has succeeded in their honorable ancestors' great spirit, and it seeks to be the world's most trusted authority in news about China.



***Dr Uchenna Ekwo of CMPI and Dr. Samuel Zhou, President of NTDTV***

New Tang Dynasty Television is a success story of the potentials of nonprofit journalism that dot the media landscape in recent times. The television station prides itself as the future of Chinese history, breaking barriers such as the infamous Great Firewall of China and arbitrariness of

the Communist regime in Beijing. From a humble beginning in 2001, NTDTV occupied one floor in its midtown Manhattan office but today occupies two floors with the state-of-the-art equipment providing authentic and unadulterated news from China and to China people in diaspora.



***Dr. Samuel Zhou, the president of NTDTV delivers speech***

After having a great chance to try Chinese food, Mr. Kean Wong, Producer/Host Multi-language programming welcomed guests to the cocktail to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the organization. Although NTD is not welcomed by Chinese government because of its sensitive reports related to China, which are not censored, millions of the Chinese people inside Mainland have tried to access its webpage. "NTDTV dispatches a lot of reporters to over

seventy countries around the world, provides a variety of programs with many different languages”, said Dr. Samuel Zhou, the president of the NTDTV in his speech.



***Mr. Kean Wong (R), producer, conducting a studio tour for guests.***

During a short studio tour by Mr. Kean Wong, he explained that NTDTV was basically a non-profit station, so it relied on donations, and sponsorships for 98% of its operations. He said NTDTV is located in 46

different locations in the US, and more than one hundred people are working in the New York headquarters. A number of guests apparently amazed at the phenomenal growth of NTDTV wanted to know the secret behind the success of the station. In the words NTDTV spokesman, Kean Wong, the station is supported by the masses that are hungry for truthful information about issues and events that affect their lives regardless of frontiers. Chinese citizens trapped in the communist country devise effective means of contributing to the station’s content. They provide information through the Internet and many of them access the station also through the Internet and other devices. Indeed, “the Internet has changed everything; we would not be here if not for the Internet”, Wong emphasized.



**A Cross section of guests at the cocktail**



**Im, Jongwon of CMPI and Kean Wong**

The effort by the Communist regime to censor the media and dish propaganda to its citizens and the international community is rendered useless by the Internet. New Tang Dynasty Television is therefore an important force in shaping international opinion on a wide range of issues including human rights violations in China and exploitation of Africa's resources by China.



***Gloria Zhang, Director of Development, NTDTV***

Already, two members of staff of NTDTV – Gloria Zhang and Danielle Zhu along with other Diaspora journalists in the United States formed the Diaspora Media Forum (DMF) to champion good governance and media activism around the world. Diaspora Media Forum, a project of Center for Media & Peace Initiative, New York supports the legitimate aspirations of media organizations such as New Tang Dynasty

Television that stand with the people and show demonstrable commitment to accountability journalism.



***Danielle Zhu and Dr. Ekwo***

For **Im, Jongwon** who joined CMPI last week, the event was both historic and euphoric. His advise: stay tuned to NTDTV always.

*Im, Jongwon filed this report.*

## News reports from Abuja

News reports from Abuja, Nigeria say the House of Representatives has passed the controversial Freedom of Information (FoI) Bill considered in many circles as the oldest bill in the country's young democracy.

The FoI Bill will now be forwarded to the Senate for consideration and subsequently, both chambers will harmonize the differences in the two versions, if any.

Unlike in the past attempts, there was no opposition to the passage of the bill, an indication that the leadership of the House may have been engaged in intensive lobby to get the bill out of the legislative mill, 12 years after its introduction.

The House had earlier suspended Order 7 Rule 22 of the House Rules to allow Speaker Dimeji Bankole preside over the Committee of the Whole, a responsibility that resides constitutionally with his deputy.

The bill seeks to make public records and information more freely available, provide for public access to public records and

information.

It also seeks to protect public records and information to the extent consistent with the public interest and the protection of personal privacy, protect serving public officers from adverse consequences for disclosing certain kinds of official information without authorization and establish procedures for the achievement of those purposes.

Of the 34 clauses in the bill, 33 were passed and only Clause 18 that has to do with the right of refusal by the head of government or public institution to disclose information was deleted.

One of the major proponents of the bill and Chairman House Committee on Diaspora, Hon. Abike Dabiri-Erewa, applauded the passage of the bill.

She described it as the culmination of synergy between the members of the House as well as civil society groups and expressed the hope that the Senate would also pass the bill expeditiously.

Minority Leader of the House, Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila also lauded the passage of the bill. Gbajabiamila said the passage at this time was an indication that the House of Representatives was sensitive and responsive to the yearnings and aspirations of the people.

According to him, the passage of the FoI Bill was long over due considering its importance.

Chairman, House Committee on Media and Public Affairs, Hon. Esemey Eyiboh, on his part, said the passage of the bill by the House would bring more responsibility and accountability into governance, adding that a new regime of responsibility and accountability has been ushered into Nigeria.

Freedom of Information legislation is expected to bring about an era of transparency and incorruptibility in Nigeria's socio political life that is often marred by graft and secrecy.

***New York Times names first female Executive Editor***

Jill Abramson, a former investigative reporter who rose to prominence as a Washington correspondent and editor, will become the next executive editor of The New York Times, succeeding Bill Keller, who is stepping down to become a full-time writer for the paper.

Jill Abramson, a managing editor, will succeed Bill Keller, center, who will become a full-time writer. Dean Baquet, right, will become the managing editor for news.



***Jill Abramson, New York Times new Executive Editor***

Arthur Sulzberger Jr., the paper's publisher and the chairman of The New York Times Company, thanked Mr. Keller, calling him a

"truly valued partner" in a speech Thursday morning in the Times newsroom, where the staff stood shoulder to shoulder to hear the publisher announce the first changeover in the top editing jobs in eight years.

Turning toward Ms. Abramson, who will become the first woman to be editor of the paper in its 160-year history, Mr. Sulzberger said, "Jill, Bill's decision to step down may be bittersweet. But the thought of you as our next executive editor gives me and gives all of us great comfort and great confidence."

The appointments are effective Sept. 6. John M. Geddes, 59, will continue in his role as managing editor for news operations.

Over the course of Mr. Keller's tenure, the paper won 18 Pulitzer Prizes and expanded its online audience to some 50 million readers worldwide. But the economic downturn and the drift of readers and advertisers to the Web also forced the paper to lay off members of the news staff and tighten budgets considerably.

"A couple of years ago, everybody was wringing their hands about doomsday for the news business," Mr. Keller said to the staff, his voice emotional at times. "People talked, some of them rather smugly, about even The New York Times not being long for this world. And now you look around, and we are economically sturdy. We are rich in talent. We are growing."

Mr. Keller will continue to write for The Times Magazine and as a columnist for the new Sunday opinion section, which will make its debut this month. Mr. Sulzberger said he accepted Mr. Keller's resignation "with mixed emotions," adding that the decision to leave was entirely Mr. Keller's.

Mr. Keller, 62, is still a few years shy of the paper's mandatory retirement age for senior executives, but he held the top job for roughly the same period of time as Max Frankel and Joseph Lelyveld, two of the editors who preceded him. Mr. Frankel and Mr. Lelyveld returned to the newsroom for the announcement.

Mr. Keller had asked Ms. Abramson to be his managing editor in 2003 as he

assembled a team that he hoped would restore confidence in the paper after the Jayson Blair plagiarism scandal. Ms. Abramson had been part of a group of editors who clashed with Howell Raines, the executive editor who was forced out after Mr. Blair's fraud was discovered.

Ms. Abramson, 57, said being named executive editor was "the honor of my life" and like "ascending to Valhalla" for someone who read The Times as a young girl growing up in New York. "We are held together by our passion for our work, our friendship and our deep belief in the mission and indispensability of The Times," she said. "I look forward to working with all of you to seize our future. In this thrilling and challenging transition, we will cross to safety together."

The selection of Ms. Abramson is something of a departure for The Times, an institution that has historically chosen executive editors who ascended the ranks through postings in overseas bureaus and managing desks like Foreign or Metro.

Ms. Abramson came to The Times in 1997 from The Wall Street Journal, where she was a deputy bureau chief and an investigative reporter for nine years. She rose quickly at The Times, becoming Washington editor in 1999 and then bureau chief in 2000. She stepped aside temporarily from her day-to-day duties as managing editor last year to help run The Times's online operations, a move she asked to make so she could develop fuller, firsthand experience with the integration of the digital and print staffs

©New York Times

## **Murdoch Empire sinking beneath the sands**

Murdoch Empire sinking beneath the sands  
"Look on my works, ye mighty; and despair!" So said the base of the statue of Ozymandias of Egypt - Ramesses the Great, Pharaoh of the 19th Dynasty of Ancient Egypt - discovered deep under the desert sands in Shelley's epic poem Ozymandias.

The poet's point being of course that though undoubtedly great, in his day, ultimately Ozymandias and his empire went the way of all flesh, and all empires. So it seems is going the empire of Rupert Murdoch, once the greatest media conglomerate the world has ever known.

Absolute carnage is currently being caused in British public life by the fall-out from the illegal phone hacking carried out by Murdoch's servants. In a story transfixing the country, there are often developments several times daily including arrests of powerful people and resignations from some of the best known public figures in the land. Like all good scandals follow the money is the maxim. And the question

made famous by Watergate - "What did he know and when did he know it?" is the one on everybody's lips. The "he" in question is, increasingly, the prime minister himself. David Cameron is slowly sinking into the Murdoch quicksands for several reasons. His relations with Murdoch's top-brass, now under investigation, have turned out to be almost comically close. He was a "riding partner" of Rebekah Brooks, Murdoch's British CEO, who was arrested by police on Sunday.

Since becoming prime minister just fifteen months ago, Cameron has had 26 meetings with Murdoch's executives. Cameron's wife was likely the only person to get more meetings with the PM than Murdoch's executives.



***British Prime Minister, David Cameron testifies before parliament and on left, Rupert Murdoch is flanked by wife, Wendi as he appears before parliament.***

Cameron, against the advice of his deputy prime minister, employed former News of the World editor Andy Coulson as his communications director. Coulson, who has been at the centre of the hacking probe, was arrested on July 8, while his deputy was detained last week. This has snowballed, causing the resignation of Britain's top two policemen and several other senior Murdoch executives.

Two months after Coulson was finally pushed out of his official position as communications director, and was under criminal investigation for phone hacking, Cameron invited him to spend the weekend at Chequers, the British prime minister's country home. Such is the turmoil in London that respected commentators - on Monday for example Professor Roy Greenslade, the pre-eminent media pundit - are calling on Cameron's deputy Nick Clegg to table a motion of no confidence in the PM. Last week, that would have been a joke. Today it doesn't seem so funny, or unlikely.

I declare an interest. I was one of the first people to be informed by Scotland Yard - London's Metropolitan Police - that my phone was being hacked by a private

investigator working for Mr Murdoch. They visited me in my office in parliament and told me this, so I began a legal action which is set to come before the courts in December.

It didn't surprise me all that much in the light of my role as a leader of Britain's anti-war movement, a champion of the Palestinian cause for over 35 years, and a defender of Muslims both at home and abroad. Even Mr Murdoch wouldn't dispute the fact that these are causes far from his own heart. This throws up a contradiction now coming more clearly into focus.

Prince Walid bin Talal bin Abdelaziz Al-Saud, the second biggest shareholder in News Corporation after Murdoch, recently gave an interview, on his yacht, to the BBC flagship programme Newsnight. The Saudi prince declared himself "a good friend" of Rupert Murdoch and his son James Murdoch (probably the next executive to be charged by the police in the scandal). He defended both men briskly, but in doing so drew attention to the fact that he is the second biggest shareholder in the

Murdoch empire, and that the Murdochs were major shareholders in his own Rotana media empire in the Middle East.

An unholy alliance, surely? Mr Murdoch is the co-owner, with Prince Walid, of Fox News - one of the most virulently anti-Muslim television stations in the world. The station gives a megaphone to the likes of Glenn Beck, Bill O'Reilly and Sarah Palin. In the US, Fox's role was to throw gallons of petrol on the flames Islamophobia which were leading to the burning of the Holy Quran by vigilantes.

Then there is the so-called "Ground Zero Mosque" controversy. The planned building was, of course, not at Ground Zero. It was not a mosque but an Islamic centre. The centre was partially funded by Prince Walid, the co-owner with Murdoch of Islamophobic media fire-raisers including Fox News and the New York Post.

Prince Walid it will be recalled was roundly insulted by the government of New York City when they returned the cheque he donated to the victims of the 9/11 attacks. A glutton for punishment no doubt.

Murdoch's newspapers in Britain are little better than their US-counterparts and include photographs and sexualised images which would never see the light of day in Riyadh, the Saudi capital. As a whole it is safe to say that Murdoch's nearly 200 newspapers - and his television stations in so far as he can compel the latter which are more tightly regulated - are bastions of fanatically pro-Israel, anti-Muslim bigotry.



***Rebekah Brooks..top Executive at News Intl.***

Yet they are co-owned by a member of the Saudi Royal family who not only approves of these practices, but regards the mogul Murdoch as his "good friend".

Murdoch's plans to take 100 per cent ownership of British Sky Broadcasting now lie in ruins like Ozymandias's broken statue. Aged 80, he may, at the pace we are moving, be ousted by his own shareholders before long.

His dream of a Sky Arabia, however, remains a clear and present danger. Like the tobacco manufacturers, the more they are run out of towns in the west the more they concentrate on selling their addictive poison in the east. NewsCorp, with Prince Walid, may be sailing your way. Beware of pirates ye Arabs.

*George Galloway is a British politician, author, journalist and broadcaster who was a Member of Parliament in the UK from 1987 to 2010.*

*The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect CMPI's editorial policy.*

## **Media objectivity in North Africa's conflicts?**

*Tendai Manzvanzike reflects on the media portrayal of events in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya.*

SINCE the Tunisian uprisings last December, followed by those in Egypt, which saw the removal from power of their respective leaders, the story has refused to die as it takes various dimensions on a daily basis - mutating in some cases at the speed of the deadly human immuno-deficiency virus. Many schools of thought have been advanced on the reasons/motives behind the uprisings; those behind the unrests; the future and what this means in the geo-political sphere. Varying viewpoints indeed!

In the current Libyan crisis, objectivity has been very difficult especially after civilians continue to get seriously caught up in the fight between Libyan security forces and rebels in what now looks like a civil war. To most of us these events are either a refresher course of African and Middle East history, vis-à-vis the imperial agenda or we are actually getting our beginners' course in international relations. For this writer, it has been another wake-up call to look at every

nook, crane and crevice in each story, especially in this electronic age where everyone is now a "reporter" and where images are being blatantly abused to advance certain interest groups' agendas.

It is also a wake-up call on the peoples of Africa and their leadership, especially the leadership that panders to the whims and caprices of the West at the people's expense. It is also a wake-up call where ordinary people are realizing that they are being used since most of what goes on in the geo-political sphere is done in the name of "the people", not necessarily by the people themselves. It is also important to interrogate the North African unrests, Libya in particular since Western media has claimed that the Government of Zimbabwe sent some troops to fight as mercenaries on Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's side. The same Western media is also alleging that Zimbabwe sent arms of war to Ivory Coast for use by Laurent Gbagbo.

### **Correspondent's remarks**

Two days ago, I spoke with someone who was in North Africa recently and he gave me his point of view after reading

Commandant Fidel Castro's reflections on the Libyan crisis. "Correspondent", as he preferred to be called, who is also a Zimbabwean resident, wrote me a long e-mail, which I believed would add to the many voices on the events in Libya and other Arab states and the Middle East. This does not in any way end the thread. Wrote "Correspondent":

I was in Cairo when the Egyptian revolution broke out. Tunisia was the spark and now Egypt burns. Where next? We asked. There was much talk - and still is - about the domino effect in relation to the Arab World. However, everyone, including and especially the Western media, seems to have forgotten that Tunisia and Egypt - and now Libya - are, in addition to being Arab countries, African countries too, members of the African Union. It should be noted that "Arab" in relation to the so-called Arab World is not a racial category. The North of Sudan, for instance, is said to be "Arab". But as Hassan al-Turabi, leader of the opposition Popular Congress Party, put it in an interview published in the Egyptian English weekly, Al-Ahram (26 January): "Most Sudanese are Arabs by culture, not ethnicity".

Gaddafi is himself a Berber. It is not even religion, Islam, that defines them as there are many other countries in Africa where Islam is the majority religion, including Ethiopia. But the fact that these countries are not only "Arab" but African should by now be clear since a few days ago the African Union Security Council asserted its right to speak up on the situation in Libya. It unequivocally adopted a "Hands off Africa" stance and affirmed that Gaddafi, whatever his failings, is within his rights to suppress an armed revolt against his government. Should be clear - but is it?

The media make much of NATO and the Arab League's request to the United Nations Security Council to impose a no-fly zone over Libya but it would appear that they either turn their deaf ear to any voice from Africa that does not trumpet their views or they believe that Africa's institutions are too insignificant and negligible to pay any attention to. Taking a position on Libya, unlike in Egypt, has been difficult for many people. The situation there was simply being portrayed, unquestioningly, as a repeat of the Tunisia/Egypt scenario - the people,

starved of democracy, rising up against a repressive tyrant. No-one seemed to question this or the fact that Gaddafi was indeed a tyrant. Everywhere, even in Africa, people were saying Gaddafi must go.

However, gradually another story began to emerge. The South African daily, The Star, published - for once undistorted - comments by the South African Ambassador on his return from Libya. They confirmed various suspicions. It became clear that the situation in Libya was not what it seemed or as it was being reported. One began to ask questions. What makes Iraq, Sudan and Libya so alike? What makes Tunisia, Egypt and Libya so unlike? The answer to the first question is "oil". The answer to the second is that Libya is not a client of the West.

It has pursued an independent political and economic line. It is also a rich country with the highest average income in Africa. Perhaps the first lesson one has to learn over and over again is never to trust the images fabricated and then legitimated through saturation propaganda by the Western media. All the time they were reporting on the turmoil in Egypt, they were

careful not to vilify Mubarak but they do vilify Gaddafi. Why? That is significant. Another fact that is not being clearly stated and analysed is the class character of these revolutions. By, 'the people' should one not understand the 'povo', the majority?

They are the ones who stand to suffer most from suppression and exploitation and benefit most from progressive change. When the streets fill with people, they are not necessarily expressing the desires and needs of "the people" in that sense. There are many instances of middle-class street protests with middle class agendas - from those in Chile when the middle class came out in opposition to the socialist policies of Allende, to similar manifestations in Chavez's Venezuela and now in Egypt and Tunisia.

The class character of the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt was clear - largely middle class Facebookers, students and intellectuals. It was largely a frustrated middle class that organized the protests and filled Tahrir Square in Cairo. To a larger extent, the poor either did nothing or simply took advantage of the situation

to loot. This is not to say that the middle class cannot spearhead liberal and democratic reforms. It is simply to warn that not every street demonstration is an expression of "the people's will" or espouses a progressive and truly democratic agenda. With all this in mind and given recent history and the geopolitics that now prevail, perhaps the following scenario might suggest itself as a way of interpreting the Libyan tragedy - for tragedy it is - no less than those of Afghanistan and Iraq. The West has always regarded Gaddafi as a thorn in its side. The West has always wanted unfettered access to Libya's oil. With Gaddafi gone, might that not be a lot easier, especially if they support those who kicked him out?

Tunisia - right next door to Libya - had a Twitter revolution, followed by Egypt. The domino theory applies. Any Arab country - regardless of differences between them - is now up for grabs. The West says - what an opportunity! Let's help some people to get rid of Gaddafi in the name of democracy - for, as we all know by now, for the West "democracy" in the old Third World is just another name for "laissez faire" or

unfettered exploitation of its wealth and resources. Nothing seems to have changed since the European powers made war on China a century and a half ago to force her to permit the importation of drugs (opium) on a massive scale - all in the name of that lofty but hypocritical ideal, "free trade".

Unfortunately, for this scenario, Gaddafi, not being their client in the first place and aware of their machinations, turns out not to be the pushover the West hoped for and expected. He did not just give up and run away but determined to resist and he showed that he has the support and the power to resist. The result? The Civil War that rages in Libya right now and the vociferous support in the West for "The People". This is just a possible scenario. Who knows the real motivation in Libya for opposing or supporting Gaddafi? The truth will one day emerge. It always does. Then people will say, "I thought so". But, by then it is too late. By then, they have had their way and got what they wanted. They are not even discredited. For how can the vanquished discredit the victors?

## **Conclusion**

We see, read, write and talk daily about these issues, but do we understand them? We tweet, facebook, and blog day and night, but do we have solutions? Are we in agreement with the African Union Security Council's position on non-interference in internal affairs of sovereign states? Despite the excessive force, is the Libyan leader correct to use force to quell the unrests?

*Tendai Manzvanzvike wrote from Zimbabwe*

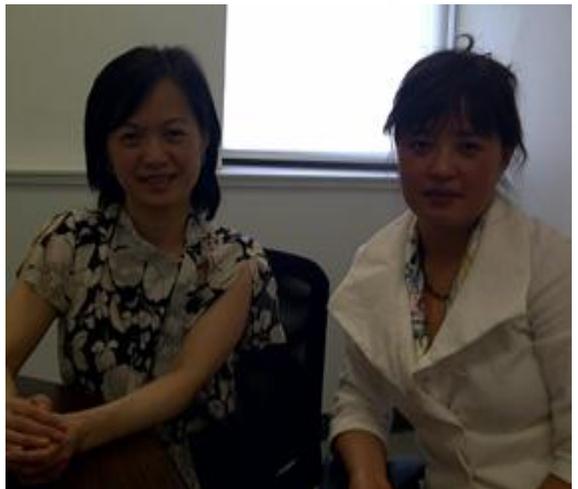
## Media Freedom: A conversation with Chinese journalists in Diaspora

Reporting China to America and America to China is the self-assumed role of New Tang Dynasty Television, a nonprofit 501 (c) (3) television broadcaster with headquarters in New York. The station brings high quality and uncensored programs to the Chinese-speaking population worldwide. Beyond the daunting task of providing news and information to Chinese in diaspora, NTDTV is emblematic of the desire of some Chinese media professionals in diaspora who are working to bridge American and Chinese cultures and exposing the secretive China society to openness, freedom, and genuine democracy while the American society learns from the network the authentic Chinese culture dating back to more than five hundred years.

Danielle Zhu, award-winning NTD reporter (Awarded the Distinction in Journalism/Freedom of Expression award by the National Ethnic Press and Media Council of Canada) who participated in the CMPI— sponsored 2011 Diaspora Media Seminar alongside her colleague Gloria Zhang shared some perspectives with

President of the Center for Media & Peace Initiative, Dr. Uchenna Ekwo during a visit to New Tang Dynasty Television premises in New York.

NTD satellite signals cover North America, Europe, and Asia reaching over 100 million potential Chinese-speaking viewers. Its programs are available to cable and over-the-air viewers in major metropolitan areas across North America such as New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Philadelphia, Washington Dc, Houston, Toronto, and Vancouver. In addition to covering all of Taiwan through satellite and cable, NTD is also carried by cable networks in some countries in Europe such as Hungary and Germany.



*Danielle Zhu (L) and Gloria Zhang (R)*

The television station faces unbelievable challenges mostly brought about by the growing influence of China in the political economy of the world. The location of the television outfit in the United States thousands of miles from China does not inoculate it from the wrenching attack of the Chinese authorities.

Danielle Zhu who won an award for her irrepressible critique of the Chinese government's record on human rights and denial of free speech is banned from entering China or any of its territories. NTD's challenges go beyond restricting its staff from reporting from China, it is also suffering from the long arm of the authorities in Beijing that stretches Westwards to manipulate and dictate to businesses in the United States to blacklist the television channel.

Only viewers in select cities and locations are able to watch the channel's Chinese and English services not because of the organization's incompetence but because of the giant shadow of the Chinese communist regime that dogs its every step. For example, some service providers in the United States are reluctant to distribute the

channel to their subscribers because some of them have business ties in China and would not want any retaliatory consequences for supporting a television network that refuses to be censored by the government in Beijing. In New York City Cablevision subscribers cannot subscribe to NTD unlike Time Warner subscribers because Cablevision allegedly has business interests in China.

The ordeal of NTD in terms of audience reach is similar to that of Al Jazeera English that has been experiencing difficulties in positioning itself within the United States because of the stigmatizing Arab label associated with violence and bigotry. Whereas 9/11 and its aftermath poses a significant challenge to the acceptance of Al Jazeera within the US society; communism, cronyism, capitalism, and political and economic opportunism hamper the growth and reach of NTD in both China and United States.

NTD's dilemma is intriguing. As a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization the television channel relies on the philanthropy of individuals and organizations. It can also adopt the Public Broadcasting System

(PBS) style of depending on donations from viewers who like the station. The prospect of survival through public charity is bleak for a number of reasons.

Subscribers in China hide their satellite dish and cover them with umbrellas or used cloths so that agents of the regime will not see it. In the event of the regime operatives discovering that you subscribe and watch the channel, the household is subject to severe punishment in addition to destroying the equipment. In these circumstances, some viewers who muster enough courage to support the channel do so anonymously just like some Chinese in diaspora who identify with the station. Gloria Zhang, NTD's Regional Director of Development admitted that the station's Chinese audience in the US makes anonymous donations to support the station. According to her this is a preferred option to avoid the wrath of the regime in Beijing.

Reputable business organizations and their leaders in United States are believed to shun NTD's request for support because they fear the reaction of Chinese government which could arbitrarily suspend or cancel business dealings with them.

Some of them refuse to advertise in the station or support special projects such as concerts and cultural shows which the organization sponsor frequently to raise funds. This is a clear case of conflict of values. America is all about freedom of expression and democracy but China that stands at the opposite end of the spectrum is remotely putting American values in a reverse gear.

Both NTD and Al Jazeera English should be given a favorable support by the United States. With the launch this week of NTD China News in English, the station is capable of providing breaking news and analysis from Mainland China - a perspective that's independent of China's state-run media. In her testimony to a Senate panel, Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton admitted that Al Jazeera English was "getting the real news around the clock instead of a million commercials..."

No doubt, the Arab world and China are of great strategic interest to the United States and the independent media may be the greatest ally in achieving freedom, rule of law, and respect for human rights in these vital regions of the world. New

Tang Dynasty Television and Al Jazeera may well be the gateway.

***Analysis by Dr. Uchenna Ekwo with additional input from Danielle Zhu and Gloria Zhang***

## Media Coverage of 2012 Presidential Election - a test of Convergence journalism

Wednesday's debate among Republican presidential candidates is one of many efforts of the news media to scrutinize politicians who are seeking to occupy the highest political post in the United States. The debate hosted by NBC and Politico at Reagan Presidential Library is perhaps the first joint effort of this magnitude between traditional and new media. POLITICO Editor-in-Chief, John F. Harris and NBC Nightly News anchor Brian Williams's moderation of the debate signaled an important step toward media convergence and political communication.

Like the advent of television and the medium's initial impact in US presidential debates between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon in 1960, the involvement of internet-based medium such as POLITICO should be acknowledged for its novelty and potential to challenge politicians of every ilk. A new platform that integrates old and new media has come to stay. What the new platform means is that it may not just be

may not just be enough for a politician to dress up cutely or appear telegenic while responding to moderators' questions but should also be able to respond to millions of citizen journalists who are surfing the web around the world. Contemporary politicians need to understand the media landscape in order to gain a thorough understanding of how to present their positions on critical issues. POLITICO's participation in the Republican presidential debate raises the bar as well as extends the geographical borders or boundaries of interest. Global citizens in cybercafés in Asia or Africa can participate in the debate to register issues of concern to their continents.



*From top: L-R: Michelle Backmann, Herman Cain, Newt Gingrich, Jon Huntsman, Mitt Romney, , Rick Santorum, Rick Perry, and Ron Paul*

What seems to be emerging is what Dr. Tapio Varis, UNESCO's chair in global

e-learning at the University of Tampere in Finland called a revitalized global public square where global interaction meets global media literacy. In his book, "Media literacy and new Humanism" Professor Varis who is also a board member of Center for Media & Peace Initiative, New York argued that although access to the global public square is limited by digital and cognitive divide the sense of community that comes with it is attractive.

So, visualize a global community fostered by the media as Americans debate the qualities of the individuals who seek the exalted position of US President or renew the mandate of the current occupant of the White House.

*Im, Jongwon Program Officer at CMPI contributed this article.*

## Media as watchdog of oil revenue

### - Alexandra Gillies

In a country endowed with great oil reserves, dependent on revenue from oil, and where political power is concentrated at the top, what should be the role of the media?

Alexandra Gillies, Governance Advisor, of New York based Revenue Watch Institute attempted to answer this question in her presentation entitled "Oil, Transparency and the Media: Illustrations from Nigeria" at a seminar on Power and Pressure: The Media in Africa organized by the School of International and Public Affairs of Columbia University in New York. Gillies explored the Nigerian socio-political environment and noted that the country had a vibrant media and some measure of transparency and open political space.

According to Gillies, the media in Nigeria is diverse and critical of those in power, an indication of its freedom and vibrancy. The Governance Advisor praised **Next** newspaper for upholding cherished journalism ethics such as refusing brown

envelopes and engaging in other corrupt practices. Even with these stellar credentials, the Nigerian media, Gillies pointed out, had other serious deficiencies that plague the sector.

*Reporters Without Borders* recorded over 30 attacks on media freedom in 2011 so far while the 2010 Press Freedom Index ranks Nigeria 145th out of 178 countries.

In what she called Press release journalism, Gillies observed a degree of sloppiness among Nigerian journalists whereby they depend on press releases with little or no effort to challenge the narratives in those releases. The endemic corruption in the sector is exemplified by a culture of Brown envelopes that reflect the financial realities of journalists in the country. Gillies spoke of how a reporter in one of the leading national dailies was given an employment paper which the boss referred to as Meal Ticket. The new employee was expected to utilize the opportunity of being employed by the newspaper to make money from routine reporting and not necessarily from her salary.

Consequently, journalists in Nigeria engage in extorting money from politicians and other influential persons who manipulate them to be biased if necessary. Gillies point indeed supports a claim by a top Nigerian editor in one of the most prestigious Newspaper organizations who said that Nigerian journalists “instead of covering corruption, cover up corruption” (Ekwo, 2010).

Rent-seeking pervades the media. In fact, Presidents, governors, and godfathers can buy-off enemies and co-opt potential sources of accountability. They can determine who among the rent-seekers should receive rewards.

The overall impact of this media culture on citizens and the media industry is phenomenal. Gillies put it simply: “it increases political competition and results in disempowerment of the majority” whose voices are drowned in the process of governance.

## **Media, meteorology, and politics: Analyzing the response and reporting of Hurricane Irene**

In the early days of radio and precisely October 30, 1938, Orson Welles' adaptation of the book *The War of the Worlds* into a radio play sparked a major hysteria among listeners and the entire US population. It had been feared then that unknown elements were about to invade the earth from the planet Mars.

Angry calls to the CBS building reflected citizens' total disapproval of the exaggerated accounts of danger and destruction on the streets of America. In fact, the radio play itself became a textbook example of mass hysteria and demonstration of the power of the media. It provided media scholars the opportunity to test the stimulus-response or bullet effect theory of mass communication. Welles himself was quoted as saying at the time that "If you had read the newspapers the next day, you would have thought I was Judas Iscariot and that my life was over."

More than 70 years later who would have believed that a similar media hoax could

happen again in an era of a gazillion of information sources and platforms. It is in this context that last weekend's media reports of Hurricane Irene could be analyzed.

Meteorologists, news anchors of all television networks, and politicians struggled to capture the attention of residents of America's North East where the Irene was predicted to occur with devastating results.

Consequently, the alarmed public went on a shopping spree purchasing torch lights, batteries, water, milk, food, electric generating sets, and many other things that could sustain them for 72 hours or more. Indeed, speculations were rife that it could be the end of life for many vulnerable citizens who live or work around the coastal and low lying areas. New York City – a city that never sleeps was told to go to bed and sleep early as public transportation systems were shut down. The specter of Hurricane Katrina resurfaced again. No one wanted to be caught unprepared. Not politicians; not the media or meteorologists.

The panic and uncertainty that ensued probably let Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and conservative commentator, George Will to accuse the media of hysteria in reporting the effects of Hurricane Irene. Other journalists such as Ed Schultz host of Ed Show on MSNBC disagreed. Could the media have done more independent research to confirm the strength of the hurricane before creating a sense of panic among the citizenry?

As it turned out, the hurricane was not as devastating as feared. Is it correct to blame the media for raising the profile of a rather benign hurricane or better a tropical storm as Irene was later downgraded?

It is the duty of the media to create awareness and in this case early warning alert to audiences so that they can make informed decisions. The media relied on the information provided by weather experts otherwise called meteorologists. The politicians too also relied on meteorologists to provide accurate information about the weather situation. And not ready to take the heat from the electorate like former President George W. Bush during the deadly Hurricane Katrina, all elected officials

wanted to be seen to be on top of the game. In New York City, Mayor Bloomberg held about three press conferences in one day and provided updates. Even President Obama cut short his vacation in an apparent display of concern for the rest of the country who were about to experience a tsunami of some sort.

When politicians reacted to the impending 'Armageddon' in the name of Hurricane Irene the way they did, it is the duty of the media to report those reactions even if they qualified as knee-jerk reactions. In reporting the comments or advice of elected local and state officials regarding certain precautions to take in emergency situations, the media unwittingly got entangled with the motives of the politicians who may have acted with less altruism.



*Mandatory evacuation orders were issued to hundreds of residents in New York*

The role the media in creating the hype as well as that of the politician who is eager to be seen to be doing a good job of protecting citizens is intertwined. So also is the meteorologist! It is a nexus of possible collusion, omission, or commission. Perhaps, all the meteorologists missed the mark; all journalists failed to investigate or question the experts as they fell over themselves in dramatic scenes on television showing reporters clutching microphones amid fast moving winds. Just like the politicians who played to the gallery and pretended to care for the people, the media organizations also struggled to capture top ratings by providing timely and accurate information to audiences.

Let's consider a different scenario. If Hurricane Irene had occurred as predicted, none of the institutions will be accused of exaggeration. New York City Mayor, Mr. Michael Bloomberg who was criticized for slow response in snow removal in the winter would have received praise for responding to the crisis by communicating with city residents in a timely fashion even if his attempts to communicate in both English and Spanish languages looked awkward. It would have been thumps up for

both the press and politicians.

On the other hand, we cannot ignore the severe consequences of hysteria in mobilizing citizens to take a course of action next time that a hurricane or natural upheaval is predicted. Another day when people are warned to evacuate or take some precautionary measures they are not likely to heed such calls. They will simply say that last time such evacuation order and threat turned out to be a hoax.

While they may not be an easy resolution to the various contradictions inherent in natural emergency management, the hysteria associated with Hurricane Irene and Orson Welles' Invasion from the Mars is indicative of the immense influence of the mass media. Whether the society has one medium or a million media makes no difference in terms of the media's potential to cause panic if its influence is used, abused or both.

***Dr. Uchenna Ekwo, a journalist and public policy analyst contributed this article***

## Libya's future without Gaddafi

With the rebels' advance to Libya's capital, Tripoli, the end of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's 42-year rule of the North African country appears all but certain. It is time for the Libyan people to celebrate the end of a four-decade dictatorship. Once they sober up from the jubilations of their well-deserved victory, however, they will discover this is only the beginning. Gaddafi has undermined, marginalized or obliterated many of the state institutions, including the military, and destroyed the political parties - indeed, political life in the country. There is much to restore and more to build from scratch.

Security, reconstruction and political transition are only a few of the challenges they will face sooner rather than later. More importantly, they will need to manage expectations of those who have given their all for liberty, freedom and prosperity. Having said that, there is no need for alarm. Not yet any way. It's easy, even clichéd, to be pessimistic, even negative, about the post-revolutionary challenge. What is needed is optimism anchored in reality.

And judging from what we have seen over the past five months, there is much to celebrate in terms of building a steering council and creating locally based revolutionary groups from the bottom up that have been well coordinated and largely disciplined. There have been disagreements and suspicion over the past several weeks, and the full story of the assassination of Abdul Fatah Younis is yet to emerge. And yes, there have been certain violations and acts of revenge, but considering the pent-up tensions and violence after decades of dictatorship and its terribly criminal behavior throughout the past few months, these have been the exceptions to the rule.

The revolution has been a pluralistic, all-encompassing coalition of people from all walks of life. They paid attention to local and tribal sensitivities and established an excellent coordination strategy between the local revolutionaries and the national steering committee.

Unlike in Egypt and Tunisia where pillars of the regime, notably the military, remain in power, the Libyan revolution is set to wipe the slate clean and begin anew. Democracy is its only way to success.

The transitional council must remember its role is just that – transitional - and avoid all tactics that prolong its unchecked authority. You mentioned Egypt and Tunisia. What do the Libyan developments mean for the Arab Spring?

Libya is much smaller and relatively less developed than its neighbors Egypt and Tunisia. It also has much on its plate and will be preoccupied with its own internal affairs for years, even decades, to come. That's why one doesn't expect the new leaders in Tripoli to play any major regional role in the near future. However, the revolutionary contagion will only accelerate after the success of the revolution in Libya. The Assad and Saleh regimes should have much more to worry about today than last week as the latest revolutionary domino falls. Under pressure from their people, the Arab regimes are going to have to act. Yemen is next, and Syria, while more complicated, will have to follow suit.

The same is true for the rest of North Africa. As a necessary bridge between Egypt and Tunisia, oil-rich Libya could play an important role in coordinating the three countries' future reconstruction strategies and their relations with the rest of the region and with the West. What about the Western powers - notably France, Britain and the US - where does the 'success' in Libya take them?

First and foremost Western leaders need to wipe that smug look from their faces and make sure not to gloat about doing the Arabs any favors. Certainly the NATO aerial bombardment did help, but this was a revolutionaries' victory par excellence. The battle was won first and foremost in the hearts of the Libyans, just as with the Egyptians and Tunisians before them.

Besides, after decades of complicity with Arab dictators, Western powers have much to make up for: They inserted themselves in the Libyan revolution after

Gaddafi made genocidal threats against his people, but their interference was not necessarily motivated by humanitarian ends, rather more of the same geopolitics that led to befriending Gaddafi, Ben Ali and Mubarak in the first place.

Syria is far more complicated and Britain and France will need to keep out of it militarily. That's not to say that the Libyans should be unappreciative for the extended helping hand. Better to have Western powers on the right side of Arab history for a change. And there is much room for cooperation and coordination in the future, but it should be done on the basis of mutual respect and mutual interest, especially that of the Arabs who are in every need of affirmative action.

Western leaders must also steer away from driving a wedge between those whom they consider moderates and others deemed "Islamists", as Libya will need cooperation among all its citizens.

*Marwan Bishara is Al Jazeera's senior political analyst.*

## Legal and ethical challenges of transnational journalism practice in the digital age

- **Joseph Ndubuisi Onunwa (LLB, BL)**

*All too often, the journalism practice is confronted with legal and ethical challenges. In his paper at the 2011 Diaspora Media Seminar, New York-based attorney, Joseph Onunwa unfolds the various legal and ethical dilemma that face transnational journalism practice in contemporary times.*

If I could shy away from this topic, I would have. Not only because of its controversy but for the fact that I may not be able to do justice to it within the twenty minutes time frame that I have. However, we will try to go through it the best and simplest way we can, we will try to see the role, responsibilities and challenges of news coverage especially with transnational news coverage.

I have tried my best to do away with legal lingo and jargons to see that no one says "what does he mean by that" as Lord Denning said "if you address people and the crowd says what does he mean by that, then you have not communicated"

## TRADITIONAL MEDIA

What is traditional media? I will look at it without any formal definition as the old reliable ways in which we get news and information across and these means include broadly the Broadcast and Print media. The broadcast media is made up of TV and Radio, while the Print media includes Newspapers and Magazine.

## DIGITAL MEDIA

This I will say is the "New school" ways of passing across news and information and it is basically any type of electronic media out there including Internet, Texts and Picture Messaging. Today media can be accessed in many ways, including with hand held devices like mobile phones, laptops, desktops, mp3 players, and more.

## MEDIA RESPONSIBILITY

Simply put the media has a responsibility to report accurate and unbiased news which is "who, what, when, where, how and why"

- 1) Media ought to work for the formation of public opinion.
- 2) Media should throw light on issues.
- 3) Media has to do something for the

solution of issues by presenting the opinion of experts.

- 4) Media ought to work for culture.
- 5) Media should provide guide line to the youth.
- 6) Media should condemn criminal activities.



***Attorney Joseph Onunwa stressing a point at the seminar***

## **TRANSNATIONAL NEWS COVERAGE**

In the past there were only a few transnational news channels such as CNN International, Voice of America and BBC World TV etc, however, over the passage of time, there has been an increase with some others like Al Jazeera English, Press TV (Iran), CCTV9 (China) etc this list is not in any way exhaustive and these are only the traditional news media. The question now is why do we need transnational news

coverage?

The introduction of digital media especially the internet has made news coverage automatically transnational in nature because it breaks all distance barriers with a very wide and open readership. There are two very important reasons for transnational news coverage;

### **To give Nations a voice**

Nations set up transnational news media to give it voice internationally and to make its presence felt in the international community. With such news media it is able to communicate its developmental efforts and also lay to the open its plans for the future while not relegating its sufferings.

### **A means of reaching Diaspora citizens:**

The increase in migration globally and the sentimental attachment that migrants have to their natural homes (Nations) has made it imperative for nations to try to reach such Diaspora citizens to keep them abreast of events. These migrants also eventually set up Diaspora news organizations to still keep themselves in touch with home. In these you will find a

third reason why Diaspora news media are set up, which is to continue agitation;

Some people migrated due to oppression and repression in their countries, especially where you have dictatorship regimes which have made laws to gag their indigenous news media. When this happens such Diaspora citizens try to cover events "truthfully" in their countries and shed light into areas that their government will like to hide from the public eye.

### **Legal Framework for the media Challenges.**

The legal challenges that the media faces is so much anchored on the following principles;

#### **LIBEL AND SLANDER;**

This happens when a person or entity communicates false information that damages the reputation of another person or entity. Slander occurs when the false and defamatory communication is spoken and heard. Libel occurs when the false and defamatory communication is written and seen.

**Sedition** is actions or words intended to lead to or encourage the overthrow of a state. Most nations have laws against sedition, although nations which value free speech have tried to protect their citizens' right to criticize their governments, differentiating, for example, anti-war protests from sedition.

Treason is sometimes confused with sedition, but the two crimes are actually different. Sedition *encourages* overthrow, but the person who commits it does not actively participate in situations designed to lead to overthrow of the government. Holding a revolutionary meeting in your home is sedition; sheltering soldiers of enemy is treason.

#### **Privacy**

Lately and with the introduction of digital media the issues of privacy have become very visible in the immediate challenges that the media faces and these include text messaging, Mass emailing and pop ups on the internet.

The question here is, is it an invasion of privacy when for example a political campaigner sends out mass text or emails to potential voters?



***Francisco Bozzano-Barnes, Director,  
Tenure & Ecology New York***

### **Publication of Classified materials**

Every government and for the good of the nation classifies some (mostly security documents) but you find sometimes that the media lays their hands on such documents and publish it. A case in point is the most recent document leaked by WIKILEAKS. While this is a challenge we put it side by side with Freedom of Information Act, which is always a defense to such publications.

### **Legal Challenges**

Legal challenges for news coverage is always presented in two fronts vis a vis.

### **The journalist**

The media is constantly on its toes especially in this digital media age to keep in line without infringing on the legal rights of the subject of its publication. We will agree that this is not only a heavy burden but a big challenge especially because of the constantly changing and evolution of laws. However, the biggest challenge is in getting a balance between all legalities and still reaching its audience with true and valuable reporting.

### **The Law Enforcement Officers**

The legal challenges of transnational news coverage to law enforcement comes in various fronts

### **International treaties:**

from time to time nations have reciprocal understanding between them which paves the way for persons in breach of another nations laws to be prosecuted or extradited, were such treaties are not available it becomes a nightmare for the jurists to proceed and still enforce any decisions.

### **Conflict of Laws:**

because of the differences in laws most times it is confusing as to what jurisdictional law will be used when a media offence is committed, within the same nation it is a bit easier to create jurisdiction but the greater challenge comes when it is transnational in nature.

### **Balance between Freedom of information and national security;**

There always comes a time when a decision has to be made between public good and national security and there has been.

### **Conclusion**

In this digital age and with digital news coverage, you now wonder if there is still any such thing as transnational news coverage, since any news put on the internet regardless of the location of the news media becomes transnational.

However, this does not in any way diminish the importance of transnational news media especially those published or operated by Diaspora citizens.

We will not finally conclude without saying that, though there is a lot of legal

challenges and social responsibilities tied to transnational news coverage, but TRUTH in reporting conquers it all. So at all times operators and publishers of transnational news media should endeavor to report truthfully and without bias wherein at all times you strive to balance the reporting.

## **On the eve of inauguration, Jonathan signs FoI law in Nigeria**

With the signing into law of the Freedom of Information bill into law on the eve of his inauguration as Nigeria's president, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan has signaled the readiness of the country to follow a path of transparency in public administration in Africa's most populous country.

The bill which was passed about a fortnight ago by the National Assembly was last Friday conveyed to the President for his assent. Deputy Director, Information at the Presidency, O. J. Abuah, in a statement issued in Abuja Tuesday said President Jonathan assented to the Bill at the presidential villa in Abuja on Saturday, May 28, 2011 prior to his inauguration the next day.

The Freedom of Information Act 2011 states inter alia, that "notwithstanding anything contained in any other Act, Law or Regulation, the right of any person to access or request information, whether or not contained in any written form, which is in the custody or possession of any public

official, agency or institution whatsoever described, is hereby established."

What does this mean to Nigerians? A simple illustration to convey the significance of the law is that if a Nigerian wants to know how much Nigeria spends on importing petroleum products and who the contractors are, all you have to do now is to write a letter to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) to request the information.

Within seven days, you are entitled to a response. If not, you can take NNPC to court and get an order to compel the corporation to reveal the information. The FoI Act which contains 34 clauses among others, is to make public records and information more freely available and also to protect public records and information to the extent consistent with the public interest and protection of personal privacy.

President Jonathan's assent to the bill coincided with the demand of Newspaper Proprietors Association, NPAN which requested at the end of its conference in Lagos last week that the President should sign the bill into law before the inauguration.

Nigerian journalist and news manager with Voice of Nigeria, Obiora Ani says that although the civil society activists and journalists believe the bill was seriously adulterated, it is better amended in the future than not having the FoI bill at all. Nigerian Senate spokesman, Senator Ayogu Eze, dedicated the passage of the Freedom of Information legislation to the doggedness and perseverance of reporters covering the National Assembly. Freedom of Information Bill was introduced to Nigeria's National Assembly in 1999 when the country returned to democratic rule after decades of military dictatorships but the bill crawled all the way to former President Olusegun Obasanjo's desk in 2007 to meet a presidential veto. The legislation was re-introduced in 2008 under a new president, the late Musa Yaradua who was replaced by Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, the then Vice President.

With the new Freedom of Information Act in Nigeria, the country now joins five other African countries— Uganda, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Angola—where freedom of information laws exist.

***©Center for Media & Peace Initiative***

## **Jailed Ethiopian journalist rejects offer for freedom**

Sharing a communal cell with 350 other prisoners, Ethiopian journalist Dawit Kebede spent 21 months in a cramped jail, losing his freedom for speaking his mind.

That was his penalty for writing an editorial criticizing the Ethiopian government after the post-election violence that rocked the country in 2005. But while many of his colleagues left the country after they gained their freedom, Kebede decided to stay.

He became the editor of one of Ethiopia's only independent newspapers, with his commitment to his trade earning him an International Press Freedom award from the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ).

"It's my belief that getting outside or preferring exile and living under such repressive situations are the same form, because as far as I go in exercising my professional duty abroad, that doesn't replace the ultimate freedom that I need in my entire life," says Kebede.

## **A brave stance on journalism**

The danger of Ethiopia's economic growth In 2005, Ethiopia held one of the most important elections in its recent history. Despite a clear victory for the opposition party, the country's government, which had been in power for 14 years, claimed victory before the results were announced.

As a result, rioting broke out and hundreds of people were killed as the police and the military opened fire on protesters.



***Dawit Kebede, Editor of Awramba Times newspaper***

Determined to report what happened in the aftermath of the election, Kebede wrote a piece criticizing the government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. "Supporters of the main opposition's party protested, because of the election results, so the government massacred

nearly 200 protesters," says Kebede.



***Ethiopian President, Meles Zenawi  
presiding over a country notorious for  
siege on journalists***

"I asked why people lost their lives while peacefully protesting an election," he adds. "Unfortunately, the government arrested me (and) the senior leaders of the main oppositional party, and I was charged with dozens of charges -- genocide, attempt to subvert the constitutional system, high treason and nearly seven counts."

Kebede, along with other journalists, was sentenced to life in prison by an Ethiopian court but after almost two years he was released by presidential pardon. While other jailed journalists decided to leave the country following their release, for Kebede that was never an option.

"Most of my former cell mates are in exile now, but for me freedom doesn't mean that," he says. "Exile is not an ultimate solution for freedom."

*"I will never hesitate from criticizing for the betterment of this nation, whatever regime can have the power."*

For the fearless journalist, there was no other choice but to stay in Ethiopia and do what he calls his professional duty. Just two days after his release from prison, Kebede asked the Ministry of Information to grant him a publishing license to run his newspaper again, only to find out that he was blacklisted.

He was eventually given permission, and in February 2008 Kebede launched Awramba Times, a weekly Amharic-language newspaper, which is one of Ethiopia's last remaining independent publications. In November 2010, Kebede traveled to New York to receive an International Press Freedom award from the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), an independent organization promoting press freedom worldwide.

"When the CPJ asked me to explain three things people should know about me, the first thing is I cannot live without the profession I have now," Kebede says.

"The second thing is, unless it becomes a matter of a question of life and death, I will never leave Ethiopia."

"The third thing is, I'm not in opposition. If I believe anything for the betterment of this nation I will never hesitate from criticizing for the betterment of this nation, whatever regime can have the power."

However, that stance doesn't come without risk under a regime that has been rated as one of the world's worst when it comes to press freedom. Kebede says the Ethiopian press exists in a climate of fear, claiming that after the 2005 election it hasn't been easy for journalists in Ethiopia to do their work independently.

"For the last three years we are just facing this political climate, not only our newspaper but many journalists in this country are forced to self-censorship if they prefer to work in this profession," Kebede says.

But he is determined to work for his country's hard-won freedoms.

"Newly won freedom cannot be taken away," Kebede says. "If you was given freedom, freedom by itself is a God given right actually, but such God given freedom cannot be denied."

***This story was sourced from CNN***

## Ivory Coast

It is being reported that about nine newspaper organizations have closed shop following what they called unbearable circumstances to operate under the arbitrary control of President Laurent Gbagbo widely believed to be hanging onto power against the verdict of the Ivorian electorate in last year's presidential polls.

The decision to close down was to protest the incessant harassment and intimidation of harassment by supporters of President Laurent Gbagbo. Most of the papers are believed to be independent publications that refuse to tow official lines. The management of the publications said their staff had suffered more than two months of physical threats because of a perception that they support Alassane Ouattara who is widely seen as the winner of last November's presidential election.

The newspapers have been subjected to fines by the National Press Council, a media regulatory body that supports disputed President Laurent Gbagbo, according to press freedom groups.

Newspaper officials said they also faced threats and harassment from Gbagbo officials, including the police.

Consequently, the owners of the nine newspapers - which include leading titles Le Nouveau Reveil, Le Patriote and Nord-Sud - said they were suspending publication "until further notice".

"Our journalists are constantly at risk of death," the newspapers joint spokesman Dembele Al Seni was quoted as saying by news agency reports. Mr. Gbagbo has not publicly commented on the allegations. Separately, the international media rights organization Reporters Without Borders said that its "concern for press freedom in Ivory Coast is mounting by the day".

"We offer our support to the privately-owned newspapers that are being hounded and threatened and have decided to denounce a situation that has become impossible for the press," it said in a statement. The organization also condemned a recent lynching of a journalist employed by a pro-Gbagbo newspaper in Abidjan, where many supporters of Mr Ouattara live.

It also said the main transmission centre of RTI, the state-owned broadcaster controlled by the Gbagbo camp, had been recently attacked by Ouattara supporters in Abidjan. In reality both sides (pro-Gbagbo and pro-Ouattara) have launched attacks on the media.

Over the weekend, a broadcast antennae for the state news agency was targeted by youths loyal to Ouattara. The youth called the news agency a "tool" used by the disputed president "to spread hate and xenophobia," said Patrice Mallet, Ouattara's representative to South Africa.

The attack killed three guards and destroyed equipment, according to a communication minister for Gbagbo's government. State television RTI has partially resumed broadcasting in Abidjan after the attack, said Ouattara Gnonzie, the communications minister.

Press freedom groups have condemned attacks on the media. "Our concern for press freedom in Cote d'Ivoire is mounting by the day," said Reporters Without Borders. "We fear that the repressive measures

adopted by the National Press Council and the media war being waged between Gbagbo and Ouattara will result in the already very polarized media becoming even more radicalized."

## **Internet advances basic principles of freedom**

Just over a year ago, US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, called for a new global commitment to Internet freedom. Based on the universal human rights framework, Internet freedom applies the freedoms of assembly, expression, and association to cyberspace. By preserving these rights in the digital era, we preserve the promise and the possibility of the Internet as a platform for ideas, innovation, connection, and economic growth.

The Internet has become part of ordinary discourse of the 21st century—it is our global town square. The kind of peaceful civic activism we saw in Tahrir Square or that we are now seeing even here in Uganda occurs increasingly on the Internet in parallel and in coordination with rallies on the street. People around the world come together every day on the Internet to connect to one another, sample a universe of news and information and to make their voices heard. And through this discourse, new dimensions of centuries-long debates re-emerge: how best to govern, administer justice, pursue prosperity, and create the

conditions for long-term progress, both within and across borders. The connectivity that the digital age fosters has only added new urgency and greater scale to how we reconcile these age-old issues. The choices governments make today will determine the face of the Internet in the future.

## **Freedom of expression**

Freedom of expression is no longer defined solely by whether citizens can go to their city squares and criticise their government without fear of retribution. Blogs, emails, social networks, and text messages have opened up new forums for exchanging ideas, and thus, created new targets for censorship. Internet freedom without government obstruction is a basic human right. In fact, having the freedom to connect to the Internet is akin to the freedom of assembly, only in cyberspace.

The choices we face are familiar, but the means by which we confront them is not. How do we protect: liberty and security? Transparency and confidentiality? Freedom of expression while fostering tolerance and harmony?

First, too often liberty and security are seen as mutually exclusive, but we must have both to have either, both online and offline. It is no secret that “security” is often invoked as a justification for harsh crackdowns on Internet freedom. Governments that arrest bloggers, pry into the peaceful activities of their citizens, and limit or close off access to information under the guise of maintaining security are fooling no one. Silencing ideas does not make them go away. We must have enough security to enable our freedoms, but not so much as to endanger them.

Second, we must protect both transparency and confidentiality. Transparency is important. We can and should give citizens information about their governments. But confidentiality is also paramount. It protects the ability of governments to carry out their missions and best serve the public interest.

Third, we must seek to protect free expression while at the same time fostering tolerance. Just like a town square, the

Internet is home to every kind of speech: false, offensive, constructive and innovative. There is no question, in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all people have the right to freedom of expression and it must be protected. We believe the best way to do this is to promote more speech, not to limit it. Exposing and challenging offensive speech, rather than suppressing it, allows for public scrutiny and response. For the United States, the choice is clear. We place ourselves on the side of openness. As we move forward and the universal town square of the Internet continues to flourish, we are confident that we can protect and advance the principles of liberty and security; transparency and confidentiality; and free speech and tolerance. Together they comprise the foundation of a free and open global community.

***Mr Jerry Lanier is the US ambassador to Uganda***

## In search of 21st Century Media Theory

As you may have known, every century since the invention of the Gutenberg's printing press has evolved a media theory in response to prevailing communication culture and media behavior at different times in human history. The famous four theories of the press - Authoritarian theory of the 17th century, Libertarian theory of the 18th/19th century, Communist theory of the 19th century and the Social Responsibility theory of the 20th century. The Social Responsibility theory emerged in part through the efforts of Henry Luce when he sponsored the Hutchins Report in 1947. Today, the landscape of the media has changed irreversibly for both the practitioners and entire global citizens. Our center is therefore exploring the ideal theory for the 21st century. We have floated ideas such as Open Society theory of the media in which citizens are empowered in unimaginable ways. Today, citizens can take down governments through the use of the media. Is humanity in the threshold to end secrecy? What is the appropriate description of the 21st century media sociology?

In their influential text —Four Theories of the Press, Siebert et al (1956) outlined a number of "theories of press" since the 17th century.

1. Authoritarian theory of the press: The function of the press is to support the policies and actions of the state, and its authorities. The press should foster social solidarity and national unity. The state has the right to control the press for the overall public good. In many cases, controlling the press means preventing the press from embarrassing the existing government, to repress criticism and protest, and to severely restrict press freedom. The authoritarian view was prevalent in 17th century Europe where publishing came under the prerogative and censorship powers of the monarch and church. The philosophical basis of this theory was that man was incapable of thinking and that leaders had absolute knowledge of what is good for the rest of the society. During this era, news is the views of kings and monarchs. News teaches, preaches, and prescribes for the rest of society. The authoritarian theory is embraced today by many leaders of non-democratic states and countries in democratic transitions.

2. Libertarian (or liberal) theory of the press: The function of the press is to protect the people's liberties and rights, and to inform the public so they can participate as citizens in democratic self-government. The liberal theory prefers a privately owned news media that is maximally free to inform citizens and criticize public policy, as well as act as a watchdog on authorities. The right to publish and express oneself freely is not a prerogative of the state or a government. It is a fundamental right of free individuals. The liberal theory argues that a free marketplace of ideas, while it may cause harm over the short term, is the best safeguard in the long run for a free and liberal society.

3. The social responsibility theory: The social responsibility theory: Four Theories describes social responsibility theory as a 20th century development and critique of libertarian theory. It attempts to balance the liberal stress on the freedom of the press. It argues that such freedoms of a powerful news media must be balanced by social responsibilities. Journalists have a duty to provide well-contextualized news in a

comprehensive manner. They have a duty to provide a diverse forum of views and values. They have a duty to go beyond entertaining news consumers and to provide a core of in-depth analysis on the most serious issues. This era marked the quest for freedom with responsibility. It was meant to correct the excesses of the heavily commercialized media of the libertarian period where the media became excessively free to the point that society's well being was threatened.

4. The Communist media theory has all the characteristics of the Authoritarian era. It was basically a theory that captured the Soviet communist control of the media essentially by the party apparatus. The party defined what was good for the rest of the society with the communist bloc. The fall of communism in the later part of the 20th century may have has some kind of impact on the effectiveness of media control in that part of the world.

At a time the news media is polarized along ideological lines, the media has unwittingly become the problem instead of the solution. Context and meaning are

ignored for the lure of grabbing headlines and easy sound bites. The media is exacerbating tension in the polity and other parts of the world. Some media professionals and stakeholders in the media industry are taking advantage of vulnerable citizens, brainwashing them and perpetrating ignorance and knowledge gap. There is little media literacy, and many are unaware of the agenda of many media organizations in terms of what they report and not report. All these contradictions reflect an industry conflicted with itself.

In fact, more than half of Americans think media bias is a bigger problem in politics today than the money that flows into campaigns, according to a recent Rasmussen Reports survey. The implications for this trend towards effective public service, policy formulation, and general governance are ominous.

The major question of journalism ethics today is what type of ethics should develop in the 21st century. Will interpretive journalism, in the form of blogging or citizen-to-citizen communication, overwhelm the professional ethics of objectivity and verification developed by

more traditional forms of journalism?  
What is the most appropriate theory for the media in the 21st century?

## **“I am an innocent journalist”**

How on earth could a journalist be involved in crimes against humanity to the degree of being summoned at the International Criminal Court at The Hague? This must be the question on the lips of curious observers of the trial of Joshua Sang, a Kenyan radio journalist and current head of operations at Kass FM Nairobi along with Finance minister Uhuru Kenyatta , suspended higher education minister William Samoei Ruto , head of public service Francis Muthaura, suspended Industrialization minister Henry Kosgey and post master general Hussein Ali.

The accused individuals are alleged to have played leading roles in the post election violence that consumed lives of people and property in 2007 following the disputed presidential election.

Expectedly, allegations of supporting or orchestrating violence are often the handiwork of desperate politicians but as the events in Kenyan has shown journalists are not immune to charges of inciting their audience into perpetrating violence and mayhem.

The ICC alleged that Sang used his radio show in the planning and execution of crimes through coded information to the members of his audience on when and where to commit attacks. When the pre-trial stage of ICC took place Thursday, April 7, 2011 Radio Journalist Joshua Sang was quick to declare that “I am innocent journalist.” Whether he is innocent or guilty of the charges before the ICC is a matter that will be determined in the coming weeks and months.

## **Media Fundraising for Sang**

Sang was able to appear before the court following a successful fundraising campaign that raised over \$60,000.00. The campaign became necessary because the journalist had told the ICC that he lacked sufficient fund to appear before the court at The Hague, Netherlands. The ICC also declined to provide financial support to the journalist, who according to reports is poorly paid and had not travelled out of Kenya for the first in his life.

When the Presiding Judge Ekaterina Trendafilova warned the suspects

including Journalist Sang against remarks that may re-ignite violence and reminded his audience that the chamber is aware of dangerous speeches, through Kenyan newspapers, that may reignite violence, the Judge stirred a vortex of debates. On one hand are analysts who argue that the media in Kenya lacked credibility and were vulnerable to the whims of the rich and powerful. On the hand, however, are those who argue strongly for free speech, as the beacon of a democratic society. The Judge's admonition suggests an attempt to clampdown on freedom of expression in Africa, an ideal cherished in western countries with advanced democracies.

Again, the offence the radio journalist, Joshua Sang was alleged to have committed also border on the freedom of expression and media freedom. Living in a democratic society, Sang should be protected by free speech laws including Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights that guarantees "freedom of expression through any media ... regardless of frontiers."

As Kenyans, Africa and the world watch the ICC proceedings; it will be historic to find

out what happens to the radio journalist. It may result in a conviction or acquittal of not just Sang but the journalism profession.

### **Media handbook for journalists**

Meanwhile, the Kenyan Section of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) has published a media handbook expected to guide media practitioners on the rule of law as they do their work. The book, which was compiled by the chairman of the Media Council of Kenya Dr Levi Obonyo and an Advocate of the High Court of Kenya Mr Erneo W Nyamboga, was officially launched by German envoy Margit Hellwig-Boette on Thursday evening at a Nairobi hotel.

Journalists and the Rule of Law is intended to be a one stop book where journalists, in the shortest time possible, can familiarize themselves with the legal jargon that characterize most legal proceedings and debates. The publication, which is also sponsored by Konrad Adeneur Stiftung, comprise of 75 chapters, which touch on both international and local laws, especially pertaining to the new constitution, the

code of conduct and the rule of law among others. ICJ executive director George Kegoro said he expects the work to give answers to the media concerning governance issues.

"It gives fast answers to the environment journalists work in," Kegoro said during the launch of the book arguing that academic resources for the media have not been adequate.

Although the book approaches the subject from a legal perspective it also deals with ethical issues in relation to practice of media. Lawyer Prof Githu Muigui, in his forward for the publication said there has been a challenge of relevant books, which must be surmounted.

"The media cannot be expected to clarify, simplify and interpret for the public issues in technical proceedings and related debates unless they have been adequately prepared and equipped. They must first be provided with the necessary tools," Muigai said.

He commended the book for providing

"relevant sections of media laws and for providing essential legal tips including explanations of various legal terms."

***Analysis by Dr. Uchenna Ekwo with additional reports from Athman Amran***

## **How convergence fosters dialogue among civilizations**

The challenge of the 21st century is the dialogue among civilizations. In the past, each civilization was developed separately. While Western civilization has experienced the development of capitalism for a long time, it tends to focus on technology. Eastern civilization is more related to mindset or philosophy known as Yin-Yang, which means circular thought rather than linear thought of Westerns. With greatly advanced technology, civilizations are shared and needed to communicate each other beyond continents. In the 21st century, higher education poses significant questions: how does global education contribute to humanity? Is there a global culture and a need for a global education? What skills do we need to live peacefully in this globalized world?

UNESCO's World Conference of Higher Education in 2009 concluded that "international cooperation in higher education should be based on solidarity and mutual respect and the promotion of humanistic values and intercultural dialogue." However, the actual world is

dominated by technology-based economic thinking and this thought does not reflect enough the nature of multicultural world. In these days, the nature of modern globalization is determined by the global corporations. Knowledge and the role of higher education for them are determined by the concept of global networks of innovations that has not been imagined in the past. And definitely, digitalism has led the innovations. During the last few years of the 20th century and early years of the 21st century, digital technologies and the new media (information & communication technology, ICT) have come to occupy the epicenter of our lives. They are thus a key factor in this civilizing stage.

Some global trends in technology and education are observed with development of ICT. As a result, the world is becoming increasingly multicultural. Now different forms of communication and technologies integrate and converge with a speed that hardly anyone has the time or ability to assess all of the consequences, real possibilities, or problems. In a positive

sense, people may be able to speak more directly to each other without restrictions. For instance, South Korea has the speediest wireless network in the world at the moment. Most people are addicted to speed, and now even old people are forced to use smart phones regardless of their own will. This is the unstoppable flow. People are supposed to learn new technology.

In order to learn new technologies and become digitally literate, new forms of learning paths have to be developed utilizing all forms of learning, especially at work and non formal environments. At the same time, special attention should be given to teacher education in ICT skills and competencies. The period of transition in which we are now living differs from the periods of change of older dominant media. Traditional print and electronic media were introduced within a period of reasonable length, and when we moved to the active use of a new form of communication, we could also have a rough estimation of the economic and social impacts of this transition and train new professionals for the media and support people for the institutions. Now different forms of communication and technologies integrate

and converge with a speed that hardly anyone has the time or ability to assess all of the consequences, real possibilities, or problems.

The trend of digitization does not mean that everything traditional should be rejected. New communicative inventions have always destroyed something valuable, and special attention should be given to the diversity of approaches in the ICT applications. A blended approach is often adopted. Most essential in this new learning environment is the fact that the learner is constantly facing epistemic conflicts when a problem is presented that needs to be solved but lies outside the learner's current repertoire. Most of the problems of the information society will be of that kind. The learner needs to proceed with self-regulation with an active engagement, which is the learner's response to the conflict. The idea is to adjust and reconstruct thinking to deal with the learning problem at hand. The cultural dimension in the ICT applications also brings the dimension of feelings and the spirit of sharing and caring to the process. The social dimension requires inclusive policies. In an intercultural world,

communication necessarily mediates different values and cultural behaviors. Great civilizations and cultures have very different patterns of communication and use different senses in a different way.

Today, knowledge and skills for international and intercultural interaction are needed in nearly all fields. This is why multicultural studies should be made an integral part not only of general education but also of adult and vocational education and training. It is essential to consolidate global education in the curricula, teaching and operational cultures of schools and vocational institutes. Instruction must offer tools for finding out the causes and effects of different phenomena and for drawing conclusions, which at its best leads to growth into active, critical and media critical world citizens.

*Prof. Tapio Varis of University of Tampere, Finland and board member of Center for Media & Peace Initiative, New York contributed this article with additional reporting by CMPI's Im, Jongwon*

## How can ICT assist in post-conflict situations?

Conflict, within and between countries, is a major cause and consequence of poverty. Conflict current affects around one quarter of low-income countries, but conflicts do end, and the challenge then is to bring relief and stability quickly, through good governance matched with rising living standards, in order to create the right conditions for nation building.

A newly inaugurated *infoDev* research project will explore the ways that information and communication technologies (ICTs) can have a transformative role in that process. Experience in a number of post-conflict countries has shown that mobile communication is one of the first sectors to contribute to economic recovery through increased foreign direct investment, better coordinated reconstruction, increased employment and expanded government revenues. Beyond the economic impact, ICTs can contribute to the development of social capital and trust. This study will seek to identify the specific ways in which this happens and how it might be improved.

In the first phase of this project, *infoDev* will lead the development of case studies about the role ICT had following conflict in Rwanda, Timor-Leste, Liberia, Tunisia, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. On-the-ground research in these countries will complement a global review of literature that emphasizes the different approaches and technologies used throughout the process of recovery and reconstruction.

The diversity of experience in these countries will serve as the springboard for the second portion of the work that will develop high-level policy frameworks for using ICT as a tool for sustainable reconstruction in post-conflict countries. An important part of this will be a workshop that convenes policymakers and experts to discuss and disseminate the findings. *infoDev* plans to host this workshop in partnership with the ICT4Peace Foundation on May 15th, 2012 at the WSIS Forum in Geneva, Switzerland. This project is inline with the Tunis Commitment of 2005, specifically Article 36:

*We value the potential of ICTs to promote peace and to prevent conflict*

*which, inter alia, negatively affects achieving development goals. ICTs can be used for identifying conflict situations through early-warning systems preventing conflicts, promoting their peaceful resolution, supporting humanitarian action, including protection of civilians in armed conflicts, facilitating peacekeeping missions, and assisting post conflict peace-building and reconstruction*

Entrepreneurs and researchers are also focused on how the ICT landscape is shaping Africa's future. As part of Financial and Private Sector Development week, infoDev and the Africa Finance & Sector Development Front Office hosted a session on the future role of ICT in Africa. The session was moderated by Valerie D'Costa, infoDev program manager, and included an expert panel of speakers: Mouhamet Diop, Chairman and CEO, Kheweul.com; CEO, NEXT SA, Senegal, Javier Ewing, Managing Director, Excelsior Firm, East Africa, David Kaplan, Professor of Business-Government Relations and Economics, University of Cape Town, South Africa, Bright Simons, Founder, mPedigree, Ghana.

Each of the panelists addressed African

business from the angles of competitiveness, productivity, exportation readiness, and the transformative effect of ICTs, each using their own unique perspectives and examples from their respective countries. Professor David Kaplan, from the University of Cape Town, began the panel by exploring the realities of technology acquisition and absorption on the continent and emphasizing the challenges for ICT businesses in Africa, such as the constraints to attract foreign direct investment, the shortage of skills, and the R&D capacity of firms. Javier Ewing, of the Excelsior Firm, used findings from infoDev's and DFID's Transforming the East African ICT Sector by Creating a Business Engine for SMEs report to focus on the challenges faced by ICT businesses in Africa. Shortage of business skills, access to financial resources, access to markets, access to technical skills, and access to business networks were discussed as the main challenges to overcome using a supportive business environment.

The African entrepreneurs present reflected on the issues raised and shared their own experiences of doing business in Africa. Bright Simmons gave a fascinating look at the potential of ICTs as a business enabler and as a tool to overcome marketplace challenges by offering the model he created for his company, mPedigree. His concept brought together mobile firms, the pharmaceutical industry and HP in an efficient partnership that has improved pharmaceutical safety and public health in Ghana. Mouhamet Diop echoed his peer's experience by underlining the transformative power of ICTs on businesses by taking the example of the music industry in Senegal.

## **From Windhoek to Washington: the world reaffirms commitment to media freedom**

*Over 700 journalists, civil society activists, and other professionals gathered in Washington May 1-3 to deliberate on the state of media freedom all over the world. At the end of the summit, participants issued what is now called the Washington Declaration similar to Windhoek (capital of Namibia) Declaration of 1991.*

Participants at the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day conference in Washington DC, 1-3 May 2011: Commemorating World Press Freedom Day and the 20th anniversary of the 1991 Windhoek Declaration have emphasized the importance of freedom of expression, including the right to seek, receive or impart information, as a fundamental right for the fulfillment of human aspirations.

In a communiqué at the end of the conference, participants noted that access to information through all forms of media and digital platforms is critical for an informed electorate and thus for healthy participation in democratic life, and transparent governance.

They called on UNESCO member States to reaffirm and implement their commitment under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers"

The over 700 participants drawn from all regions of the world also wanted UNESCO member states to recognize and ensure that the same principles of freedom of expression apply equally to the Internet and other new information technologies, as they apply to traditional forms of media.

Welcoming growing global recognition of the positive potential represented by new media, especially highlighted in the recent and ongoing movements for democracy and social justice, participants

also paid tribute to journalists and media personnel who contribute to press freedom through their work, often bravely risking their lives in the process.

They nevertheless condemned the intimidation and attacks, including arrests and murders inflicted upon journalists, media personnel and bloggers by repressive regimes whenever they undermine their rights and the right of all persons to seek, receive and impart information and ideas.

The communiqué otherwise called the Washington declaration also called on Professional Associations, Media Outlets and Industry to recognize that professional journalistic values and practices must be applied to information distributed via social networks and other emerging forms of media.

In addition, the documents also sought for more access to information of marginalized groups through digital communications tools, including mobile phones, and sharing of best practices related to freedom of expression and privacy protection. The theme of this year's World Press Freedom Day- 21st Century Media: New Frontiers, New Barriers was meant to focus on the

phenomenal power of connection technologies in sharing of information across national boundaries.

Twenty years after the call for the establishment of World Press Freedom Day, the arrival of the digital revolution—the evolution of the Internet, the emergence of new forms of media, and the rise of online social networks—has reshaped the media landscape and made “the press” of 2011 something that those gathered in Windhoek in 1991 could not have imagined .

## Freedom of Information law in Nigeria

When President Goodluck Jonathan signs the Freedom of Information Bill passed recently by the National Assembly, Nigeria's Senate and House of Representatives, the country would join five other countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Uganda, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Angola) that have passed freedom of information legislation. What does the freedom of information law mean to Nigeria's democracy?

To understand this, consider this clause in the law waiting for the president's signature: "every citizen of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has a legally enforceable right to, and shall, on application be given access to any information or record under the control of a government or public institution or private companies performing public functions, provided the disclosure of such information or release of such record(s) ***shall not compromise national security***".

The definition of national security or national interest has remained ambiguous

in national discourse. Who determines national interest and national security is also another quandary.

Governments, have in the past, used the defense of national security to undermine basic democratic freedoms especially in the realm of information sharing. When the Freedom of Information law becomes operational in Nigeria, it is envisaged that vexed issues of national security will undermine the efficacy of the law. To enact a freedom of information law may be a giant step towards transparency but to put caveats as the present law does renders the law impotent. The general perception about freedom of information legislation among most advocates is to open government records and grant access to information about government business.

*Wanted: access to information about multinationals and government*

As much as the Nigerian government remains the greatest obstacle to transparency in public administration, Nigerians should know that even if the problem of government secrecy is taken

care of by the Freedom of Information law, a growing and festering enemy of the people is indeed the multinational companies.

Tseliso Thipanyane, Former CEO of South African Human Rights Commission while speaking at a conference on Africa's Re-colonization - Strategies for Africa and the U.S. left, organized by the Left Forum in New York, outlined how multinational companies have indeed become the bastions of corruption. He argued that any freedom of information that does not empower citizens to be able to access the records of multinational companies doing business with African governments is grossly ineffective.



***Tseliso Thipanyane***

This is true. Recall the bribery scandal involving Halliburton Oil Company that offered million of dollars in bribe to top Nigerian government officials. In the US, the aide to the former US Vice President Dick Cheney is serving jail time while the people who were implicated in Nigeria are walking free on the streets. Citizens do not have enough information about the transactions but such information should be sitting somewhere between Halliburton and Aso Rock offices.

A story such as the Halliburton one highlights the challenges to public transparency just before, Nigerian citizens, media leaders, and freedom of information advocates. What seems very clear is that we live in a world where the movement towards openness is irreversible. Writing in the March issue of Harvard Business Review, Julia Kirby outlined what the world should learn from Wikileaks' disclosure of classified documents of the United States State Department.

According to Kirby, Julian Assange's "endeavor has altered the way many of us think about privacy, technology, transparency, and diplomacy – and a lot more."

The lesson from the release of US diplomatic cables is that "you can now expect that day to come when your most private and candid communications will appear for all to peruse. In preparation for that moment, you better make sure that your private dealings match your public declarations."

### *Nigerians in Diaspora React*

Meanwhile, Nigerians in the diaspora have been reacting to the passage of the Freedom of Information bill in Nigeria last week. Veteran labor leader John Okolonta described the passage of the Freedom of information Bill by the Legislature in Nigeria as "historic, a very good beginning and highly commendable."

In an interview with ***CMPI media Watch***, Okolonta noted that the law will uphold the people's right to know and will enable Nigerians to have access to government

records. In his words: "the law is a notice to public officers that the days of hiding and covering their corrupt and dubious practices are numbered and that the general public especially the media, civil society groups and trade unions have been empowered to know what the Government is doing."

Okolonta who for many years fought military dictatorship in Nigeria as Chairman of Nigerian Labor Congress asserted that access to information was an indispensable component of democracy. "When people have the right information it enables them to participate meaningfully in the process of democracy. Also, when public officials know that their actions and inactions may now easily come to public light, they may become more careful and curb the urge to do the wrong thing."



***Comrade John Okolonta***

Although, the FOI Bill is a great instrument for democratic process, Comrade Okolonta expressed some skepticism about the prospect of destroying official documents by corrupt public officials who fear the consequences of letting information in the public domain.

He therefore suggested stiff penalties for the destruction of official information, to ensure the preservation of the very information that the FOI Bill intends to enforce. This will make the future of the FOI very bright because our people are difficult, he added.

Mr. Segun Kerry, the Director of Nigerian Community Health Center, an organization based in New York City applauded Nigerian law makers for passing the legislation.

He called on all Nigerians including those in the diaspora to support the law and make use of the law in the most appropriate circumstances. Considering where we are coming from

"I support the law but there should be an effective mechanism to enforce the law because if the law is not enforced it is as

good as not having it," Mr. Kerry said. He emphasized that Nigeria's greatest problem was corruption and expressed the hope that the sunshine laws when operational will eliminate corruption in the country to the minimum.

He lamented that Nigerians in diaspora did not make adequate input in the crafting of the legislation because they are not allowed to participate in the election of political office holders in Nigeria. According to Mr. Kerry, it is important for diaspora Nigerians to be part of the electoral process in the country. We have always had the opportunity to frustrate the rule of law to the detriment of the entire citizens.

## FOIA under threat in America

A ruling Tuesday from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit could signal the death knell for—or at least the erosion of—a two-decade-old Supreme Court case that has stymied many a Freedom of Information Act request. The new decision takes note of a striking contradiction that has developed in the way the federal courts treat privacy under FOIA and in their own records. The courts routinely uphold government decisions to deny FOIA requests for law enforcement records, including court records, about individuals charged with criminal offenses. In 1989, the Supreme Court ruled that so-called "rap sheets" could not be released under FOIA, even though most of the information in them was available publicly in courthouses around the country.

Notwithstanding the Supreme Court's 1989 ruling in *Department of Justice v. Reporters' Committee*, the federal courts have embraced the Internet era. They now make available for a fee a national database that allows anyone to conduct a name search and quickly retrieve federal criminal court filings from across the country. Now, federal

courts are not local or state courts where most criminal arrests and prosecutions are dealt with. But the federal court database known as PACER is the same kind of national criminal database whose public disclosure the Supreme Court considered to be an unwarranted invasion of privacy back in 1989.

This tension has been apparent for some time to many FOIA requesters who deal with the courts. What's unusual is to see the courts acknowledge it, even obliquely. D.C. Circuit Judge Merrick Garland did just that Tuesday in a case the American Civil Liberties Union brought under FOIA seeking information about criminal cases stemming from warrantless cell phone tracking.

Garland wrote:

...computerized government services like PACER make it possible to access court filings concerning any federal defendant from the comfort of one's home or office, quite unlike the "diligent search of courthouse files, county archives, and local police stations throughout the country" that a citizen would have had to undertake to replicate the contents of a

rap sheet....In addition, newspapers regularly report on federal prosecutions, and their accounts can easily be found on the internet.

Garland goes on to note that the Justice Department regularly issues press releases that identify defendants, which means:

If someone wants to know whether his neighbor or potential employee has been indicted for, convicted of, or pled guilty to a federal offense, he may well find out by simply entering a Google search for that person's name.

This may all seem like stating the obvious, but when it comes to the advance of technology, judges more often ignore the obvious than state it. For what it's worth, the Justice Department has previously used the Reporters' Committee rationale to deny FOIA requests for such things as a list of the terrorism cases prosecuted since 9/11 or even the press releases for terrorism cases prosecuted since 9/11. Yes, you can word search "terrorism" in the search engine on the DOJ website, but if you ask for the same info the old fashioned way in writing under FOIA, your request will be denied.

Garland's decision, posted here, doesn't overturn Reporters' Committee. He doesn't have the authority to do that. But it begins to nibble around the edges of the 1989 ruling and could lead other courts to read Reporters Committee more narrowly. Who knows? It might even prompt the Supreme Court to consider whether in an era of the Internet, Nexis/Lexis and PACER, the Reporters' Committee ruling still makes any sense.

*Source: POLITICO*

## **FoI law faces historic test in Nigeria**

Barely two weeks after the Freedom of Information Act was signed into law by President Goodluck Jonathan, human rights lawyer, Mr Bamidele Aturu Tuesday became the first person to put the Act to test by requesting the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to supply the names of member of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) who received bribe recently.

The EFCC had in statement accused the civil society group of collecting the sum of N52 million from some of its suspects being investigated by the commission in order to weaken and campaign against the commission.

But Aturu, who is a solicitor to CDHR, urged the anti-graft commission to prove the allegation or be faced with a suit.

He urged the commission to obey the Act by disclosing the names of the suspect or suspects that gave N52 million to the leadership of the CDHR and the persons to whom the money was given.

He also wants the commission to disclose the manner in which the money was paid and when, where and how the money was paid, threatening that if it fails to do so within the period stipulated by law he will proceed to court in accordance with the provisions of the law.

Aturu argued that the words against the CDHR and its President, Olasupo Ojo, were meant to portray them as paid agents of corrupt public officials who loot the treasury, making them corrupt, accessories to crimes, deceitful and dishonest.

“Furthermore, the words meant and were understood to mean that our clients have an ulterior and hypocritical agenda to weaken anti-corruption agencies and promote corruption in Nigeria while pretending to be champions of good governance and the rule of law.

Meanwhile, Nigeria Police Tuesday disclosed that the advent of militant activities in the Niger Delta had undermined security of lives and properties within the creeks and

waterways around Lagos State, saying the era of sea robbery and piracy would soon be a history on Lagos waters.

The State Commissioner for Police, Mr. Yakubu Alkali disclosed at the launching of six patrol gunboats, which the Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Hafiz Ringim donated to Lagos State Police Command at the Marine Police Headquarters located at Awolowo Road, Ikoyi.

At the inauguration attended by Governor Babatunde Raji Fashola (SAN) and senior police personnel, the commissioner added that the state police command had witnessed a gradual deterioration in security within the creeks and waterways around the state. Speaking at the launching, Ringim solicited for special security arrangement for Lagos state, just as he handed-over six gunboats to the Police Command to beef up security around the coastal areas in the state.

"Your deliberate choice of words was therefore intended to portray our client as hypocrites, ignoble, dishonest, unreliable and irresponsible persons. Perhaps, more devastating to the CDHR's solid reputation

as the pre-eminent civil society organization in Nigeria is the imputation in your statement that the organization is a bunch of opportunists who lack commitment to principles and which ought not to be taken seriously by members of the public.

"Our clients are certain that you have no reasonable or probable cause to believe the damaging allegations you made concerning them. "They have challenged you to provide evidence or proof that they were hired by any person to engage in the activities which they voluntarily assumed in order to build a developed Nigeria devoid of fraud, corruption and abuse of power. You have thus far been unable to provide an iota of proof."

***©Thisday Newspapers***

## FOI and Nigeria's democracy

Last week's passage of the Freedom of Information bill by Nigeria's House of Representatives signaled the final stages in the struggle to enact Sunshine Laws in Africa's most populous country. But the specter of military dictatorship still hunts the approval of the bill by the upper legislative chamber – the Senate where former military general David Mark (retired) holds sway as Senate President.

Nothing illustrated the reluctance of the political class to pass FOI bill than the ignorance of politicians as to the true intent of freedom of information legislation. When media proprietors in Nigeria visited Senate President, David Mark to enlist his support to ensure that the Senate tows the line of the lower Chamber to give a nod of approval to the bill, Mark expressed concern about whether journalists will be able to exercise restraint and responsibility if the bill becomes law.

His words: "Senate would pass the bill but warned that some clauses would be removed and the bill watered down. Passage of the bill into law is not a

problem but we must show enough restraint and responsibility in order to avoid recklessness in the discharge of our duties."

The Senate President also justified the veto of the same Freedom of Information bill by former President Olusegun Obasanjo, (also a retired military general) on the basis of national security concerns. While the so called security concerns have been removed from the new bill, Mark's lecture to his visitors, arguably the cream of Nigerian media practitioners clearly shows a political class scared of transparency and openness in public administration and indeed allergic to "sunshine as a disinfectant."

As Nduka Obaigbena, Publisher of Thisday Newspapers correctly told the Senate President freedom of information "is for every Nigerian and should not and never be presented as a right of the media or journalists". Indeed, Mr. Obaigbena hit the nail at the head. It is the fear that freedom of information law will give arbitrary powers to journalists as well as the penchant for secrecy by public functionaries in Nigeria that have

dogged efforts to usher unfettered information flow in the country.

Freedom of information is for all Nigerians and not just journalists. After all, in the digital era all citizens including politicians can become journalists and participate in the dissemination of information in a democratic society. What freedom of information means is that every Nigerian has the right to demand information in the public domain? Nigerians should have access to all public records. For example, as a Nigerian citizen, one could demand to access the receipts of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) in terms of how much crude is sold to whom on a daily basis. What is the salary of the President? How much does he spend on putting fuel on his presidential jet? What is the cost of his presidential campaign? All these information are there but often hidden from Nigerians. Citizens ought to know what their leaders are doing and how they are doing their job of serving the public.

So freedom of information is desideratum for democratic governance. Every citizen including professional journalists, politicians, civil society, students etc require

information to make informed decisions about their leaders in both public and private sectors.

Obaigbena was on point when he told Senate President Mark that journalists recognized the need for responsibility in the performance of their duties but warned that the idea of criminalizing libel ran contrary to international obligations of Nigeria.

In the final analysis, the Nigerian Senate stands on the threshold of history: to pass the Freedom of Information Bill and take it to the president's desk for accent or allow the military hangover of some its members to dwarf the collective march towards effective democratic governance where information flow invigorates the country's young democracy.

***Analysis by Dr. Uchenna Ekwo, Public Policy Expert and commentator on African affairs with additional reports from Kunle Akogun in Abuja***

## **Facebook strikes deal with Skype**

*Both companies plan to share video to add appeal appeal to world's most used online social networking service.*

Facebook will soon add Skype video chat as a new feature, aiming to add appeal to the world's already most used online social networking service while fending off increased competition from Google. The agreement between the two companies was announced by Facebook founder, Mark Zuckerberg, at the company's California headquarters on Wednesday, deepening the company's relationship with Microsoft Corp, which is in the process of buying Skype to build its web presence.

Zuckerberg said Facebook has hit a record 750 million users. The new service could be a huge boost for Skype, which currently has about 145 million regular users. The partnership comes as competition heats up in online social networking market, with Facebook and Google, as well as fast-growing companies such as Groupon and Twitter, vying for billions of dollars in online advertising revenue.

Facebook's Skype service, initially limited to one-to-one video chat, will be free. Financial details of the deal, if any, were not disclosed. Tony Bates, Skype's chief executive, said Wednesday's deal with Facebook is only the start of a potentially lucrative partnership.

"For us, this makes a lot of business sense," said Bates. "We get huge reach. In the future we're talking about potentially also having Skype paid products available within the web format we saw here today."

In a phone interview later on Wednesday, Neil Stevens, the general manager of Skype's consumer business, said the company was planning on introducing a for-pay service that would allow users on Facebook to place calls to landline and mobile phones. Stevens said he could not provide a timeframe for when such a service might be available.

## **Returning fire**

Facebook, which also unveiled a group messaging function is returning fire from Google, which last week announced its

newest social networking competition, dubbed "Google+".

While many of Google 's social networking features are similar to those already available on Facebook, Google is generating interest with its video-conferencing function, which allows up to 10 people on the service to participate in a video call. Zuckerberg hinted that video chat for multiple people could eventually be available on Facebook. But he said that most video chats today occurred between two people anyway.

"We think this is awesome because we're using the best technology that's out there for doing video chat with the best social infrastructure that's out there to create some really cool new scenarios," said Zuckerberg. Zuckerberg said Wednesday's announcements were the first of several to come in what he described as "launching season 2011".

Facebook's new Skype feature will likely benefit Microsoft, which owns 1.6 per cent of Facebook and announced its \$8.5bn purchase of Skype in May.

***Source: Agency Reports***



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



## The Washington Declaration

### 21st CENTURY MEDIA: NEW FRONTIERS, NEW BARRIERS

We, the participants at the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day conference in Washington DC, 1-3 May 2011:

**Commemorating** World Press Freedom Day and the 20th anniversary of the 1991 Windhoek Declaration, which emphasized the importance of freedom of expression, including the right to seek, receive or impart information, as a fundamental right for the fulfilment of human aspirations;

**Recalling** Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers";

**Taking note of** the principles and recommendations of the Brisbane Declaration of 2010 on Freedom of Information: the Right to Know, and of the Doha Declaration of 2009 on the Potential of Media for Dialogue, Mutual Understanding and Reconciliation, and of the Maputo Declaration of 2008 on Fostering Freedom of Expression, Access to Information, and Empowerment of People;

**Taking note of** the report to the Human Rights Council of April 2010 by the U.N. Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (A/HRC/14/23).

**Underscoring** the principles set forth in the Declarations of Windhoek, Alma-Ata, Sana'a, Santiago and Sofia, that identify free, pluralistic and independent media as a cornerstone of democratic societies in all parts of the world, good governance and development;

**Noting** that new information and

communication technologies present individuals with unprecedented access to news and information, that has the potential to promote democracy and good governance and to combat corruption and wrong-doing, and to promote the equality of opportunity among all groups;

**Recognizing** that this access has been illegitimately and abusively restricted by some governments and that information and communication technologies can be manipulated to curtail the exercise of civil liberties by citizens;

**Emphasizing** that access to information through all forms of media and digital platforms is critical for an informed electorate and thus for healthy participation in democratic life, and transparent governance;

**Welcoming** growing global recognition of the positive potential represented by new media, especially highlighted in the recent and ongoing movements for democracy and social justice;

**Honouring** the journalists and media personnel who contribute to press freedom

through their work, often bravely risking their lives in the process;

**Condemning** the intimidation and attacks, including arrests and murders inflicted upon journalists, media personnel and bloggers whenever they undermine their rights and the right of all persons to seek, receive and impart information and ideas;

**Call on UNESCO Member States:**

To reaffirm and implement their commitment under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

To recognize and ensure that the same principles of freedom of expression apply equally to the Internet and other new information technologies, as they apply to traditional forms of media;

To use fully the potential of the Internet and digital media while fully respecting civil liberties, including the rights of freedom of expression and privacy;

To ensure an environment in which media are pluralistic and editorially

independent of political interference;

To seek to leverage advances in technology and communication tools to promote affordable access to the Internet and other digital information infrastructure for everyone;

To refrain from imposing illegitimate or abusive limits on free expression, including the ability to seek information on the Internet - be it on blogs, e-mail, or social media networks - taking into account, to be legitimate, any restrictions on freedom of expression must be strictly proportional; narrowly defined; necessary in a democratic society and soundly based in law, provided they would not be contrary to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They should be implemented by an instance independent of political, commercial or other outside influences ; enforced in non-arbitrary and non-discriminatory manners ; and surrounded by guarantees against abuse, to include access to independent courts;

To ensure a legal environment in which free speech is encouraged, and penalized

neither by onerous defamation laws, nor excessive monetary penalties. To enact and enforce freedom of information laws, and provide adequate resources that permit everyone ways to access information held by governments and guarantee transparency of governmental activities;

To take prompt and effective action to assure the safety of journalists, bloggers, and all those, including students and youth, who express themselves on digital media platforms from intimidation, threats, physical attacks, and attempts against their lives;

To bridge the digital and knowledge divides by improving literacy and increasing access to the Internet, including through media literacy in school curricula, and by making information available in local languages;

To refrain from licensing as a requirement for the professional practice of journalism;

To give renewed emphasis to public

debate on the role of journalism and independent media in the creation of a culture of democratic pluralism, and to promote actions to build public trust in journalism and independent media;

To endeavor to prevent non-state actors from taking actions that would undermine the enjoyment of freedom of expression;

To examine, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, new forms of assistance to media, including support for innovation in the development of media, encouraging investigative journalism, and promoting public service values in journalism, while ensuring that the providing of assistance does not compromise editorial independence and journalistic freedom;

To refrain from using advertising or business practices as a tool to unduly influence media editorial independence;

**Call on Professional Associations, Media Outlets and Industry:**

To recognize that professional journalistic values and practices must be applied to information distributed via social networks

and other emerging forms of media;

To promote the access to information of marginalized groups through digital communications tools, including mobile phones;

To promote the sharing of best practices on the respect of freedom of expression and privacy protection;

To refrain from using compulsory membership in professional bodies as a means to restrict access to the profession;

To promote and support investigative journalism through professional training and to raise awareness about the role of new media platforms for journalism;

To encourage high standards of journalism and ethical behaviour by media professionals, new media users, and practitioners, bearing in mind that news media are a public trust;

To promote the plurality of voices in news coverage and across all media outlets, especially those of the

disadvantaged and marginalized, including women and youth;

To provide journalists with fair living wages so as to ensure that the integrity of their work is not compromised;

To respect principles of freedom of association and other universal rights, to work toward improving the safety and working conditions of journalists and other media personnel, and to provide adequate professional and safety training opportunities;

To promote and strengthen forms of independent and voluntary self-regulation that enhance and support high-quality ethical journalism and build public trust;

To resist pressure from states and other actors to block, deny or limit access to the Internet and new media;

**Call on UNESCO:**

To encourage the production of quality content, and to foster media literacy as a necessary skill in the new, more complex information environment, including through

its promotion at different levels of educational and training systems;

To promote Internet and social networks as platforms for democratic discussion and civic participation;

To continue to promote and coordinate dialogue among Member States to ascertain the legal and human rights implications of social networks for freedom of expression, privacy, and personal data protection;

To sensitize Member States, public authorities, civil society and individuals about exercising freedom of expression through new media, and the importance of such media in democratic societies;

To provide assistance and to promote synergies among relevant actors, such as parliamentarians, for the development and implementation of legal environments and policies fostering freedom of expression and taking

advantage of technological developments that facilitate public discourse everywhere in the world;

To support the promotion of best practices, both by professional journalists and through new forms of expression via social networks and other digital platforms, including through research, documentation and knowledge-sharing;

To support an open and unrestricted Internet;

To gauge the interest among Member States to commission a study for the UNESCO Director General's attention on the best way to foster access to information on the Internet and through mobile technology for the world's under-served populations;

To condemn, whenever they occur anywhere in the world, violations of freedom of expression through censorship, content filtering, cyber surveillance, arrests, intimidations, physical attacks – including attempts to life – on journalists, bloggers, and all those who express themselves;

To ensure the inclusion of freedom of expression, press freedom and the new frontiers represented by new media, and the related issues addressed in this Declaration, as key topics for the development agenda, especially for achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and to facilitate discussion and a coordinated approach on these matters among UN agencies and other relevant stakeholders;

To communicate this Declaration to Member States and to other international and regional organizations;

To endorse and use this Declaration as a reference for UNESCO's activities in the field of freedom of expression and to use it to promote development of a free and independent press -- print, broadcast, and digital – everywhere around the world.

### ***Cradle of civilization***

*As the cradle of civilization, analysts are wondering whether recent revolution in Egypt could result in greater focus of the international media to events in Africa and not just on the Middle East. In this report, Azad Essa provides an analysis of the hypocrisy and neglect of Africa by the world press.*

"I think Egypt's cultural significance and massive population were very important factors in ensuring media coverage," says Ethan Zuckerman, the co-founder of Global Voices, an international community of online activists.

"International audiences know at least a few facts about Egypt, which makes it easier for them to connect to news there," he says, drawing a comparison with Bahrain, a country Zuckerman says few Americans would be able to locate on a map. Zuckerman also believes that media organizations were in part motivated by a "sense of guilt" over their failure to effectively cover the Tunisian revolution and were, therefore, playing "catch up" in Egypt.

"Popular revolutions make for great TV," he adds. "The imagery from Tahrir square in particular was very powerful and led to a story that was easy for global media to cover closely."

### **The African Egypt versus the Arab Egypt**

Egypt was suddenly a sexy topic. But, despite the fact that the rich banks of the Nile are sourced from central Africa, the world looked upon the uprising in Egypt solely as a Middle Eastern issue and commentators scrambled to predict what it would mean for the rest of the Arab world and, of course, Israel. Few seemed to care that Egypt was also part of Africa, a continent with a billion people, most living under despotic regimes and suffering economic strife and political suppression just like their Egyptian neighbors.

"Egypt is in Africa. We should not fool about with the attempts of the North to segregate the countries of North Africa

from the rest of the continent,” says Firoze Manji, the editor of Pambazuka Online, an advocacy website for social justice in Africa. “Their histories have been intertwined for millennia. Some Egyptians may not feel they are Africans, but that is neither here nor there. They are part of the heritage of the continent.” And, just like much of the rest of the world, Africans watched events unfold in Cairo with great interest. “There is little doubt that people [in Africa] are watching with enthusiasm what is going on in the Middle East, and drawing inspiration from that for their own struggles,” says Manji.

He argues that globalization and the accompanying economic liberalization has created circumstances in which the people of the global South share very similar experiences: “Increasing pauperization, growing unemployment, declining power to hold their governments to account, declining income from agricultural production, increasing accumulation by dispossession – something that is growing on a vast scale – and increasing willingness of governments to comply with the political and economic wishes of the North.

“In that sense, people in Africa recognize the experiences of citizens in the Middle East. There is enormous potential for solidarity to grow out from that. In any case, where does Africa end and the Middle East begin?”

### **Rallying cry**

The „trouble“ that started in Tunisia (another African country) when street vendor Mohamed Bouzazi’s self-immolation articulated the frustrations of a nation spread to Algeria (yes, another African country), Yemen and Bahrain just as Hosni Mubarak made himself comfortable at a Sharm el Sheik spa.

Meanwhile, in „darkest Africa“, far away from the media cameras, reports surfaced of political unrest in a West African country called Gabon. With little geopolitical importance, news organizations seem largely oblivious to the drama that began unfolding on January 29, when the opposition protested against Ali Bhongo Ouhimba’s government, whom they

accuse of hijacking recent elections. The demonstrators demanded free elections and the security forces duly stepped in to lay those ambitions to rest. The clashes between protesters and police that followed show few signs of relenting.

"The events in Tunisia and Egypt have become, within Africa, a rallying cry for any number of opposition leaders, everyday people harboring grievances and political opportunists looking to liken their country's regimes to those of Ben Ali or Hosni Mubarak," says Drew Hinshaw, an American journalist based in West Africa. "In some cases that comparison is outrageous, but in all too many it is more than fair.

"Look at Gabon, a tragically under-developed oil exporter whose GDP per capita is more than twice that of Egypt's but whose people are living on wages that make Egypt look like the land of full employment.

"The Bhongo family has run that country for four decades, since before Mubarak ran nothing larger than an air force base, and yet they're still there. You can understand

why the country's opposition is calling for new rounds of Egypt-like protests after seeing what Egypt and Tunisia were able to achieve."

Elsewhere on the continent protests have broken out in Khartoum, Sudan where students held Egypt-inspired demonstrations against proposed cuts to subsidies on petroleum products and sugar. Following the protests there on January 30, CPJ reported that staffs from the weekly Al-Midan were arrested for covering the event.

Ethiopian media have also reported that police there detained the well-known journalist Eskinder Nega for "attempts to incite" Egypt-style protests. In Cameroon, the Social Democratic Front Party has said that the country might experience an uprising similar to those in North Africa if the government does not slash food prices.

"There are lots of Africans too who are young, unemployed, who see very few prospects for their future in countries ruled by the same old political elite that

have ruled for 25 or 30 or 35 years,” says CSM Africa bureau chief Scott Baldauf.

“I think all the same issues in Egypt are also present in other countries. You have leaders who have hung onto power for decades and who think the country can only function if they are in charge. A young Zimbabwean would understand the frustration of a young Egyptian.”

### **Divide and rule**

Sure, the continent is vast and acts of dissent and their subsequent suppression are the bread and butter of some oppressive African states. But just as self-immolation was not new in Tunisia, discontentment and rising restlessness is not alien to Africans. In the past three years, there been violent service delivery protests in South Africa and food riots in Cameroon, Madagascar, Mozambique and Senegal. But whether the simmering discontent in Africa will result in protests on the scale of those in Egypt remains to be seen.

“All the same dry wood of bad governance is stacked in many African countries, waiting for a match to set it alight,” says Baldauf.

“But it takes leadership. It takes civil society organisation,” something the CSM Africa bureau chief fears countries south of the Sahara do not have at the same levels as their North African neighbours. Emmanuel Kisiangani, a senior researcher at the African Conflict Prevention Programme (ACCP) at the Institute of Security Studies (ISS) in South Africa, believes the difference in the success levels of protests in North and sub-Saharan Africa can be attributed in part to the ethnic make-up of the respective regions.

“In most of the countries that have had fairly „successful riots“ the societies are fairly homogeneous compared to sub-Saharan Africa where there are a multiplicity of ethnic groups that are themselves very polarised. In sub-Saharan Africa, where governments have been able to divide people along ethnic-political lines, it becomes easier to hijack an uprising because of ethnic differences, unlike in North Africa.”

### **'Where is Anderson Cooper?'**

Egypt and Tunisia may have been the catalysts for demonstrations across the Arab world, but will those ripples spread into the rest of Africa as well and, if they do, will the international media and its audience even notice?

"What the continent lacks is media coverage," says Hinshaw. "There's no powerhouse media for the region like Al Jazeera, while European and American media routinely reduce a conflict like [that in] Ivory Coast or Eastern Congo to a one-sentence news blurb at the bottom of the screen."

Hinshaw is particularly troubled by the failure of the international media to pay due attention to events in Ivory Coast, where the UN estimates that at least 300 people have died and the opposition puts the figure at 500.

"With due deference to the bravery of the Egyptian demonstrators, protesters who gathered this weekend in Abidjan [in Ivory Coast] aren't up against a military that safeguards them – it shoots at them.

"The country's economy has been coughing up blood since November, with banks shutting by the day, businesses closing by the hour and thousands of families fleeing their homes," he continues. "And in all of this where is Anderson Cooper? Where is Nicolas Kristof? Why is Bahrain a front page news story while Ivory Coast is something buried at the bottom of the news stack?"

The journalist is equally as disappointed in world leaders. "This Friday, Barack Obama publicly condemned the use of violence in Bahrain, Yemen and Libya. When was the last time you saw Obama come out and make a statement on Ivory Coast? Or Eastern Congo? Or Djibouti, where 20,000 people protested this weekend according to the opposition?

"The problem is that most American media compulsively ignore everything south of the Sahara and north of Johannesburg. A demonstration has to be filmed, photographed, and streamed live into the offices of foreign leaders to achieve everything Egypt's achieved." Nanjala, a political analyst at the University of Oxford, suggests this

journalistic shortcoming stems from journalists' tendency "to favor explanations that fit the whole „failing Africa“ narrative”.

### **Filling a void**

So with traditional media seemingly failing Africa, will social media fill the void? Much has already been written about the plethora of social media networks that both helped engineer protests and, crucially, amplified them across cyber-space. Online-activists, sitting behind fiber optic cables and flat screens, collated and disseminated updates, photographs and video and played the role of subversive hero from the comfort of their homes. Of course, not all Tweets or Face book uploads came from pajama-clad revolutionaries far from the scene of the action – an internet-savvy generation of Egyptians was also able to keep the world updated with information from the ground.

“It’s not clear to me that social media played a massive role in organizing protests,” says Zuckerman. “[But] I do think it played a critical role in helping expose those protests to a global audience, particularly in Tunisia, where the media environment was so constrained.”

So, could the same thing happen in Africa?

“I think it’s important to keep in mind that African youth are far more plugged in than most people realize. The spread in mobile phones has made it possible for people to connect to applications like Face book or Twitter on their telephones,” says Nanjala, adding: “At the same time, I think most analysts are overstating the influence of social media on the protests.

“The most significant political movements in Africa and in other places have occurred independently of social media – the struggles for independence, the struggles against apartheid and racism in Southern Africa. Where people need or desire to be organized they will do independently of the technology around them.”

Baldauf concurs: “In every country you see greater and greater access to the internet and greater access to cell phone

networks. I remember getting stuck on a muddy road in Eastern Congo, out where the FDLR [Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda] controls the mining industry. We had to stay the night in a village, the guests of a lovely old man in his mud hut. It was [at] the end of the world, but to get a phone call off to my wife and my editor, I just had to walk out of the hut and use my cell phone."

### **An important year**

2011 is an important year for Africa. Elections are scheduled in more than 20 countries across the continent, including Zimbabwe and Nigeria. But as food prices continue to rise and economic hardship tightens its grip on the region, it is plausible to imagine Africans revolting and using means other than the often meaningless ballot box to remove their leaders.

"What people want is the democratization of society, of production, of the economy, and indeed all aspects of life," says Manji. "What they are being offered instead is the ballot box." But, Manji adds: "Elections don't address the fundamental problems that people face. Elections on their own do

nothing to enable ordinary people to be able to determine their own destiny. "

This, according to Kisiangani, is because "the process of democratization in many African countries seems more illusory than fundamental".

Gabon, Zimbabwe, even Ethiopia may never have the online reach enjoyed by Egyptians, and the scale of solidarity through linguistic and cultural symmetry may not allow their calls to reach the same number of internet users. But this does not mean that a similar desire for change is not brewing, nor that the traditional media and online community are justified in ignoring it.

Screens were put up in Tahrir Square broadcasting Al Jazeera's coverage of the protests back to the protesters. It is difficult to quantify the role of social media in the popular uprisings gaining momentum across the Arab world, but it is even more difficult to quantify the

effect of the perception of being ignored, of not being watched, discussed and, well, retweeted to the throngs of others needing to be heard. Ignoring the developments in Africa is to miss the half the story.

“The protests have created the „hope“ that ordinary people can define their political destiny,” says Kisiangani. “The uprisings ... are making people on the continent become conscious about their abilities to define their political destinies.”

## CNN and Tea Party: Strange bedfellows?

Tuesday's Republican presidential debate hosted jointly by Cable News Network - CNN and Tea Party is indeed revealing considering the public image of both organizations.

CNN is a respected international news organization that carries the banner of professionalism and Americanism that is only comparable to the professionalism of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in the coverage of world news. But, within the United States, CNN is struggling for high rating among audiences faced with multiple choices in the cable news business notably between Fox News and MSNBC. In the fierce battle for audiences, Fox News clearly pitches its tent with conservative and right wing ideologues just as MSNBC does not hide its liberal and left wing bias. In an ideologically driven market place of ideas, CNN has found itself non-aligned. It struggles to maintain a balance – an ideal though acceptable in sound journalism practice but repudiated within the real life ideological divide that characterizes contemporary American polity.

It is against this background that the collaboration of CNN with Tea Party organization known for its extremist views and ideological purity should come as surprising to analysts especially media watchers. What are the possible reasons for CNN's action of aligning itself with a fundamentalist organization notorious for its intransigence? What does this mean to new or old journalism? What is the assessment of Wolf Blitzer, the moderator of the debate, in terms of professionalism and courting a "stranger"- the Tea Party?

One possible reason for the unholy alliance with the derided Tea Party is to ride on the crest of Tea Party's populist rants that seem to have gained traction with the "vast right wing conspiracy" to undermine the essence of government. CNN's embrace of the Tea Party is obviously as hypocritical as some of the views espoused by the Tea Party crowd. From the public posture of CNN news, it is clear that the organization is not sympathetic with Tea Party philosophy like Fox News or other conservative media outlets. Indeed, not being able to take a position may probably hurt the standing and recognition of CNN as an

effective umpire in the sharply partisan climate in America today. It is unlikely that CNN will win conservative audiences from rival Fox News as a result of hobnobbing with Tea Party elements. The fact that the Tea Party is not a political party makes CNN's alliance with it murky and professionally inexpedient. It sends a wrong message. A reputable organization such as CNN could cover events and activities of the Tea Party as news but should not endorse a group of people with extreme views by jointly organizing events of such significance as presidential debates. Organizing events jointly with the Tea Party is equivalent to a public endorsement and further elevates the group in the eyes of conservative, liberal, and non-aligned members of the public. If the CNN's niche is neutrality, it should not be seen to be taking sides as its embrace of Tea Party represents.

As midwives of democracy, the media plays active roles in the political process. It is absolutely professional for the news media such as CNN to organize forums for aspiring candidates for elective offices to explain to voters their stand on wide ranging issues. It is through the process of

scrutinizing politicians that the electorate can make informed decisions about candidates to vote for during elections. Information is the lifeblood of democracy and as purveyors of information the media is central to the health of all democracies. In the book: *The people's choice: How the voter makes up his mind in a presidential campaign*, Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet (1965) demonstrated the influence of the media on voters during presidential elections. Although the study yielded startling results, indicating that neither radio nor print had as much influence on voters as had been suspected, today's media ecology has completely changed with the emergence of the Internet and other connection technologies that may have fundamentally altered both media behavior and audience attitude towards the media. It is therefore significant for both citizens and media professionals to understand the central role of the media in contemporary politics. In essence, hosting a presidential debate is a professional duty CNN owes its teeming

audience but doing it in collaboration with fringe elements of a respected Republican Party is preposterous, unprofessional, and defies logic. Will CNN organize a debate with the more moderate members of the Republican Party? It is unlikely. Not doing so means rewarding the Tea Party for their intolerance in the political discourse of the present political dispensation in America. It arrogates a sense of superiority to the Tea Party and emboldens them to continue their intransigence and defiance of constituted authority.

During the debate, the audience at the venue of the event cheered at almost every rhetoric and jabs of all the candidates thereby making it impossible for one to understand the stand of the Tea Party audience. The audience's reaction was beyond the control of the moderator but the refusal of the candidates to answer pointed questions and the candidates' misleading responses to questions were within the control of Wolf Blitzer, the moderator. For example, a member of the audience wanted to know how much of every dollar he earns he is entitled to keep to himself in an imaginary world of limited government espoused by Tea Party

ideologues. None of the candidates could commit to a dollar amount neither did Wolf Blitzer demand an effective and efficient answer to that question. Governor Rick Perry believed to be the front runner among the Republican Party primary voters upped the ante by repeating his often quoted refrain: "I will make Washington inconsequential in your lives." Such rhetoric has no place in accountability journalism. By Washington DC being inconsequential in the lives of Americans, Governor Perry probably meant that government will not have any effect in our lives. In other words, we shall return to the Hobbesian state of nature where life is "poor, nasty, brutish, and short." The logical questions, Wolf Blitzer should have helped his audience to understand is:

1. Why Governor Perry and perhaps other candidates are running to be President if government is to be abolished.
2. Which government are they going to preside if they win the election?

Understandably, Republicans want to unseat President Barack Obama of the Democratic Party. To do that, it is

expected that the candidates should attack the president from all corners, denounce his administration, and even portray a US president as unpatriotic. That is the nature of politics but the business of journalism should attempt to separate fact from fiction; separate reality from rhetoric, and similarly myth, mystery, and myopia. Wolf Blitzer should have asked the candidates to identify at least one area they agreed with Obama. He did not and Michelle Bachman, the Minnesota Congresswoman seized the moment and railed on Obama in every answer to every question even when they are not related. She even twisted questions to provide an opportunity to mention Obama's name. In the NBC/POLITICO presidential debate last week, Brian Williams asked the candidates questions about the areas of agreement with President Obama and I recall that Newt Gingrich specifically said that he agreed with Obama on Charter schools.

Furthermore, moderators of political debates must not allow the candidates to get away with misleading information. For example, Rick Perry erroneously stated that Obama's stimulus plan created zero jobs. The non-partisan and respected referee -

Congressional Budget Office said the stimulus created 1.9 million jobs. How and why Wolf Blitzer did not bring this fact to the attention of viewers is beyond understanding. Happily, Anderson Cooper in his *Keeping Them Honest* later in the night invited his colleague Tom Foreman to do a fact check on the claims by the candidates. Foreman identified a lot of inaccuracies and misleading comments by the candidates. Rachel Maddow of MNSBC continued the next day – Wednesday in what she appropriately titled *Entering the Republican land* where demagoguery and propaganda are important assets. *Rachel Maddow Show* with great precision provided evidence to challenge the assertions of the candidates during the debate including the wild allegation that the stimulus did not create any job.

No doubt, the political season is a great season for the media but professionals in the business should not join the chatter, charade, and tirade and abandon their

responsibilities to the audience and to the world. The media should not make itself to be a problem to democracy instead the media should provide solutions. A recent survey by Rasmussen confirmed that 51% of Americans believe that the media is more of a problem to politics than money. This negative view of the media is unacceptable and unsustainable. The current attitude of chasing the crowd especially the extremist elements of both left and right of the political spectrum by the media is not healthy to America's democracy. It exacerbates tension in the polity and eliminates the prospect of compromise and national dialogue in a deeply politically divided country. It is in this light that CNN and Tea Party alliance must be perceived and pilloried.

***Dr. Uchenna Ekwo contributed this article. Views expressed in this article are not necessarily that of Center for Media & Peace Initiative but of the writer's.***

## Civil rights leader

Civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said that "the **arc** of the **moral** universe is long but it bends toward justice and President Obama recently said that "it was the moral force that bent the arc of history toward justice in Egypt, not violence." Perhaps, the media arc of freedom shall liberate the Libyan people from Colonel Muammar Qaddafi.

History has gone 360 degrees for Libyan Strongman Qaddafi as far as using the media as an instrument of acquiring, and retaining power. In September 1, 1969, Qaddafi used Benghazi Radio which primarily functioned as a government state channel as a platform to announce his seizure of power in a bloodless coup that toppled the previous regime. On that September day nearly 42 years ago, Qaddafi used eerily familiar words to announce his reign. "From this moment on, Libya is a free and sovereign republic."

Today, in a twist of fate that same radio station now styled Radio Free Libya is being used by activists to orchestrate the

movement to oust Qaddafi from power.

For four decades Qaddafi kept the media under tight control. Now with a new, robust newspaper and a radio station, the country's long-stifled journalists are reveling in free speech and joining the protests.

Amidst the horrific bloodshed that has crippled the African nation of Libya over the last few weeks and the violence and death that is surely yet to come, a story of hope and renewal arises and travels across the radio airwaves from Benghazi to Tripoli and Zawiyah. Benghazi Radio has been broadcasting as the "Voice of Free Libya" since 2 pm on February 21st when sound engineer Saleh Zayani announced "This is free Libya, and Tripoli is our capital."

Zayani is joined by a group of 20 radio professionals, engineers, hosts and activists who are volunteering their time to keep Radio Free Libya broadcasting around the clock. Many of those at the

station have worked for 2 decades or longer under Dictator Muammar Qaddafi's rigid censorship.

Ahmed Omar el-Naili, a broadcaster at the former and current Radio Benghazi says, "It's true that most of us used to work for the dictator. But we had little choice. Coming to work every day, it felt like a gun was being held to our heads. I'm not getting paid, but it's an incredible relief to be speaking freely for the first time in my life."

Local Libyans bring the broadcasters food donations in gratitude for the access they are providing them to news. Without Radio Free Libya, most Libyans would be left in the dark. Khalid Ali was the host of "Goodnight Benghazi" until he was fired last year and threatened with death for allowing callers to criticize Qaddafi's government. Now he is back, broadcasting as Libya ushers in a new era. "I can't really describe what's happening. For 15 years here, I was ordered to talk about „freedom“ and „democracy“ by the government. Before, those words were completely drained of meaning. Not anymore."

Now, Ali and his colleagues use the airwaves as they choose – encouraging their countryfolk in Tripoli to keep up the fight against Qaddafi's army, eliciting stories of tragedy and triumph from callers across the country. They are backing former Justice Minister Mustafa Abd el-Jalil, as the leader of a provisional government. Jalil was the first member of Qaddafi's government to break with the regime once the demonstrations were underway.

"We have more freedom than ever before. Our thinking is free now. Our words are free now. It's a feeling you can't transfer and you can't explain," Zayani says. "I feel free. For 41 years we were prisoners."

**Source: *The Faster Times***

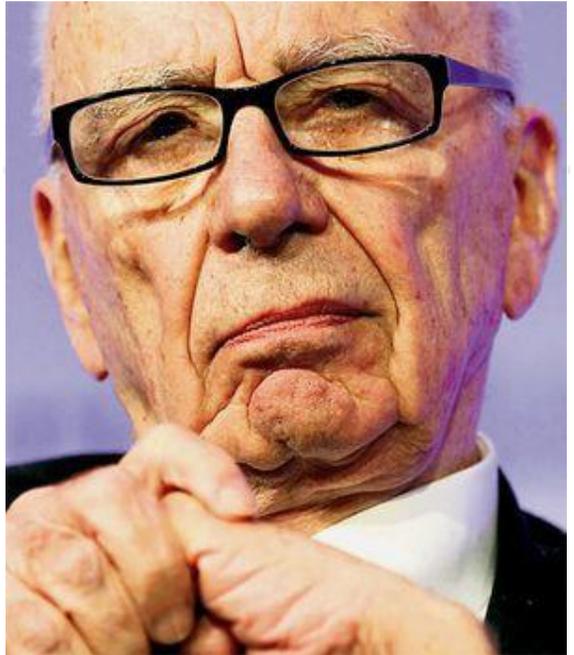
## **A Media Empire in Crises**

*Rupert Murdoch, a truly successful international media mogul faces unprecedented unethical challenges resulting from the conduct of his employees.*

In a strange coincidence, two major news organizations owned by media mogul, Rupert Murdoch Fox News based in the United States and News of the World based in United Kingdom got involved in a series of egregious, unethical, and suspicious conducts that justifiably attracted the ire of the public.

First was the false news published in a Fox News Twitter account which claimed that President Barack Obama has been assassinated on July 4th the independence anniversary day of America. The report which came in a series of six tweets on the @foxnewspolitics Twitter announced that the president was killed while campaigning in Iowa. The organization notorious for vituperative and vitriolic attacks on the president quickly alerted the public that the information was a false and mischievous handiwork of hackers.

Across the Atlantic, another Murdoch media organization is embroiled in yet a grave hacking scandal, this time not twitter but regular phones, thereby exposing the vulnerabilities of journalists in relation to the use of communication devices in doing their job.



### ***Rupert Murdoch***

The News of the World, a tabloid published for the past 168 years is accused hacking phone records of a number of people including murdered schoolgirl Milly Dowler, bereaved military families and relatives of 7/7 bombing victims.

With the worldwide condemnation of the

newspaper's conduct, News International Chairman James Murdoch announced Thursday that the organization was closing down to business. The tabloid newspaper, the chairman said, will be published for the last time on Sunday after it was rocked by the phone hacking scandal. Mr. Murdoch said in a statement: "Having consulted senior colleagues, I have decided that we must take further decisive action with respect to the paper. This Sunday will be the last issue of the News of the World."

The shock development came as police said there could be as many as 4,000 victims of phone hacking by the paper, which has been published for 168 years. Mr. Murdoch said this Sunday's edition of the News of the World would have no commercial advertisements and all the revenue from sales would go to good causes. He said: "The good things the News of the World does, however, have been sullied by behavior that was wrong. "Indeed, if recent allegations are true, it was inhuman and has no place in our company." Mr. Murdoch admitted that the paper's internal inquiry into earlier phone hacking claims was inadequate.

News of the World royal editor Clive Goodman and private investigator Glenn Mulcaire were jailed in 2007 after plotting to intercept voicemail messages left for royal aides. Mr. Murdoch accepted that the paper made statements to Parliament "without being in the full possession of the facts" and said he wrongly approved out-of-court settlements without having a "complete picture" of what had happened. He went on: "The News of the World is in the business of holding others to account. But it failed when it came to itself.

The political and commercial pressures had been mounting on News International all week with dozens of MPs, including Labor leader Ed Miliband, saying chief executive Rebekah Brooks had to go.

The crisis deepened after Scotland Yard Commissioner Sir Paul Stephenson said evidence from the company listed illegal payments being made to police officers. The closure comes a day after Rupert Murdoch said phone hacking at one of his flagship newspapers was "deplorable and unacceptable".

## Political reaction

Also yesterday Prime Minister David Cameron ordered a public inquiry into the scandal. The chairman of the Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee, John Whittingdale, said the closure of the paper was not the end of the phone hacking affair.



### ***British Prime Minister, David Cameron***

"We still need to get to the bottom of what went on. If necessary, prosecutions should follow. I think we still need to find out what happened," he told BBC Radio 4's PM program.

Alastair Campbell, Tony Blair's former communications director, said it was a "shocking move" and blamed bad management for what happened.

## Staff Reaction

Meanwhile journalists working at the News of the World greeted the announcement about the closure after this weekend with shock and amazement. Staff at the publisher's other newspapers received the statement by Chairman James Murdoch and gasps were heard across the newsrooms at Wapping as they reached the line: "This Sunday will be the last issue of the News of the World."

## Fallout

Rupert Murdoch's planned takeover of Britain's biggest commercial broadcaster was cast into doubt last night as his newspaper empire faced fresh allegations that it hacked the families of dead British servicemen and a dozen blue-chip companies withdrew advertising from its best-selling paper. In another damaging day for Mr. Murdoch in the deepening phone-hacking scandal, the communications regulator Ofcom

revealed that it was "closely monitoring" allegations of widespread criminality at News International and said it had a duty to be satisfied that Mr. Murdoch and his top executives were "fit and proper persons" to control BSkyB. Amid continuing claims that the News of the World had accessed the voicemails of child murder victims, Mr. Murdoch's embattled top-selling British title last night faced grave new claims that relatives of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan may have been victims of voicemail eavesdropping.

## CMPI launches TV show

Center for Media & Peace Initiative will launch a new television show ***Many Faces One World*** in November this year. It will air on Manhattan Neighborhood Network (MNN) every Wednesday by 12 noon

The weekly program will focus on promoting multiculturalism in the digital age. A general interest magazine program, *Many Faces One World* will emphasize the common bond that unites the human race. In a statement after a meeting with MNN's External Affairs Director, Ms. Zenaida Mendez, the President at the Center for Media & Peace Initiative, Dr. Uchenna Ekwo emphasized that both organizations were committed to improving intercultural dialogue through mediated communication. Already, CMPI hosts a radio show *Africa Public Square*. It airs on blogtalkradio every Saturday by 12 noon. The program discusses issues and events about Africa and the world.

CMPI designs, produces, and manages an innovative program of high quality seminars and conferences which promote the sharing

of knowledge and information, create opportunities for learning, and contribute to the development of people and organizations at all levels.

[www.facebook.com/cmpimedia](http://www.facebook.com/cmpimedia)

<http://sb.blogtalkradio.com/host/studio.aspx#>

## **Can journalists resist bias in reporting Libyan conflict?**

In the fog of war information becomes a vital asset. Both sides of a conflict not only fight for physical occupation of territories, they also struggle to win the hearts and minds of citizens and the rest of the world through propaganda. The mass media as vehicle for information dissemination are important instruments of propaganda in war situations. Colonel Moammer Gaddafi and the rebel opposition movement understand the need to manage information about the ongoing conflict in Libya. The Libyan strongman's clear understanding of the strategic value of utilizing the international media to tell his story informed his decision to provide lodging for all international journalists in one of Tripoli's most glittering hotels.

In the wake of the rebel advance to Tripoli and the determination of world powers in Europe and United States to remove Ghadafi from power at all costs, is it possible that journalists covering the conflict most of whom are from the West will be unbiased? Already, supporters of Ghaddafi are accusing western journalists of

favoring the NATO-supported rebels in their reports.

It is against this backdrop that journalists in the hotel provided by the Ghadafi's administration became restive when it became clear that Ghadafi's forces would not let them out of the hotel. It was therefore heart-warming for dozens of foreign journalists trapped in one of Tripoli's most glittering hotels for five days regained their freedom, ending what some were beginning to fear was a hostage situation. In its halcyon days, the Rixos hotel in Tripoli, Libya boasted of going the extra mile to make guests "feel privileged." It sent flowers and cooled towels to their rooms, and made Porsches and Jaguars -- even helicopters -- available at a moment's notice.

But by early Wednesday, the remaining guests at the luxury hotel in the Libyan capital were reduced to raiding cabinets for cheese and fruit. About 35 journalists who were allowed into the North African country to cover the conflict with the blessing of the Moammar Gadhafi regime were trapped at the hotel for five days.



And about five more journalists covering clashes in the area fled into the hotel Wednesday morning and were briefly barred from leaving, said CNN's Jomana Karadsheh, who is among those at the hotel. Four were later allowed to go, she saw.

### **Africa after Gadhafi**

But armed Gadhafi loyalists ring the hotel's perimeter and patrol its corridors, barring most journalists there from leaving. It's for their protection, the guards say. CNN's Matthew Chance, who is also at the hotel, urged other journalists in the city not to

come for fear they, too, would be trapped.

"We are not being allowed to leave. We want to leave. We are obviously in a very fragile position," he said. They have enough snack food and bottled water to last for several days, he explained.

"After that, we're going to be in trouble," he added. So, as battle rages outside for control of Tripoli between pro-regime and rebel forces, the reporters can do little but sit and wait.

With no air-conditioning and sporadic electricity, they walk the halls with the glow of candlelight to guide them. Giant paintings of Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi stare down at them from hotel walls. Snipers keep a wary eye from rooftops. "The concern we have now is that we seem to be in one of the few remaining patches of territory in Libya which is still controlled by Gadhafi's forces," Chance said. "And so we're kind of very anxious about what might happen at this hotel in the hours ahead."

The reporters spend their days in helmets and bullet proof vests. At night, they sleep on bed sheets in the hallway to avoid shards of glass from windows shattered by gunfire. "This is not a comfortable position, but ... all in good spirits," BBC correspondent Matthew Price tweeted Tuesday.

Chance said the journalists would like to "negotiate an exit," but have been prevented from doing so. The reporters have put up white bed sheets from the top floor balconies of the hotel. In large black letters, they scrawled the words "TV, press, don't shoot" on them to leave no doubt they are impartial observers in the conflict.

"Gadhafi loyalists have basically regarded the international media as being on the rebels' side in this conflict, even though that's obviously not the case," Chance said. "We're just here trying to report the government's side of things in this conflict."

The hotel has served as a de facto media hub approved by the regime for international journalists and scores of government officials who relocated their families there during the civil war. It also made headlines along the way.

In March, Eman al-Obeidy, stormed the hotel in tears while journalists were having breakfast and said Gadhafi forces had raped her. In May, Gadhafi himself made an unannounced appearance to hold a meeting with tribal leaders.

His sudden appearance, and the fact that the hotel is now being guarded so closely, has led to some speculation that Gadhafi himself is there, or that he has access to the hotel through secret tunnels from his bunker.

But Chance said he and other journalists had "scoured" the hotel "from top to bottom" and had seen no evidence of tunnels. On Tuesday, Gadhafi's son, Saif al-Islam, turned up to debunk reports that rebels had captured him. Hours after the son's defiance stance, rebel fighters and throngs of citizens stormed the ruler's fortress compound in Bab al-Aziziya not far away.

Celebratory gunfire rang out as residents

took off with souvenirs, including reams of documents and weapons. But away from the action, the journalists waited as dawn gave way to another day Wednesday -- and more clashes erupted outside the hotel.

Chance said their goal is to avoid agitating the guards. "We do not want to prompt any dangerous action," he said. "We are trying to stay as safe as possible." He hopes the nightmare, as he called it, ends soon.

"In a fizzle," he said. "Not a bang."

*Report culled from CNN with additional reporting by Im, Jongwon*

## **British politicians rightly close the door to Murdoch**

- *Steven Barnett*

As the resignations pile up in Britain's phone hacking scandal, the whole saga has already been compared to a Shakespearean tragedy.

This is no longer about the illegal interception of the voice mails left on the phone of a murdered 13-year-old schoolgirl, the key event that so appalled the world and galvanized British politicians into belated action. This has now become a watershed in British public life, a moment of transformational change that has no modern parallel. Some are comparing it, perhaps with just a touch of hyperbole, to a revolution on a par with the Arab spring.

There are two interweaved elements to this revolution, both of which were in the spotlight during the parliamentary hearings held Tuesday. First, there is the collusive and poisonous relationship between British government ministers and Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. For the last 30 years, starting with Conservative Prime Minister

Margaret Thatcher and followed up with interest by Labor Prime Minister Tony Blair, British governments have traded political favors and big political scoops with the Murdoch newspapers in return for their political support.

As a result, Murdoch built a phenomenally powerful media empire and wielded power so great that it could only be acknowledged surreptitiously -- in the UK, quite literally, through the back door of Downing Street. Why, he was asked Tuesday by one MP, did he go in the back entrance to see David Cameron days after his election as prime minister rather than the front door, like heads of state? Because he was told to, replied Rupert. Oh, and in case there was any doubt -- he did exactly the same, he said, with Gordon Brown when he was prime minister. Several times.



*Tony Blair and Gordon Brown*

That power has almost visibly started draining away as political leaders fall over each other in their unseemly rush to distance themselves from an increasingly toxic media empire. From now on, it's quite clear the back door will be firmly locked. And the front door -- if it's used at all -- will be opened sparingly, transparently and nervously. The man every prime minister wanted to court has suddenly become their worst nightmare.

The second strand is the personal power Rupert Murdoch himself wields over his newspaper editors. Four years ago, I accompanied another parliamentary committee (this time from the House of Lords) to New York to hear evidence from Murdoch and other proprietors for an inquiry on media ownership. Rupert was quite clear about his editorial influence: He was a "traditional proprietor" for his UK tabloids, the Sun and the News of the World, exercising editorial control over which political party to back in a general election or what line to take on major policy issues like Europe. He looked and acted like a man in charge.

I was also in the room when he gave

evidence Tuesday, and the contrast was sharp. Not only had the confident authority dissipated but he quite purposefully distanced himself from his British tabloids. He "seldom" speaks to the News of the World editor, and perhaps once or twice a month to the Sun editor. His master's voice, it seems, no longer commands the authority over his British editors that it once did.



***Margret Thatcher former Prime Minister and current PM, David Cameron***

Was this being a touch economical with the truth, to ensure that he stays untainted by the News of the World scandal? It didn't feel like it. It felt like a man who really has retreated to the United States, who is less interested in what his British tabloids are saying than

he was, and is therefore -- by extension -- less able to terrorize the politicians who have for so long lived in fear not only of losing his patronage but also of having their or their family's personal lives splashed all over his front pages.

It may also, of course, have something to do with the declining readership of his tabloid papers, which are suffering the same fate as most newspapers worldwide: The Sun down from 3.5 million copies sold in 2000 to around 2.8 million copies today, and the News of the World down from more than 4 million in 2000 to 2.6 million just before its closure. And now, of course, there is no more News of the World or any "immediate plans" to launch a new Sunday redtop.

So while there was plenty of contrition on show -- "the most humble day of my life" he said with head bowed, early in proceedings -- perhaps more significant were the real signs of waning authority. And most important of all, in terms of the health of British public life, a global audience witnessed a small cross-party

group of Britain's elected representatives doing what they should have been doing for the last 30 years: holding the press, and Murdoch in particular, accountable for their actions rather than scurrying away like a bunch of frightened rabbits in the glare of News Corp.'s headlights.

***Steven Barnett is professor of communications at the University of Westminster. He was special adviser to the House of Lords select committee for its inquiry into media ownership in 2007-2008.***

## **How Information, Communication, and Collaboration can re-shape Africa**

Adeyinka, a 21 year old Nigerian-American works as customer service retail assistant with the retail giant, K-Mart in New York City. He was asked by his boss to assist a customer to locate a particular item from the shelves and one of the first questions he asked was: are you African? The customer answered in the affirmative and he also told the customer that he was African and in fact his mother told him he was Nigerian. He verbalized all the information he had about Nigeria and how the country was located very closely to South Africa. How wrong!

Adeyinka's ignorance is not peculiar; it is pervasive and emblematic of the gross misunderstanding of all that is Africa not just by its peoples but also by others especially in the United States, Europe, and Asia etc.

As part of efforts to redress the poor information about Africa, African Views Organization convened a forum of eminent scholars, journalists, economists, lawyers,

social entrepreneurs, students, and civil society activists at the CMPI auditorium Wednesday to discuss Africa and what the continent represents to the world.

The forum provided a learning opportunity to guests on the richness of Africa, its diversity, cultural heritage, and governance activities.

Wale Ajibade, Director of Research and Strategy, African Views told the audience that the organization was determined to work towards generating and facilitating new ideas to overcome immediate and future challenges facing Africa and African Diaspora communities.

Ajibade, whose accent belies his Nigerian roots, having left Africa's shores in his teens, emphasized that the organization was a platform for cultural exchange among civilizations and also a framework for networking among organizations.

**“...generating and facilitating new ideas to overcome immediate and future challenges facing African and African Diaspora communities.”**



***Mr. Wale Ajibade, Director of Research & Strategy, African Views***

The organization’s website, Ajibade said, was an important resource base for practically everything about Africa and the world ranging from historical analysis to current social, economic and political developments in the continent.

Evidently, discussions at the forum confirmed long held views that Africa is extremely connected with the rest of the world in vastly historical and cultural terms. For example, Africans are found in India (*Jarawas, sentinel, and siddis*) but regrettably like in present global context,

the *siddis* occupy the lowest rung of the ladder below the so called *untouchables* within India’s heavily classified social system.

In Poland, according to Polish-born attorney Ms. Agnieszka Grzybowska, Africa’s ties with her native country dates back to the 16th century during the reign of King Zygmunt Waza III (c.1587-1632) when a close African friend of the king attended a wedding.



***Attorney Agnieszka Grzybowska: “Poland was not involved in slave trade...”***

Unlike, some European countries, Poland’s ties with Africa were not associated with the despicable trade on fellow human beings. If Grzybowska’s account is accurate, it is therefore understandable that many Africans travelled to Poland for education and

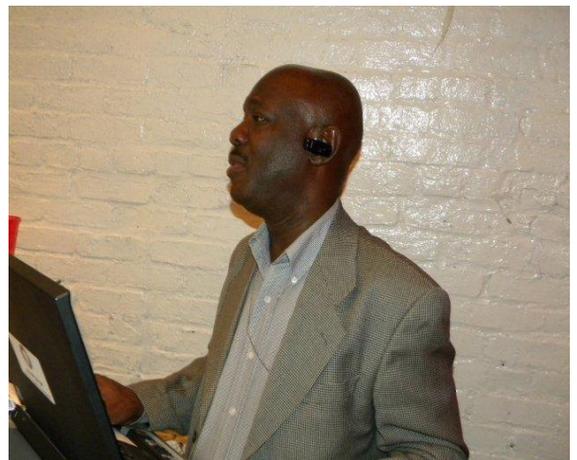
subsequently qualified as valued professionals who in turn contributed to the growth of the continent.

Participants at the forum shared similar views with Ms. Grzybowska on the desire by most non-Africans to visit the continent to explore its richness, culture, and fauna and flora. Other presenters included the President at the Center for Media & Peace Initiative, New York, Dr. Uchenna Ekwo who spoke of the need to change Africa's image as portrayed negatively in the international media. Dr. Ekwo outlined a number of programs by CMPI to change Africa's narrative for the better, eliminate stereotypes, and utilize information to empower citizens to attain their fullest potential.



***Dr. Uchenna Ekwo explains a point***

Ernest Opong, the Publisher of New Jersey based *Amandla* Newspapers said the mission of the publication was to tell Africa's stories from the continent's perspective. He lamented that the distortion of information about Africa was because in his words "we do not tell our stories by ourselves, and we allow others who do not understand us to manipulate information about us to suit their interests". Opong, however, admitted that the challenge of financial resources was a bane for journalists and other activists who are determined to change the deplorable African situation.



***Mr. Ernest Opong, Publisher Amandla Newspapers***

But, enterprising and talented African youths in the diaspora who are professionals in different fields are undaunted in their pursuit for positive social change in the continent.

For example, a young Nigerian Architect, Anaelechi Owunwanne, along with his colleague Efrain Perez partners with Freeform + Deform organization in collaboration with African Views is pioneering a unique Cultural Exchange Institute in Gweru, Zimbabwe. A program for Africans by Africans, the Institute will extol the virtues of Africa to both the continent and other parts of the world interested in Africa.



***Architect Anaelechi Owunwanne presenting AV's Cultural Exchange Institute scheme***

The \$21 million project generated series of questions from forum participants.

Ms. Adesuwa Enabulele fired the first salvo. What is the guarantee that Zimbabwean citizens living in the 22,000 acres of land will not be displaced? Dr. Susanna Dodgson, Publisher of Medical Journals Therapeutics Africa spotted the absence of medical facilities in the design that was on display for participants to critic. Another participant, Jack Nutuega who joined through Skype sought to know why the project should be sited in Zimbabwe that is notoriously unstable politically and economically?

Answers to these and other questions helped in shaping the project to reflect the diversity and heterogeneity embodied in the Institute's concept.



**Cross Section of participants**



***Dr. Uchenna Ekwo of CMPI and Professor Susanna Dodgson, Publisher Medical Journal of Therapeutics Africa.***



***Video of Africans in diaspora as available in African Views website.***

***Report by Center for Media & Peace Initiative***

## **AEJMC Supports Federal Funding Of Public Media**

More organizations have joined in the demand for public funding of public radio in the United States. The latest is The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) that called on the Senate to reject a provision in a House-passed budget bill that would devastate public media and, instead, to protect funding for broadcasting in the public interest.

Last month, House law makers voted to eliminate funding to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which distributes federal funds that support operations at 1,300 local public broadcasting stations. While federal funding is just a portion of station budgets (almost 14 percent, on average), it is critical to the ability of those stations to operate and to raise additional funding. Research indicates that local stations hardest hit by these cuts would be those in rural areas, where federal dollars are almost half of some stations' operating budgets and where there are fewer sources of news for residents and the threat of a "digital divide" for access to information is

more pronounced than in urban areas.

Objections to federal funding of public media have, in part, been based on the mistaken belief that the government has no obligation to fund the "Fourth Estate." The Carnegie Commission, formed in 1965 to examine the role of broadcasting in U.S. democracy, released its report two years later calling for a public broadcasting system that would be available "to all the people of the United States: a system that in its totality will become a new and fundamental institution in American culture" for the "full needs of the American public" to be served.

The AEJMC believes that the need for such a publicly funded system has not diminished in the decades since the Commission's report. Indeed, as the issues facing Americans become increasingly complex, the need for public broadcasting designed to "help us see America whole, in all its diversity" is greater than ever.

As research also points out, commercial media enterprises have ---- for most of this country's history ---- received federal assistance in the form of discounted postal subsidies and tax breaks, for instance. Yet, Americans trust public media more for relevant, complete news. A recent Roper Poll listed PBS as the nation's most-trusted institution. In the 2010 poll, 45 percent of respondents said they trust PBS more than any other nationally known organization. PBS ranked at the top in public trust among every age group, ethnicity, income and education level measured. Second in trust are "courts of law," which are trusted a great deal by 26 percent. PBS ranks highest in importance among 58 percent of respondents when compared to commercial broadcasting (43 percent) and cable television (40 percent).

A recent report by researchers at the USC Center on Communication Leadership and Policy suggests that *increased* funding for public broadcasting might be advisable. The AEJMC also urges lawmakers, journalists and the public to engage in discussion that will move the debate beyond simply whether public broadcasting should or should not be federally funded. As scholars

and activists point out, the way public broadcasting is funded - through a process that involves partisan decision-making every budget cycle - needs to be scrutinized so public media can better meet its obligations to democracy.

