



✉ **Subscribe to AlterNet:**

E-mail address



We Stormed the Polls!

Check out our archive of articles and resources about youth and election '04.

Site of the Week

Make Textbooks Affordable.com

Most college students pay an average of \$900 a year for textbooks

Submissions

WireTap is always looking for new writers, activists and artists to add to the site. [Find out more!](#)

Background

Mobilizing the Hip-Hop Generation

Hip-hop is being reclaimed from the clutches of corporations by youth activists.

Get on the Bus!

A daily record of last year's Immigrant Freedom Ride.

Defending Affirmative Action: Tips for Teen Organizers

The gulf between schools attended by suburban whites and those attended by inner-city minorities is deep, wide and growing. What can youth organizers do about it?

Rediscovering Tribal Wisdom

A Native youth activist, organizer, and hip-hop promoter talks about how he broke free of the colonized mindset, and how he's helping other Native youth do the same.

The New Street Basketball Industry: Who Profits?

It would be a great if sports corporations contributed more to the development of the inner cities

Conversation with Amy Goodman

By **Suemedha Sood**, **WireTap**. Posted **April 14, 2006**.

One of the world's leading investigative journalists talks about her career, Iran, the immigration debate and what we can do to support free and independent media.

Tools

✉ **EMAIL**

🖨 **PRINT**

🗨 **COMMENT NOW**

Journalist Amy Goodman has been called everything from a hero to a threat to national security. The founder and host of *Democracy Now!*, she has won numerous awards for her courage and perseverance. From getting exclusive interviews with figures like Jean-Bertrand Aristide and Hugo Chavez to relentlessly reporting on Hurricane Katrina and 9/11, Amy Goodman is respected worldwide for her journalism and activism. Her fierce commitment to investigative journalism has put her life at risk on a number of occasions. In 1991, Amy and fellow journalist and activist Allan Nairn were shooting a documentary depicting the genocide in East Timor, then occupied by the Indonesian military. In the midst of a massacre of a huge group of Timorese, she and Allan were brutally beaten and almost killed by Indonesian soldiers.

With her book, *The Exception to the Rulers: Exposing Oily Politicians, War Profiteers, and the Media that Love Them*, she challenges the policies of the Bush Administration, holding the corporate media accountable for reproducing the lies of those in power. [WireTap Magazine](#) spoke with Amy Goodman about her career, her thoughts on U.S. foreign policy, and what we can do to support free and independent media.

Also in WireTap

Tippling in America

Talia Berman

The Birth of a New Generation of Activists

Nawal Arinji, Karla Cano, Caroline Leopold

Criminalizing Humanitarian Aid

Jordan Buckley

Join the Largest Social Movement of Our Decade

Valerie Benavidez

Notorious C.H.O.

Gary Moskowitz

More stories by Suemedha Sood

WireTap: What inspired you to pursue a career in journalism?

Amy Goodman: In high school I saw it as a way of documenting what was around me and holding those in power accountable -- at the time it was my school principal. And so, it was just something I always did. I was editor of my high school newspaper and it was a way to try to improve the situation; it was my way of dealing with issues by exposing injustice, and trying to improve things.

WT: Who were your sources of inspiration in your twenties?

AG: My parents, who were peace activists. My grandparents, who were immigrants to this country, fleeing persecution.

WT: What did you do before your work with Pacifica Radio?

AG: I was lucky enough to find what most journalists look for their whole lives at the beginning of my career at Pacifica (then WBAI), and that is independence. I was always involved with newspapers from when I was a kid. But on WBAI I heard all of the

9.11-9.11: The Year in Youth Activism

a landmark year for youth organizing

WireTap Makes Headlines!

A publishing journal praises WireTap's "unflinching look" at youth issues.

Recommended Sites

WATCH: Global Warming

OnTheBrink.org brings you a closer look at evidence that the earth is getting warmer.

WATCH: Media That Matters

Check out the fourth annual online film festival.

Interview with M-1 of Dead Prez

Watch: Interview with m-1 of dead prez

A political musical artist speaks his mind on hip hop, global politics and revolution.

HEAR: Border Youth

Listen to the 6/19 show of Ritmos De Las Americas, where youth from Border Action Network speak out.

Premium Advertisement

books⁺ we like.



promote
your faves
discover
new ones
support
AlterNet

Books We Like

[Read More...](#)

Be 1 of 2 ads at the top of the page!

Basic Advertisement

The Sport of Distraction



rawness and realness of New York by just tuning in. It was all the various accents and experiences of New York and hearing all of that in people's voices and it just amazed me and mesmerized me.

WT: In *The Exception to the Rulers* you talk about the responsibility that journalists have to "go where the silence is." Why is it more difficult for the mainstream reporters to carry out this responsibility?

AG: It's not more difficult to do it, they just don't do it. I think the obstacle is media consolidation. The fewer the owners, the more similar the points of views expressed. And I think the media was at an all-time low when leading up to the invasion [of Iraq]. All the cheerleading for war and singing the praises of those in power -- it was a tremendous disservice to the people of this country.

I definitely don't have unlimited access, but if you can't get information one way, you pursue it another way. But I think it's very important that we not partake in the "access of evil" -- we talk about it in the book -- the trading of truths for access. It happens when journalists go to press conferences and ask soft questions just to get access, just to get a quote. But we can't trade truth for access. Because politicians need journalists more than journalists need politicians.

WT: You talk about mainstream journalists contributing to the "access of evil." But what about reports that came out about the Abu Graib scandal or Hurricane Katrina where it would seem the mainstream media has been somewhat critical of the government?

AG: I say that journalists indulge in the "access of evil" in that they trade truth for access to these politicians so that they can get a direct quote. I think what counts is the repetition -- how often the story is told. It's very important that the Abu Graib prison story was broken -- it was broken by CBS and by Seymour Hersh at *The New Yorker*. At CBS, they held on to it for a few weeks, but they did break it.

But it can't just be broken once -- the story has to keep on being told, and those in charge have to be questioned, and it has to be investigated. And the investigation can't be limited to one place because we now know that these things have been happening in many places. And we should see the same level of investigation as we see with celebrity journalism. When celebrities are covered, we see every minute detail of their lives and each day something new happens. We hear that Tom Cruise walked outside today, and his girlfriend Katie walked out on the street, or they got on a plane and on and on. And we have to take the same approach to stories that matter, to issues of life and death; because I think people would deeply care -- more than they care about celebrities -- if they really knew what was going on. And that's the trick, that's our responsibility

WT: What are your thoughts on the use of political satire as a means for reaching out to young people? For example, many have praised *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart for representing dissent through comedy.

AG: It's extremely important to break the sound barrier every way we can because the more TV channels there are, the more illusion there is that we're getting diversity of opinion, but what really matters is who owns the media and how many media moguls there are and how they operate.

WT: On your book tour, you've been meeting with groups of people all over the country. What are some of the concerns echoed across state lines?

AG: They are all concerned with the state of this country -- with poverty, with the state of dissent, with the minority elite, consolidated power, and what's happening in Iraq. They're concerned about the number of soldiers dying, the number of Iraqis being hurt, the thousands of people unjustly detained whether at Guantanamo or Abu Graib. I think people are very scared that it's undermining the basic principles of this country; and it's crossing the whole political spectrum. I think conservative Republicans are concerned about the violation of privacy and corporate control the same way they are about U.S. soldiers coming home in body bags.



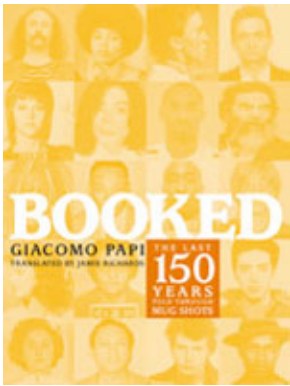
America is showered with diversions; join in identifying the beneficiaries of a distracted society, which results from a devotion to amusement

- Examine the:
- Ills of Fanaticism
- Liberal Media Myth
- Religious Politicization
- Redefining Patriotism & more

100+ References Supporting Arguments

[Read More...](#)

The Last 150 Years in 366 Mug Shots

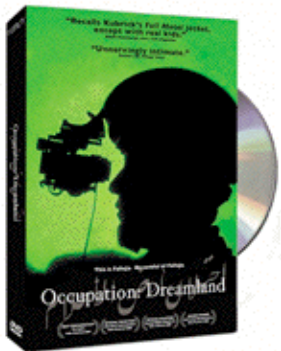


"The mug shot has become an opportunity to carve out one's identity before the public eye.... Steve McQueen raises his hand in a peace sign. Jane Fonda holds up a fist. Michael Jackson's expression resembles a Peter Pan mask. Frank Sinatra poses like a model."

Read an excerpt, buy the book.

[Read More...](#)

The Iraq War: Uncensored



"Occupation: Dreamland"
Limited Edition DVD

Acclaimed Documentary
"Recalls Stanley Kubrick's Full Metal Jacket, except with real kids."
- New York Magazine

[Read More...](#)

Support Our Troops? Question War!

WT: What would you say about claims regarding so-called "liberal bias" in the mainstream commercial media?

AG: I don't know where it is. It's an illusion that right-wing pundits use to pressure the media to become even more in line with them, and it's not true. The problem with the corporate media is that it ices out dissent. It should be a sanctuary for dissent, that's what makes this country healthy.

WT: How could independent media like Pacifica and AlterNet reach out to a more conservative audience?

AG: I think all sorts of people are turning to independent media. I think the audience is increasing in all sorts of ways because the issue of Weapons of Mass Destruction not being found exposed the Bush Administration, it exposed the media that reproduced these false claims. People are starting to look for something else. And the mainstream media -- it shouldn't even be called mainstream. It's extreme media.

WT: What are some examples of corporate media outside the U.S. that could call themselves democratic? Specifically, where can we find a media system that isn't plagued by the problems of concentrated ownership, influence of advertisers, uniformity of content, etc.?

AG: I think in a lot of countries there is a lot more media. What matters is just having a diversity of media. I spent time in Nigeria, and there is a very vibrant media there. In other countries I think what matters for all people is to reach outside of the media in your own country so you can find a diversity of perspectives. It's really essential to seek out a lot of different media to seek out different perspectives and different angles on what is happening. As for Americans, the decisions that the president of this country makes have far-reaching effects on people all over the world.

WT: What are some specific matters of foreign or domestic policy that are currently being overlooked by the corporate media?

AG: Torture. Poverty. Health care in this country. What I mean by saying that these are overlooked is that what matters is repetition. It's not enough to just tell the story once, no matter how big the expose. But what gets pulled on the front pages of the newspapers on a daily basis, day after day, that's what sinks into people's consciousness. Hurricane Katrina, for one, has very much put into perspective the fact that poverty and the racial divide are important problems that need this kind of repeated coverage in the media.

WT: *Democracy Now!* recently reported on Seymour Hersh's article in *The New Yorker* regarding the possibility of a U.S. military attack on Iran. The Bush Administration has denounced such claims as has Iran's top nuclear negotiator who says Hersh's report is part of a U.S. psychological warfare campaign. What's your take on this?

AG: As for Iran and Seymour Hersh's very important expose, what we're seeing the Administration saying is a replay of Iraq. Before the invasion of Iraq, Bush was saying there were reports that Iraq was months away from getting a nuclear weapon and it turned out there was no such report. And they're citing the same type of information in talking about Iran. The difference is that we have Iraq behind us and people no longer trust what the government is telling us.

WT: For the past few weeks, *DemocracyNow!* has been covering the immigration debate, which some are likening to a second Civil Rights movement. Can you comment on this incredible display of democracy?

AG: The issue of immigration -- it's just astounding what has happened in the last month or so. We have never seen this level of protest in this country on any issue. And it's coming from people who have been marginalized more than any other -- who have been targeted, victimized and here they are marching in the streets of Chicago, Florida, Texas, everywhere. In Dallas, Chicago, Los Angeles, and many others, these are the largest protests in these cities' history. Tens of thousands -- even millions of people



The perfect answer to "patriotic" yellow ribbons. **Put this on Your car.** It is time the voices questioning war grow stronger than those justifying war. The intelligent car magnet that needs to be everywhere. Get it at: www.QuestionWar.com

[Read More...](#)

Sustainable Energy in Motion Bike Tour



Bike hundreds of miles. Meet incredible people. Participate in amazing service projects. Work on organic farms and promote sustainable food. Study and work with Native American communities. Live with the land and camp under the stars.

Change your world, one mile at a time.

[Read More...](#)

[Be 1 of up to 5 ads in this strip!](#)

AlterNet Your turn

Support AlterNet

Do you value the information you're getting from AlterNet? Please show your support with a [tax-deductible donation](#).

Feedback

Tell us [how we're doing](#).

Search:

have taken to the streets, spreading the message that, 'Yes we can, it's possible.' And these are the people that have the most to lose -- and yet if they don't speak up, they lose everything. And to see this demonstration of solidarity and anger, it's changing policy in America. It proves that grassroots action makes a tremendous difference. It is extremely inspiring.

WT: You often report on issues that expose the darkest sides of humanity. Where do you find the strength to keep going? What inspires you today?

AG: I think I find the strength and I am inspired by the people I cover. The people I cover and work with have hope and continue to believe that the world can be better -- that has always inspired me. From people in Timor, people in Haiti, people in Nigeria, and people right here in the United States. And that's what gives me hope.

WT: What can students and young people do to support progressive, independent media?

AG: Get involved with it. Make media. Use Public Access TV, get involved with independent radio and independent media in this country and around the world. There's no better way to understand independent media or support it than by doing it. There's no better way to understand how it works than by making your own. Build independent media and challenge corporate media because they control the airwaves. Whatever we're involved with we need to recognize that the media are the most powerful institutions in the world. They really determine so much about what people understand about the world and about what the rest of the world understands about us.

Suemedha Sood is a frequent contributor to WireTap. She studies politics and religious studies at the University of Virginia.

[« WireTap](#)
Tools:
[EMAIL](#)
[PRINT](#)
[COMMENT NOW](#)

Comments

[Give Us Feedback »](#)

Tools: [\[Post a new comment\]](#) [\[Login\]](#) [\[Signup\]](#)

View:

There are no comments posted yet. [Post a comment now!](#)

