MEDIA POWER COLLABORATIVE

COORDINATED BY Free Press

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Building a Shared Vision of Media Power

I. Description

The Media Power Collaborative (MPC) is an organizing space for media workers, movement organizers, and allied researchers to build a shared analysis for the future of journalism and operate as an initial base of mobilization to advance public policies for a revived civic information landscape.

II. Objectives

As a group, we aim to:

- Develop a common analysis of our media system that integrates our collective experiences
- Build a community and shared culture around transforming our media system
- Function as a connecting hub for media policy ideas among media workers, movement organizers, and allied researchers
- Serve as an initial base to advocate and mobilize for public policies that build a revived national civic information landscape

As individuals, we seek to gain:

- A critical understanding of the media system and our places within it – as workers, community members, etc. – in both local and national contexts
- Foundational historical knowledge of how and why we have arrived at this point, including previous struggles for media democracy
- Committed solidarity with a shared vision for civic information and public investments
- A strong familiarity with the different possible interventions to make that vision a reality
- Capacities for strategic leadership to organize in our workplaces and communities

III. Summary of Activities (December 2021 to April 2022)

Getting Started

MPC Kick-off Meeting!
December 17, 2021 (1-2 pm ET)

Guiding questions:

- Why is collective power necessary to realize a just and equitable media system?
- How does the basic structure of the media system affect the challenges you see at the local level?
- What avenues are available to advocate for and construct a media system that better serves our communities?
- What relationships do you see between the media and broader struggles for a multiracial, multiclass democracy?
- Why must you act, how can you act, and what must you learn to do?

Required text:

- Marshall Ganz, Public Narrative, Collective Action, and Power (2011), pp. 282-88.

Part 1 | Media past: How we got here

Expert Panel and Q+A: **What can we learn from the history of organizing around local media policy?**
January 21, 2022 (1-2 pm ET)

- Letrell Crittenden (American Press Institute), Nan Rubin (Community Media Services), Joseph Torres (Free Press)

Group Discussion and Synthesis
February 4, 2022 (1-2 pm ET)

- Meeting notes & takeaways

Guiding questions:

- How does today's media system relate to a longer history of political struggles? How might the situation have turned out differently?
- How have past media policies constructed the system we have today?
- How has public policy shaped the ways media exclude and/or actively harm certain communities?
- How have people fought for a more democratic media system in the past, and where have they succeeded and failed?
- What relationships do you see between public policy, media, and social/political power?

Required texts:

- Media 2070, pp. 40-57.
- Juan Gonzalez & Joseph Torres, *News for All the People* (Verso, 2011), Introduction.

- Robert W. McChesney, *The Problem of the Media* (Monthly Review Press, 2004), Chapter 1 excerpt.

Supplemental resources:
- Juan Gonzalez & Joseph Torres, *News for All the People* (Verso, 2011), Chapters 9, 11, 16.
- Victor Pickard, *Democracy Without Journalism? Confronting the Misinformation Society* (Oxford University Press, 2020), Chapter 1.
- Sanjay Jolly & Ellen Goodman, A "Full Stack" Approach to Public Media in the United States (German Marshall Fund, 2021), pp. 4-10.
- Makani Themba & Nan Rubin, Speaking for Ourselves (The Nation, 2003).
- Lewis Raven Wallace, John Biewen & Chenjerai Kumanyika, More Truth (Scene On Radio, S4E11, 2020).

Part 2 | Media crisis: Assessing our current situation

Expert Panel and Q+A: What is the present-day landscape around civic information policy and media reform organizing?
March 4, 2022 (1-2 pm ET)
- Carla Murphy (Independent Journalist), Victor Pickard (Media, Inequality, and Change Center)

Group Discussion and Synthesis
March 18, 2022 (1-2 pm ET)
- Meeting notes & takeaways

Guiding questions:
- Who holds power in the media today and why? How does your local media ecosystem allocate power, influence, and resources in your community?
- How do public policies encourage or constrain the democratic potential of your local media ecosystem?
- Who in your community is organizing locally in response to civic information challenges? What are some potential untapped resources?
- How are your local circumstances similar or different to those of other MPC participants?

Required texts:
- Media 2070, pp. 9-16.
- Victor Pickard, *Democracy Without Journalism? Confronting the Misinformation Society* (Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 69-77, 84-89.
- S. Derek Turner, How Big is the Reporting Gap? (Free Press, 2020).
- Martina Guzmán, A View from Detroit in *Losing the News* (PEN America, 2019), pp. 37-42.

Supplemental resources:
- Carla Murphy, Why We Need a Working-Class Media (Dissent Magazine, 2019).

- Joshua Benton, Do countries with better-funded public media also have healthier democracies? (NiemanLab, 2022).
- Victor Pickard, *Democracy Without Journalism? Confronting the Misinformation Society* (Oxford University Press, 2020).
- Losing the News (PEN America, 2019).

Part 3 | Media futures: What we do about it

Expert Panel and Q+A: What policies can transform our media system for the better, and how do we achieve them?
April 15, 2022 (1-2 pm ET)
- Brandi Collins-Dexter (Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy), Darryl Holliday (City Bureau)

Group Discussion and Synthesis: Dream Salon
April 29, 2022 (1-2:30 pm ET)
- Meeting notes

Guiding questions:
- What would a fully realized civic information system look like, nationally and locally? What values underlie that vision?
- How can media policy be used to redress historical harm and injustice?
- What policy interventions would help generate a revived media landscape? What are their strengths, weaknesses, and potential impact on your local community?
- How might these policy proposals be achieved, and what role could *you* play in those efforts?
- Who are the key stakeholders in your local community?

Required texts:
- Media 2070, pp. 18, 24-25, 91-94.
- Darryl Holiday, Journalism is a public good. Let the public make it (Columbia Journalism Review, 2021).

Supplemental resources
- Anya Schiffrin, Who Will Save the News? (The Nation, 2020).
- Rodney Benson & Matthew Powers, Public Media and Political Independence (Free Press, 2011), pp. 3-14, 61-66.
- Timothy Karr & Craig Aaron, Beyond Fixing Facebook: How the multibillion-dollar business behind online advertising could reinvent public media, revitalize journalism and strengthen democracy (Free Press, 2019).
- Victor Pickard, The commercial era for local journalism is over (NiemanLab, 2021).
- Mike Rispoli, Why the Civic Info Consortium Is Such a Huge Deal (Free Press, 2020).