

## Change the Media, Change the World: The National Conference on Media Reform

by Sue Ann Martinson

What happens when 2500 media mavens who are organizers, techies, professors, high school teachers, students and media advocates of all stripes come together? Synergy. Energy. Sharing. Networking. Advocacy. Activism. That's what happened the weekend of April 8-10, 2011 in Boston.

I will start with Amy Goodman. I have never heard the Democracy Now! host speak so passionately. She said "from global warming to global warring, we need independent media." She talked, in part, about her experience of being arrested in St. Paul during the 2008 Republican National Convention. She is suing the city.

Two powerful messages emerged from the convention this year. The first, as stated by Federal Communications Commissioner Michael Copps was: "No matter what your first issue is, your second issue needs to be the media." To embrace this idea is essential. Why? The mainstream media, as you know, is owned by corporate conglomerates who act as gatekeepers for the information that the public gets and consistently consolidate for even more power. So while the drum was beat loudly and often for independent media, and it was well represented by so many wonderful independent media organizations, journalists, broadcasters, educators, students, and citizen journalists, a new message was given added emphasis this year: It's time for citizens to take back our media and our democracy in this country.

The second important message to emerge from the conference is the founding of the Democracy Fund, a new operating foundation that will challenge the influence of corporate lobbyists over government policymaking. Media corporations such as AT&T, Verizon, and Comcast spend \$100 million dollars a year combined on lobbying Congress. Josh Silver, outgoing president and CEO of Free Press, which sponsors NCMR, is leaving Free Press to become CEO of the Democracy Fund.

Meeting with others from around the country made me realize just how lucky we are in the Twin Cities and Minnesota. We have many more public stations and independent newspapers than most parts of the country.

You can see videos of NCMR speeches by Michael Copps, John Nichols, Josh Silver, Amy Goodman, Robert W. McChesney, Juan Gonzales, and other media and political luminaries, as well as find links on the NCMR website to listen to the many informative workshops on media analysis, media justice, media advocacy and media reform. Many videos are featured on the WAMMToday blog, The Uptake.org, FreeSpeechTV.org, YouTube, and the NCMR website: [conference.freepress.net](http://conference.freepress.net). Watch the videos or listen to the audio of the workshops on your computer at home, by yourself or in groups. Be a part of changing the media to change the world.

Sue Ann Martinson is a long-time justice and peace activist. She currently serves on the WAMM Board and WAMM Media Committee, and she created the WAMMToday blog.