

Gathering Storm: Collaborative Activism After Seattle  
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I have a lot of tapes I want to show some pieces of, but I thought I ought to give a little introduction first of all. Just to explain a little bit, and it may be a little of a correction from what Tom was saying, the web site and the whole independent media center is more than just video activists and the web. It's actually an amazing phenomena because it brings together not only video makers and people who work in new technologies, but it's also brought together print people that work with regular newspapers and photographers. And one of the big aspects of it is radio.

Actually, has anyone here ever worked in micro-radio, or worked at a radio station? Bard should have a radio station, you guys. You guys should just do it. The transmitter costs about sixty dollars. Go get one, you know. Actually, if you go to the web site there's probably a diagram. You could build one yourself. But what's unique [about the independent media center], is the people working together, that has been the most exciting thing. I have worked as a video activist and a film maker, but I've never really worked with radio people before, or people who were primarily interest in still photography, and actually we have one of the people from the photo workshops at the IMC here today. Ali is here and we'll have him say a few words about the work he did in D.C. and I'll be showing a D.C. tape.

Indy Media is a kind of confluence, a convergence, and similarly a convergence in the movement also. You have people who, in the past, may have worked very hard on the sweatshop movement, and then you have other people working on the prison movement, the anti-prison movement, and in all of these events that have happened since Seattle, people are realizing that there aren't those kind of divisions, that people can work together. Actually when you're talking about the prison movement, in a way, there's many similarities to the Globalization Movement. I don't where these desk were made, but there's a huge booming business in office furniture that are being made by various incarcerated persons, probably very close to here. Up in Hudson, New York, there's a huge factory that's connected with the prisons up there. If you teach at a state school, you're required to buy furniture from the prisons. You can't just go out and buy used furniture store or go to Home Depot. You have to buy furniture from the prison. Its similar in New York State, and also in California.

So, what's the connection there? Is this a sweatshop? That's a really great sweatshop. You don't have to pay people hardly anything. What they do with prisons is they pay minimum wage, but then they take off room and board, and various costs. They give money to what's called a Victim's Fund. By the time the

prisoner gets the money it comes down to between ten and twenty five cents an hour, which is probably about the same that people are getting in Haiti. So, there's a lot of similarities, a lot of connections that can be made. The same kind of thing is happening in the social justice movements here in the United States. They are realizing that it's a very similar kind of thing when they talk about their issues, to what's going on in all the Nike stores, or Nike shops, Nike factories in various parts of Asia.

So, in terms of the media work. I think what's I'd like to do is just explain a little bit about Deep Dish, because none of this would have been possible without a kind of a slow build up of various infrastructures. Somebody said, "Oh isn't it amazing, it's like, you had the sixties and then nothing happened, and then all of the sudden, there was like Seattle, and it just came from nowhere," and that's not exactly true because just as there have been people working for decade on issues of fair pay and exploitation and imperialism abroad. There have also been people working on and trying to build up infrastructures, alternative infrastructures, for media.

Paper Tiger is a collective...Has anybody here every worked with Paper Tiger? Yes, did you work as an intern there? Meetings? I think I saw you there one time. We've had a lot of Bard students work at Piper Tiger and we love to get more and more interns. Sometimes the room gets a little crowded, but it's an ongoing collective. It was started in 1981, and it began mostly doing videotape about the media, critiquing the media. We had Joel Kovel look at Covert Action Information Bulletin and Psychology Today. I don't know if any of you know that Joel Kovel used to be a psychiatrist and, so he has a very interested take on Psychology Today, which you might want to look at that tape some time. It's a wonderful tape, and he also did a very nice program about Bill Moyers.

We've done over three hundred and seventy programs having different people look at the media, and the idea was to actually have something on cable which critiqued the media. We have nine hundred channels on my cable system. You can actually get nine hundred channels, but it's all pretty much the same, and one of the things you don't see is a really cogent look at the media itself. So Paper Tiger began as a kind of attempt to provide a critique of the media, and the programs. How many people here have ever seen a Paper Tiger show? They are shown in various classes around the country and some are better than others. They're very low budget. One of the reasons for Paper Tiger was also to try to provide media that actually showed how the media was done. So, there's always a lot of process, we let the scene show. It's like a hand thrown pot, where you can actually see the thumb print of the potter who made it, rather than a machine, factory made, pot.

Paper Tiger was going for about seven or eight years and in 1986, we kept getting a lot of requests from people around the country who wanted a piece of the tape for their own cable systems, because what Paper Tiger really was was

a cable show that didn't have a potted plant and a curtain. We tried to more creative and more inventive with the visuals and also with the format of the show. It became very popular, particularly for cable access stations around the country who wanted to encourage their producers to become more expansive, more imaginative, and to try to also use resources in the community, like intelligent people, such as Joel Kovel, or Herb Shiller, or Joan Braderman, or the various people that we've had on the show. We got all these requests and we used to send out tape for free. We had said if you send a tape, we'll make a dub and send it back to you free for your cable station, but we couldn't afford to do that. All of the sudden we were getting like sixty different requests.

So we started doing research about how to distribute the programs in a way that would be cost effective, and the logical thing came up. Satellite. We started leasing a satellite and originally we were just going to send Paper Tiger shows, but then we realized that we really should make it more interactive. We ended up getting programs from around the country from different public access people that we'd been in touch with. It built up so that we had maybe two or three hundred producers that were sending us tapes and we would do these series, lease the satellite, and then send them out to various public access station across the country. It was actually cost effective. We figured if we only got thirty stations, already, if you factor in the mailing costs and the dubbing costs, it actually is cheaper to lease the satellite and send programming up, and get it around the country. How much do you think it costs to rent a satellite for an hour? Take a guess. It's less. It can run from \$250 to about \$700 or \$800 an hour to lease the satellite. With that you have not just the United States, but actually a very large part of Canada and also Mexico. Several of the satellites have strong enough signals to go down to Mexico City. That's what's called the footprint of the satellite.

We started sending these programs out and people around the country really responded. It became a kind of emergency network. So, for example, when the Gulf War happened, we hadn't really planned to do any programming, but we got all these calls saying "I think there's gonna be war in the Gulf and you guys should do something." So, we responded and did a series called the Gulf Crisis T.V. Project, which was ten half hours really giving the background of the Gulf War and giving some of the resistance that was happening on the streets. Even in San Diego, where I teach, which is a majorly conservative town, made up of a lot of military people, a lot of people retire to San Diego who are generals, officers in the corp. There are many military installations in San Diego. There was a demonstration in San Diego against the Gulf War, seventy-five thousand people, but you did not hear about that on NBC News. You did not hear about that on CNN, but you did hear about it on Deep Dish. We had a wonderful segment that was sent in from video producers in San Diego.

This was being built up over the years and actually right before Seattle happened we had just finished a whole series on prisons, on the prison

industrial complex. Now, people are finally talking about it, this amazing horror that exists, and in many cases, very close to Bard. In the United States we have two million people in prison. It's a higher percentage of people in prison in this country than has ever existed in human history. A higher percentage of the population is in prison. It's an abomination. In 1995, we started doing work on prison issues and we've done, I think, three different series on prison issues. So along comes Seattle. The World Trade Organization was scheduled to meet in November and we started getting calls from people in September saying "are you guys gonna cover the WTO meetings?" We started putting together a whole series of programming around that and we worked together. One of the other infrastructures that was in place was Free Speech T.V., which is an operation out of Boulder. They have been working on very similar kinds of issues that we have and actually they'd been showing a lot of Deep Dish and Paper Tiger shows in their programming. And so we worked together with them. They had applied to get a DBS license. They didn't get it by the time of Seattle, but they just now received it. The last series we've done has been up on DBS, but what I want to do is show you.

We'll start with tape number one, which is some of the material from Seattle. It was five half hour programs we did. We did not do these live. The ones I'm going to show you from Philly and from L.A. were done live. This was done overnight. Events would happen in the afternoon and in the mornings and then late at night people would get together. There were a couple of editing spaces and people would put together a half hour program and literally bicycle, we use that word bicycle tapes because of the blockades and stuff in town, the only way to get it to the satellite uplink was by bicycle. There was somebody who actually bicycled the tape over to the satellite uplink and then it went out into the satellite and then it was carried on seventy or eighty public access stations around the country including a lot of the major cities: L.A., New York, Chicago, Minneapolis, Etc. So, let's see a little bit of the Seattle show.

[excerpts from video on Seattle]

Dee Dee Halleck

O.K. We're going to turn it off and go to D.C. right now. I have five that I wanted to show you little pieces of and we don't have that much time. So, maybe, Ali would you like to come up and say something? I met Ali in D.C. and maybe you could talk about how the photo thing...

Ali

O.K. My name is Ali. I'm a sophomore at Bard. Last year I went to D.C. kind of because other people from Bard had gone to Seattle and they had a little screening of the IMC video showed on Seattle. It really impressed me and I wanted to become part of the Independent Media Center. So, I got in contact

with people who were organizing the Independent Media Center in D.C. and after talking and conversing with them, they decided I should be the photo coordinator for the Independent Media Center in D.C. So, because of that, I really had a chance to kind of see how the organizing was done and how the actual structure of the Independent Media Center was running in D.C. What really impressed me was that it was unlike anything other that I'd seen. It was extremely democratic and all decisions were reached with everybody's agreement. It was based on the spokes-counsel model, which I hope you guys know, if not you probably will soon, implemented in planning specific events like Seattle and D.C. and Philadelphia.

I didn't do video because I don't know that much about video, but I was coordinating photography because other than video the Independent Media Center consists of lots real talented writers who, actually in all the events that the Independent Media Center has covered until now, there's usually a daily newspaper that's published and distributed freely. So, there's a team who does print, there's a team that does video, clearly obvious, there's also a big group of people who do audio and send it streaming over the Internet and there's photography. Basically, with photography in the Independent Media Center in Washington were the people who were interested in anti-globalization movements and who also had skills in photography. They heard about the Independent Media Center, maybe from previous protests. They came to the space we had directed for an Independent Media Center and we had maybe a few meetings and kind of mapped out the events and distributed it to people. Then they would go out and shoot and we would develop the film and put them on the website.

What I really like about the Independent Media Center is the spreading all around the world. If you go to the website, there's a little list on the left that shows the Independent Media Centers started all around the world. It's really impressive because it keeps growing and growing and I like it because, it kind of starts out, if a major event happens for example... If you guys know, in France, a French farmer was tried for going and kind of deconstructing a McDonald's which was being constructed, and he was on trial, for example, because of that event, suddenly Indy Media France popped up and so it was really nice in that way. Basically, that's all I have to say. If you want to ask anything about how Independent Media Center runs and how it's organized you can ask me. I'm a sophomore here, so you can just grab me and ask me. I'm here for two more years.

Dee Dee Halleck

Actually, I was so impressed, particularly with the photography from D.C. that I corresponded with Ali on email and myself and a bunch of photographer put together an exhibit that's on display right now at the Berkeley Art Museum of photos, just from the website. Actually, Ali was saying we should get the zip

discs and do them in high resolution, but actually it's very nice just to do them from the website and some of them are in higher resolution than others, but it's a wonderful exhibit and we want to have a tour. So, maybe it could come to Bard, actually. I can be rolled up into a tube or it can be re-printed out from a disc, a zip disc, and it's really impressive. It's up on the website, if you go to [indymedia.org](http://indymedia.org) and then go to photos there's some photos from the exhibit there. So, you can see what the exhibit looks like. Ali's going to take a copy to Prague and put up, hopefully in Prague, he'll find a place for it because there's going to be an Independent Media Center in Prague.

There's one right now in New York that if you go to the indymedia and then go to the IMC New York, you can get the address. I think it's 34 East 29th St., but you should check that out. It's either 34 or 37. I'm suddenly unsure of the address. It's around the whole millennium summit that's going on right now in New York and they'll be there start...well they've already started work there. There were some protestors arrested this morning. There will be actions going on all week and especially on the weekend. So, if you're interested in being involved or in just going down and seeing what an Independent Media Center looks like, you can go to New York and see it. You could go to the web and see what they're doing there.

There's a wonderful thing on the web that I wanted to show but I can't work that little mouse. Somebody posted on the website a map of all the place in Manhattan that have surveillance cameras. Just so you make sure, if you're doing an action and you don't want the police to know, you should know where the cameras are. It's an amazing thing. You can like click in closer and closer like those map websites do and it will show you where the cameras are. So, if you go to the independent media in New York City site you can find that out.

Let's just show a little bit of Washington. It's called "Breaking the Bank" and this is the demonstrations that were in April 16th and 17th in D.C. The first part is just to show you some of the background. It starts with these tapes that look at the background of why people are protesting.

[excerpts from video on D.C.]

Dee Dee Halleck

O.K. I just want to cut that off and move on. One of the things that's happening is that the police are really mobilizing to counter this movement and one of the things that happened in L.A. was they passed out a paper that was incredible. It was basically to scare the police into acting very aggressively against the demonstrators. It basically warned the police that demonstrators were walking around with surgical gloves filled with acid and that they were going to throw them at the police, so that if a demonstrator was to take out their hand, raise their hand, that they should knock their hand because they're going to get hit

with acid. They had all kinds of complete disinformation. They talked about how they used puppets to hide Molotov cocktails and things like that. It was just horrendous, but what it did was to raise the level of fear and aggression in a group of people, the LAPD, who do not need that kind of encouragement. So, I think it's on tape number five, if you could just put that one in, it's a nice segway into this next one.

[excerpts from video on Los Angeles]

Dee Dee Halleck

O.K. Let's turn that off. Actually there's still people in jail in L.A. who were involved in the protest. So, they didn't get out quite as quickly as he said they did. They actually had had plans to confiscate all the puppets, but because of what had happened in Philadelphia when a whole warehouse, full of fifteen years worth of puppetry and artwork was completely trashed, they put the puppets in a garbage compactor and compacted the entire contents of this workshop, which had been going there for fifteen years, which included artwork, paintings, a ton of stuff. A lot of it didn't even have anything to do with the protest. People in L.A. were worried that that same thing would happen here so they actually got an injunction against that happening. Actually, a judge gave that injunction out, because they said that they couldn't take artwork or protest signs...that they could not confiscate it and so that's why they didn't confiscate it, but it was clear that they had actually planned to confiscate that.

That tape you saw right there was edited like a couple of hours after it was made, and that show actually went out live. So, this from L.A. and this was the last series that we did from the Democratic Convention and in this case although we edited little segment produced stuff, the actual discussion went out live. I wanted to just finish my part and then hopefully, we'll have time to talk, just a little bit...tape number four, if you guys can find that. That tape that you just saw was Friday night and the tape I'm going to show you just a little bit of was Thursday night. On Thursday night one of the things that happened was a very important discussion took place, which hopefully will continue. I don't think there's any right or a wrong side, but I think there's a lot of things people need to think about and it's about the whole question of violence. And in Seattle, there had been the mass media kind of picked up on one house of anarchists that lived in Portland and one of the anarchists who lived in that house is Tim Reem and he's on this tape. And at one point in Seattle, Media Benjamin, who's the director of Global Exchange, had a confrontation with some of the anarchists and actually made a kind of line to keep them from breaking the windows of a Gap or something, and actually asked the police to arrest them and so what you're seeing on this tape is a confrontation between someone else who works at Global Exchange, Kevin Danaher, who happens to be Media Benjamin's husband, confronting these anarchists about the whole use of violence in this kind of demonstration.

[excerpts from video of discussion group on protesters use of violence]

Dee Dee Halleck

Just a few more points I wanted to make. One is that, you remember the shot where they do the close up of the badge of the policeman? One of the really important things that happened lately has been the use of a lot of the material that is archived and collected through the Independent Media Centers to actually build a case about the really gross violations of civil rights that have gone in terms of the police actions. It becomes a way of searching through the photographs, searching through the videotapes and freeze framing, still framing, and actually creating a kind of dossier. Not just on general police actions, but also on specific cops and the cops are doing the same things around the demonstrators. The cops actually have their own page where they have demonstrators they think have perpetrated various crimes. It's interesting to see the way the technology is being used in this way.

From D.C., there was a really wonderful group of lawyers that came together. It's called the Midnight Law Collective and the leader of that group is a woman, Katcha Komisaura, who in about fifteen years ago, she actually went in and she was a plow sharer's, what she called, white rose person. She was following in the actions of the White Rose Movement, which was one of the few resistant movements against Nazism in Germany. And she went in and knowingly tried to destroy a nuclear first strike system, a computer system. She took a fire hose, a fire extinguisher, and poured it into a computer and then, but she didn't even get caught. She was figuring she was going to get killed, so she put a little dish of cookies out for the policeman and said, "Please, I'm just a girl. Don't kill me. I'll come peacefully and I know I should be arrested for what I'm doing," or something and then, but nobody came. Their alarms didn't go off and she went home and took a shower and tried to decide what to do and she turned herself in and she did, I think two and a half years of hard time, actually, for doing that. But she's a very committed lawyer. She is one of those people who are willing to take the consequence and are not hitting and running. She is in the tradition of civil disobedience, in a kind of Henry Thoreau, put your body on the line for your beliefs and she had taken her own life and dedicated it to... She went to law school after she got out of jail and now she's defending the demonstrators who got ruffed up in D.C. and using the really quite astounding archive of evidence that has been built up through the Independent Media Center, really quite and interesting thing that goes on.

So, anyway, I thought that maybe if anybody wants to have any comments or questions or answers.