

Media Democracy in Action

Censored

2003

The
Top 25
Censored
Stories



Peter Phillips & Project Censored

INTRODUCTION BY ROBERT W. MCCHESENEY

CARTOONS BY TOM TOMORROW

CENSORED

“Project Censored is one of the organizations that we should listen to, to be assured that our newspapers and our broadcasting outlets are practicing thorough and ethical journalism.”—Walter Cronkite

“[*Censored*] should be affixed to the bulletin boards in every newsroom in America. And, perhaps read aloud to a few publishers and television executives.”—Ralph Nader

“[*Censored*] offers devastating evidence of the dumbing-down of mainstream news in America.... Required reading for broadcasters, journalists and well-informed citizens.”—*Los Angeles Times*

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—Rhoda H. Karparkin, President, Consumer’s Union

“Buy it, read it, act on it. Our future depends on the knowledge this collection of suppressed stories allows us.”—*San Diego Review*

“This volume chronicles 25 news stories about events that could affect all of us, but which we most likely did not hear or read about in the popular news media.”—*Bloomsbury Review*

“*Censored* serves as a reminder that there is certainly more to the news than is easily available or willingly disclosed. To those of us who work in the newsrooms, it’s an inspiration, an indictment, and an admonition to look deeper, ask more questions, then search for the truth in the answers we get.”—*Creative Loafings*

“This invaluable resource deserves to be more widely known.”
—*Wilson Library Bulletin*

CENSORED 2003

**The Top 25
Censored Stories**

**PETER PHILLIPS &
PROJECT CENSORED**

**INTRODUCTION BY ROBERT W. McCHESNEY
CARTOONS BY TOM TOMORROW**

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Cover photo © Jordan Silverman. IMC activists in Los Angeles filming as LAPD entered a hotel to disrupt a banner hang by the Rainforest Action Network. In the end, only half the banner was hung.

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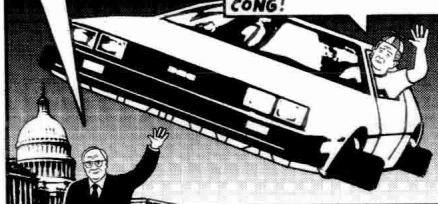
THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

HEY, KIDS! IT'S TIME FOR THE ALL NEW ADVENTURES OF...
GEORGIE BUSH--BOY PRESIDENT!
 THIS WEEK'S EPISODE: BACK TO THE FUTURE!

BE CAREFUL, GEORGIE!
 THAT TIME MACHINE IS
 A TOP-SECRET PENTAGON
 PROTOTYPE!

DON'T WORRY, MR. CHENEY!
 I USED TO FLY FIGHTER
 JETS, YOU KNOW--BACK
 WHEN I WAS DEFENDING
 TEXAS FROM THE VIET
 CONG!



UNFORTUNATELY, THE PRESS BEGINS TO NOTICE THAT
 SOMETHING **STRANGE** IS GOING ON...

SIR--AREN'T YOU
 AFRAID OF DAMAG-
 ING THE SPACE-
 TIME CONTINUUM
 WITH THESE NOMI-
 NATIONS?

I'VE SAID IT BEFORE AND
 I'LL SAY IT AGAIN--I'M
 NOT GOING TO COMMENT
 ON ANYTHING I MAY OR
 MAY NOT HAVE DONE IN
 THE **PAST!**

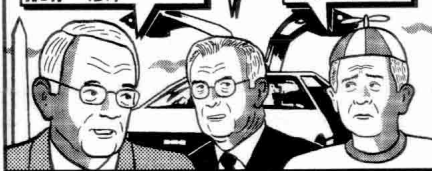


WITH THE HELP OF HIS **TIME MACHINE**, GEORGIE
 REACHES FAR INTO THE **TWENTIETH** CENTURY TO
 ASSEMBLE A CABINET FOR THE **TWENTY-FIRST!**

ALL RIGHT, FUTURE BOY--WHAT ARE THE DAMN
COMMIES UP TO THESE DAYS?

AND WHAT ABOUT THE
ECONOMY? HAVE WE
**'WHIPPED INFLATION
 NOW'** YET?

UM--MAYBE YOU
 GUYS BETTER
 TALK TO MR.
 CHENEY.



BUT THINGS **REALLY** GET OUT OF HAND WHEN **JOHN
 ASHCROFT** TAKES THE TIME MACHINE OUT FOR A
 SPIN!

GEORGIE, I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET A COUPLE OF
HEROES OF MINE--**STONEWALL JACKSON**
 AND **ROBERT E. LEE!**

HEY, I THINK I READ ABOUT YOU
 FELLAS! I WAS A **HISTORY** MAJOR,
 YOU KNOW!

AND MORE
 IMPORTANTLY,
 A **DEKE!**
 BOOLA,
 BOOLA!



Contents

Preface	11
Acknowledgments.....	13
Introduction by Robert W. McChesney.....	23
How Project Censored Stories are Selected.....	31
Project Censored Mission Statement	32
 CHAPTER 1 The Top <i>Censored</i> Stories of 2001 & 2002 by Peter Phillips and Project Censored.....	 33
1 FCC Moves to Privatize Airwaves.....	35
2 New Trade Treaty Seeks to Privatize Global Social Services	38
3 United States' Policies in Colombia Support Mass Murder	41
4 Bush Administration Hampered FBI Investigation 46 into Bin Laden Family Before 9-11	46
5 U.S. Intentionally Destroyed Iraq's Water System	50
6 U.S. Government Pushing Nuclear Revival	52
7 Corporations Promote HMO Model for School Districts	55
8 NAFTA Destroys Farming Communities in U.S. and Abroad	60
9 U.S. Faces National Housing Crisis.....	62
10 CIA Double Deals in Macedonia	65
11 Bush Appoints Former Criminals to Key Government Roles.....	68

12	NAFTA's Chapter 11 Overrides Public Protection Laws of Countries.....	72
13	Henry Kissinger and Gerald Ford Lied to the American Public about East Timor	77
14	New Laws Restrict Access to Abortions in U.S.....	78
15	Bush's Energy Plan Threatens Environment and Public Health	81
16	CIA Kidnaps Suspects for Overseas Torture and Execution	85
17	Corporate Media Ignores Key Issues of the Anti-Globalization Protests.....	88
18	World's Coral Reefs Dying.....	91
19	American Companies Exploit the Congo.....	93
20	Novartis's Gene Research Endangers Global Plant Life.....	96
21	Large U.S. Temp Company Undermines Union Jobs and Mistreats Workers.....	97
22	Fish Farms Threaten Health of Consumers and Aquatic Habitats	99
23	Horses Face Lives of Unnecessary Abuse for Drug Company Profits	101
24	Wal-Mart Takes Union Busting to the State Level.....	106
25	Federal Government Bails Out Failing Private Prisons.....	107
CHAPTER 2	9-11 Before and Beyond: A Critical Analysis by Peter Phillips, Tom Lough, Robert Hackett, Karen Talbot, and Project Censored	129
CHAPTER 3	<i>Censored Déjà Vu: What Happened to Last Year's Most Censored Stories</i> by Peter Phillips and the Project Censored Writing Team: Chris Salvano, Krista Arata Eric Garrison, Kevin Cody, Kerry Beck, Stephen Dietrich and Kathleen O'Rourke-Christopher.....	161
CHAPTER 4	Junk Food News and News Abuse by Krista Arata and Kathleen O'Rourke-Christopher	193

CHAPTER 5	Rebuild Democracy with Grassroots Community News by Peter Phillips and the Project Censored Writing Team: Chris Salvano, Eric Garrison, Kevin Cody, Kerry Beck, and Stephen Dietrich	203
CHAPTER 6	The Big Ten Media Giants by Mark Crispin Miller	231
CHAPTER 7	Media War and the Rigors of Self-Censorship by Norman Solomon	241
CHAPTER 8	Power Sources: On Party, Gender, Race, and Class, TV News Looks to the Most Powerful Groups by Ina Howard	255
CHAPTER 9	Truth About Afghan Civilian Casualties Comes Only Through American Lenses for the U.S. Corporate Media [Our Modern-Day Didymus] by Marc W. Herold.....	265
CHAPTER 10	Leave No Child Untested: How New York State Exams Censored Literature by Jeanne Heifetz.....	295
APPENDIX A	Project Censored's Guide to Independent Media Resources and Activism.....	311
APPENDIX B	Resource Guide: Media Activist Organizations	351
	About the Editor/Director	379
	Index	381
	How to Support Project Censored.....	399

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

GEORGIE BUSH HAS TAKEN HIS **TIME MACHINE** BACK TO 1787!

IT'S BEEN **FUN**, FELLAS--BUT I'VE GOTTA GET BACK TO THE **FUTURE** AND START CUTTIN' **TAXES** AND SPENDIN' THE **SURPLUS** AND ALL THAT **OTHER** STUFF MR. ROVE AND MR. CHENEY WANT ME TO DO!

LIKE I TOLD JOHN MCCAIN--
THE PAST IS **OVER**!



GENTLEMEN, I FIND IT MOST WORRISOME THAT OUR DESCENDANTS WILL ONE DAY SEE FIT TO ELECT SUCH A MAN AS **THAT** TO THE HIGHEST OFFICE IN OUR LAND.

IT IS A VEXING PROSPECT INDEED.

YES--PERHAPS OUR DEDICATION TO THE IDEAL OF SELF-GOVERNANCE HAS BEEN MISGUIDED FROM ITS **INCEPTION**.



DO NOT **DESPAIR**, MY FELLOW DELEGATES! WE NEED ONLY INCORPORATE INTO OUR CONSTITUTION A SYSTEM OF PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION WHICH WILL PROTECT OUR POSTERITY FROM THEIR OWN **POOR JUDGMENT**--

--A SYSTEM
I CALL--



--THE
ELECTORAL
COLLEGE!!

AND WITH ITS ADOPTION, WE WILL **ASSUREDLY** PREVENT THE PRES-
IDENCY OF THIS **BUSH LAD!!**

THANK THE **DEITY**
WE WERE THUSLY
FOREWARNED!



DID YOU NOTE
THE SINGULAR
EMPTYNESS
OF HIS GAZE?

IT WAS LIKE THAT
OF A **DEER** CAUGHT
IN THE **CARRIAGE**
LAMPS!



Preface

Freedom of information is in crisis in the United States. Big media no longer values news as vital to the democratic process. Instead the media giants release news as guileful information designed to build governmental-protective dependency and consumptive behaviors (see Chapter 6, “The Big Ten Media Giants”). Corporate media in the U.S.—interlocked with capitalism’s core—spews top-down propaganda interwoven with titillation, gossip, and emotion (see Chapter 4, “Junk Food News and News Abuse”). The “experts,” who dominate the news and speak from credentialed hierarchies, diminish our capacities for understanding (see Chapter 8, “Power Sources”). Real news stories that challenge the powerful are repressed or spun to fit the dominant ideological frame (see Chapter 7 by Norman Solomon).

News stories that speak to collective social concerns of the *demos* find little space in the bylines of the dailies or the timelines of the broadcast domains (see Chapters 1 & 3). Investigative reporting has died on the vine. The media stenographers no longer ask the hard questions—no longer pursue the truth. They no longer stimulate our minds or answer our questions (see Chapters 2 & 9).

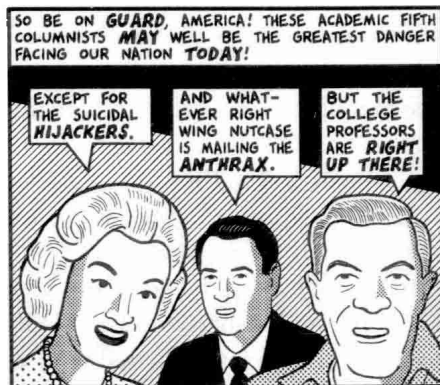
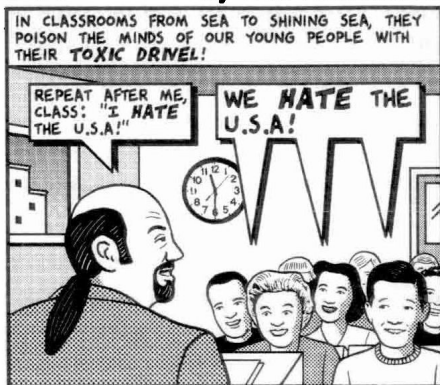
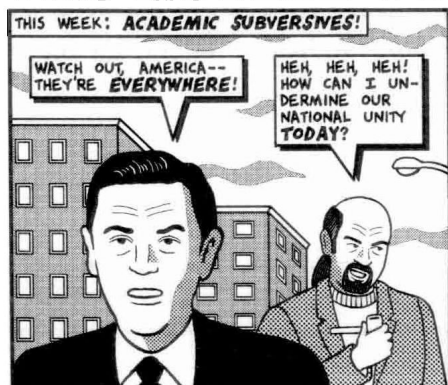
Instead of precipitating a reevaluation of our media, 9-11 accelerated the loss of truth. Post-September Justice Department repression has mushroomed, but it found deep roots in the fungal soil of bureaucratic dysfunction. Weapons profits soared as the bombs dropped. Oily slime surrounded the policymakers. Some watched with revenge in their hearts.

Nevertheless, not all the news is bad. Other places are emerging for truth and discovery—places where activists dream of shared power, places where decisions form from within. We can share and tell our stories. We can find our own news and report our victories (see Chapter 5, “Rebuild Democracy with Grassroots Community News”).

Peter Phillips
June 20, 2002

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



Acknowledgments

Project Censored is managed through the Department of Sociology in the School of Social Sciences at Sonoma State University. We are an investigative sociology and media analysis project dedicated to the freedom of information throughout the United States.

More than 200 people were directly involved in the production of CENSORED 2003. University and program staff, students, faculty, community experts, research interns, funders, and our distinguished national judges all contributed time, energy, and money to make this year's book an important resource for the promotion of freedom of information in the United States.

I want to personally thank those close friends and intimates who have counseled and supported me through another year of Project Censored. Most important, my wife Mary Lia-Phillips, who as my lover, friend, and partner provides daily consultative support to Project Censored. The men in the Green Oaks breakfast group, Noel Byrne, Bob Butler, Rick Williams, Colin Godwin, and Bill Simon, are personal advisors and confidants who help with difficult decisions. Thanks go also to Carl Jensen, founder of Project Censored, and director for 20 years. His continued advice and support are very important to the Project. Trish Boreta, Project Censored coordinator is an important daily associate administrator of the Project. Her dedication and enthusiasm are greatly appreciated. Katie Sims, our story coordinator, deserves a special thank-you; she supervised the processing of more than 900 story nominations for this year's book.

A big thanks goes to the people at Seven Stories Press. They are more than a publishing house, but rather have become close friends, who help edit our annual book in record time, and serve as advisors in the annual

release process of the most *Censored* stories. Publisher Dan Simon is a dedicated freedom of information activist, who deserves full credit for assembling an excellent support crew including: production director Jon Gilbert; managing editor M. Astella Saw; editors Mikola De Roo and Greg Ruggiero; academic marketing director Tara Parmiter; publicists Lars Reilly and Ruth Weiner; and book designer Cindy LaBreacht.

Thanks also to the great sales staff at Publishers Group West, who see to it that every independent bookstore, chain store, and wholesaler in the U.S. is aware of *Censored* each year. Thanks to Hushion House, our distributors in Canada, as well as Turnaround Publishers Services Ltd. in Great Britain and Tower Books in Australia.

Thank you to Robert W. McChesney, who wrote the introduction to *Censored* 2003. Dr. McChesney is a national media scholar and has been Project Censored judge for several years.

Thanks also to the authors of the most *Censored* stories for 2003, for without their often unsupported efforts as investigative news reporters and writers, the stories presented in *Censored* would not be possible.

Our guest writers this year are Norman Solomon, Robert Hackett, Mark Crispin Miller, Ina Howard, Marc Herold, Karen Talbot, and Jeanne Heifetz. They each wrote an original article on an important contemporary media or censorship issue.

This year's book again features the cartoons of Tom Tomorrow. "This Modern World" appears in more than 90 newspapers across the country. We are extremely pleased to use Tom Tomorrow's wit and humor throughout the book.

Our national judges, some of whom have been involved with the Project for 25 years, are among the top experts in the country concerned with First Amendment freedoms and media. We are honored to have them as the final voice in ranking the top 25 most *Censored* stories.

An important thanks goes to our major donors and funders, including Anita Roddick and The Body Shop International, Sonoma State University Instructionally Related Activity Fund, the School of Social Sciences at Sonoma State University, and thousands of financial supporters from throughout the United States. Without their core financial support, Project Censored simply could not continue.

This year we had 92 faculty/community evaluators assisting with our story assessment process. These expert volunteers read and rated the nominated stories for national importance, accuracy, and credibility. In March, they participated with the students in selecting the final top 25 *Censored* stories for 2003.

Most of all, we need to recognize the Sonoma State University students in the Spring 2002 Media Censorship class and the Fall 2001 Sociology of Media class, who worked long hours nominating and researching some 900 unpublished news stories. Each student has become an expert in library database research. Student education is the most important aspect of Project Censored, and we could not do this work without their dedication and effort.

Ron Liskey is our webmaster. Under his supervision, the Project Censored Web site, www.projectcensored.org, has blossomed.

Lastly, I want to thank our readers and supporters from all over the United States and the world. Hundreds of you nominated stories for consideration as the most *Censored* news story of the year. Thank you very much!

PROJECT CENSORED STAFF

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Lyric Smith, Paul Stutrud, Pat Thurston, Scott Underwood, Mitzi Valdes, Jeff Vandevor, Lillian Vaughn, Jaleah Winn, Juliet Wong, Jonnett Woods, and Meika Zilberberg.

SPRING 2002 INTERNS AND COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

Krista Arata, Kerry Beck, Dan Bluthart, Adam Cimino, Kevin Cody, Henry Colbert, Ambrosia Crumley, Stephen Dietrich, Grace Farasey, Eric Garrison, Terrie Girdner, Alea Giles, Sharone Goldman, Laura Huntington, David Immel, Kristen Jacobs, Sean Kelson, Brooke Krystosek, Kaitlin, Jean McNally, Justin Myers, Kathleen O'Rourke-Christopher, Jessica Peterson, Luanna Peterson, Sarah Potts, Lisa Randall, Michael Runas, May Saelee, Chris Salvano, Paul Saran, Marcia Simmons, Jason Spencer, Kara Stout, Jennifer Swift, Joshua Travers, Scott Underwood, Lillian Vaughn, Natalie Villalobos, Melanie Westbrook, Leah Whyte, and Clayton Woodhull.

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STUDENT RESEARCHERS IN MEDIA CENSORSHIP CLASS, SPRING 2002

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