

# 10 things **BIG MEDIA** doesn't want you to know

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## **1) A HANDFUL OF COMPANIES DOMINATE**

Five media conglomerates — Viacom, Disney, Time Warner, News Corp. and NBC/GE — control the big four networks (70% of the prime time television market share), most cable channels, as well as vast holdings in radio, publishing, movie studios, music, Internet, and other sectors.

## **2) BIG MEDIA USE THE PUBLIC'S AIRWAVES AT NO CHARGE**

The total worth of the publicly-owned airwaves that U.S. broadcasters utilize has been valued at \$367 billion — more than many nations' GDPs — but the public has never been paid a dime in return. And the broadcasters claim they can't afford to be accountable to the public interest!

## **3) BIG MEDIA ARE A POWERFUL SPECIAL INTEREST IN WASHINGTON**

Media companies intent upon changing the FCC media ownership rules have spent nearly \$100 million on lobbying in the last 4 years. FCC officials have taken more than 2,500 industry-sponsored junkets since 1995, at a pricetag of \$2.8 million.

## **4) INDEPENDENT VOICES ARE FADING**

Since 1975, two-thirds of independent newspaper owners have disappeared, and one-third of independent television owners have vanished. Only 281 of the nation's 1,500 daily newspapers remain independently owned, and more than half of all U.S. markets are dominated by one paper.

## **5) CONSOLIDATION THREATENS MINORITY MEDIA OWNERSHIP**

Minority ownership — a crucial source of diverse and varied viewpoints — is at a 10-year low, down 14% since 1997. Today, only 4% of radio stations and 1.9% of television stations are minority-owned.

## **6) CONSOLIDATION IS KILLING LOCAL RADIO**

The number of radio station owners has plummeted by 34% since 1996, when ownership rules were gutted. That year, the largest radio owners controlled fewer than 65 stations; today, radio giant Clear Channel alone owns over 1,200.

## **7) CONSOLIDATION FOSTERS INFERIOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING**

After Viacom purchased the independent KCAL in Los Angeles, children's programming plunged 89%, dropping from 26 hours per week in 1998 to three hours in 2003 (the minimum requirement set by Congress). TV stations air programs like *NFL Under the Helmet* and *Saved by the Bell*, claiming they meet educational programming requirements.

## **8) THE FREE FLOW OF IDEAS AND INFORMATION IS BEING STYMIED**

No copyrighted work created after 1922 has entered the public domain — an incubator for new ideas — due to corporate-sponsored legislation extending copyright terms. If laws being considered today had been in effect a few generations ago, you wouldn't have access to products such as VCRs and copy machines.

## **9) CABLE RATES ARE SKYROCKETING**

Cable companies lobbied for and won deregulation in 1996, arguing that it would lower prices. Since then, cable rates have been rising at three times the rate of inflation. On average, rates have risen by 50%; in New York City, they've risen by 93.7%.

## **10) BIG MEDIA PROFIT FROM A MONEY-DOMINATED CAMPAIGN FINANCE SYSTEM**

In 2004, television stations earned more than \$1.4 billion from political advertising — more than they earned from fast food and automotive ads. You were four times more likely to see a political ad during a TV news broadcast than an election-related news story.

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Prepared by Free Press, on the web at [www.freepress.net](http://www.freepress.net). Free Press is a non-profit organization working to involve the public in media policymaking and to craft policies for a more democratic media system.

media *is* the issue.

