

By using this website, you consent to our use of cookies. For more information, visit our [Privacy Policy](#) X

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA



MASTER'S IN FINANCE

Careers in investment management, corporate finance and more

Explore

Tippie College of Business
The University of Iowa

MEDIA EDITORIAL NOVEMBER 25, 2013 ISSUE

Free the Media!

It's time to get back to our roots—the grassroots—to fight for reform of an increasingly monopolistic and manipulative media.

By John Nichols and Robert W. McChesney

NOVEMBER 6, 2013




THE NATION. TRAVELS

Singular Journeys for Progressives

NATIVE AMERICAN VOICES:
May 10–18, 2020

LEARN MORE



Ready To Fight Back?

Sign up for Take Action Now and get three actions in your inbox every week.

Enter Email

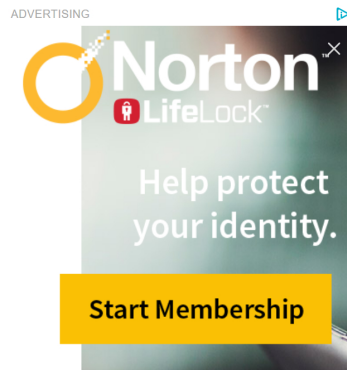
SIGN UP

You will receive occasional promotional

When we helped form the national media-reform network Free Press, we were motivated by an understanding that the great debates about media policy played out behind closed doors in Washington, with corporate puppeteers pulling the strings of politicians and regulators. Free Press, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary, set out to change the dynamic by securing a place for citizens in those

deliberations. We always knew this involved more than just a critique of what was wrong. There had to be bold proposals for how to make things better, proposals that would inspire Americans to join mass movements

to counter the mass money and influence of the telecommunications industry.



An opportunity we had not anticipated helped make our network a major player more rapidly than we had ever imagined. Free Press took shape early in 2003, as George W. Bush was selling his war in Iraq. Americans recognized that media outlets had let them down by tipping coverage in favor of a wrongheaded rush to war. When administration allies on the FCC proposed greater consolidation of media ownership by the same interests that had facilitated an unnecessary war, Free Press and allies like Common Cause, MoveOn and Code Pink got an unprecedented 3 million Americans to signal their opposition. The courts put consolidation on hold, citing the public outcry.

Early victories created a sense that we could pressure Congress and regulators to do the right thing. Free Press and other groups achieved significant success with those strategies, forcing the FCC to consider minority ownership issues, fighting cuts to public broadcasting, exposing corporate and government spin masquerading as news, and defending Net neutrality and a free and open Internet. But big media corporations have reasserted themselves. They are spending more freely on campaigns and lobbyists than ever before, reminding all of us that whichever party is in power, the money power rules in Washington.

It's time to get back to our roots—the grassroots—and organize citizens into a media-reform movement so big and so bold it cannot be denied. The people are ready. On our current book tour we have spoken to thousands of Americans. We've heard the fury at a media system that fails to cover elections but gladly pockets billions for spewing negative campaign ads; that facilitates government and corporate data mining; that creates cartels rather than independent journalism.

We are more certain than ever that Americans can be organized around ideas for sweeping media reforms. They include:

§ Increase public funding for public media. Newspaper and broadcast layoffs, cutbacks and closings have gutted newsrooms, and digital media are not coming close to filling the void. We are as excited by the investment Pierre Omidyar is making in a new venture with Glenn Greenwald as we are by every serious investment in serious journalism. But there will never be enough enlightened billionaires to fill the information voids that have opened. We need enlightened policies. Instead of merely opposing cuts, reformers must fight for massive expansion of public broadcasting,


community media and nonprofit digital experiments. The hallmark of a strong democracy is public support for great independent and aggressive journalism—and a great deal of it.

§ **Give the Internet back to the people.** The Internet has spawned the greatest wave of monopoly in history. Thirteen of the thirty-two most valuable publicly traded US firms are primarily Internet companies, and many of those thirteen have a market share in their core activities approaching that of John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil monopoly in its prime. This is simply untenable for democratic governance. One place to start: eliminating the government-created cartel of Verizon, AT&T and Comcast, which gives the United States some of the lousiest, yet most expensive, cellphone and Internet service in the world. Washington should establish free high-speed broadband for every American.

§ **Restore privacy.** Coverage of the NSA scandal has focused on data mining by the government. But private corporations and political consultants have access to the same information, and they're using it to manipulate our choices as consumers and citizens. The restoration of privacy rights may begin with limits on the NSA, but it should extend to strict regulation of, and limits on, the digital data that can be collected from us, and how corporations and politicians can use those data to manage discourse.

These are starting points for a broader reform moment in which we must limit the influence of negative campaign ads while extending the range of political debate; more tightly regulate the commercial carpet-bombing of our children; and make media literacy central to public education. That moment must be characterized, above all, by organizing so that no matter who runs things in Washington, politicians will know that the people want media that err on the side of diversity and democracy—not profiteering and propaganda.

In August, [Leticia Miranda](#) wrote about deregulation of the telecom giants and how it affects working-class and minority people. **N**

John Nichols  John Nichols is *The Nation's* national-affairs correspondent and host of [Next Left](#), *The Nation's* podcast where politics gets personal with rising progressive politicians. He is the author of [Horsemen of the Trumpocalypse: A Field Guide to the Most Dangerous People in America](#), from Nation Books, and co-author, with Robert W. McChesney, of [People Get Ready: The Fight Against a Jobless Economy and a Citizenless Democracy](#).

Robert W. McChesney Robert McChesney is Gutsell Endowed Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Illinois. He hosts the program *Media Matters* on WILL-AM every Sunday afternoon from 1-2PM central time. He and John Nichols, *The Nation's* Washington correspondent, are the founders of [Free Press](#), the media reform network, and the authors of *Tragedy and Farce: How the American Media Sell Wars, Spin Elections, and Destroy Democracy* (New Press) and *The Death and Life of American Journalism* (Nation Books). He has written sixteen books and his work has been translated into fifteen languages.

To submit a correction for our consideration, click [here](#).
For Reprints and Permissions, click [here](#).

Trending Today

Ads by Revcontent





Top Gut Doctor: I Beg All Americans To Throw Out This Vegetable

United Naturals



Diagnosed with Lymphoma After Using Roundup Weed Killer?

Injury Survey



Virginia: Say Bye To Your Mortgage If You Live Near Arlington

Fetcharate



Whatever You Do, Don't Retire in These 16 States

MoneyWise.com



20 Places Where \$150k is More Than Enough to Retire

MoneyWise.com



Couple Perplexed After Their Photo Goes Viral, Until They See The Comments

Brainstay.com

Today's Refinance Rate

2.88%
APR 15 Year Fixed

Select Loan Amount

\$ **\$225,000**

lendingtree
No SSN required

Calculate Payment

Terms & Conditions apply, NMLS#1136

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SEXUAL ASSAULT SUBJECT TO DEBATE OCTOBER 21, 2019, ISSUE

A Sexual Assault Memoir Women Deserve

Chanel Miller's brilliant account of her assault by Stanford swimmer Brock Turner questions the way we treat sexual assault—and sex itself.

By *Katha Pollitt*

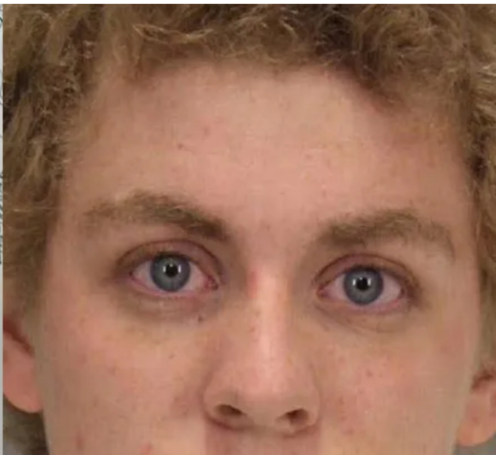
TODAY 7:00 AM



THE NATION. TRAVELS
Singular Journeys for Progressives

INDIA: March 14–28, 2020

LEARN MORE





In the courtroom and the media, Chanel Miller (left) was just “Emily Doe.” Brock Turner (right) got to be the “Stanford swimmer.” (*Mariah Tiffany and the Santa Clara County Sheriff’s Department via Reuters*)

Ready To Fight Back?

Sign up for Take Action Now and get three actions in your inbox every week.

SIGN UP

You will receive occasional promotional offers for programs that support *The Nation’s* journalism. You can read our [Privacy Policy](#) here.

In June 2016, “Emily Doe” read her 12-page victim impact statement to the court before the sentencing of Brock Turner, the Stanford undergrad who’d been convicted of sexually assaulting her while she was unconscious. It was a brilliant piece of writing—frank, angry, straight from the heart—and it seemed to sum up everything about the trauma of sexual assault and the many ways that society, especially the legal process, makes that trauma worse.

Turner’s lenient sentence of six months in county jail and Judge Aaron Persky’s [explanation](#) (“I take him at his word that, subjectively, that’s his version of events”) set the public on fire. Within days of being [published](#) on *BuzzFeed*, Doe’s statement had been viewed more than 15 million times.

KEEP READING



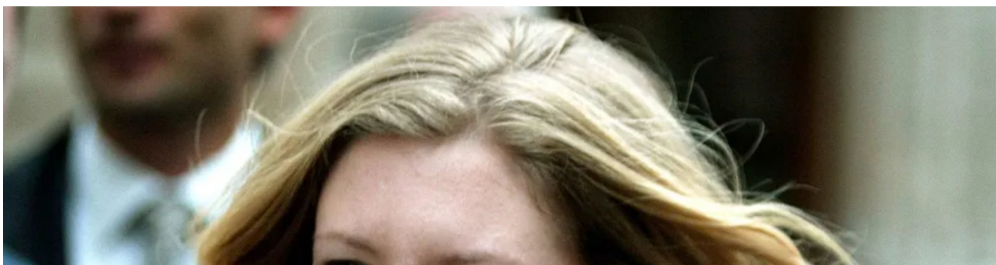
WHISTLEBLOWERS GOVERNMENT SURVEILLANCE EDWARD SNOWDEN

‘Is It a Crime to Expose Crimes Already Committed?’

Reading Edward Snowden’s new memoir in the midst of the current scandal raging in Washington, the famous Iraq War whistle-blower explains why all whistle-blowers deserve our protection.

By Katharine Gun

TODAY 6:30 AM





Katharine Gun, whistle-blower who in 2004 was charged under the Official Secrets Act in Britain for leaking Iraq War correspondence between US spies and their British counterparts. (Reuters / Stephen Hird SH/ASA/JV)

Ready To Fight Back?

Sign up for Take Action Now and get three actions in your inbox every week.

SIGN UP

You will receive occasional promotional offers for programs that support *The Nation's* journalism. You can read our [Privacy Policy](#) here.

Donald Trump has demanded to know the identity of the anonymous person who revealed the US president's interactions with his Ukrainian counterpart. "I deserve to meet my accuser," Trump tweeted, while at the same time making it clear why the person might be reluctant to come forward.

But there are other reasons besides personal safety for someone in this situation to remain anonymous. In 2003, when I disclosed top secret, classified information in the weeks before the invasion of Iraq, my intention was to remain anonymous in order to

keep the focus on the information—American and British efforts to spy on members of the UN Security Council in order to influence the vote on going to war—rather than on me. Yet eventually my identity was revealed when I

KEEP READING



--	--	--	--	--	--	--

GOVERNMENT NET NEUTRALITY DONALD TRUMP

It's Time to Fight Trump's Assault on Net Neutrality

The courts won't reverse Trump's FCC. But the states, Congress, and presidential candidates can act to preserve a free and open Internet.

By John Nichols

YESTERDAY 11:30 AM






Striking down net neutrality laws allows internet service providers to control connection speeds. (AP / Jaap Arriens, Sipa USA)

Ready To Fight Back?

Sign up for Take Action Now and get three actions in your inbox every week.

SIGN UP

You will receive occasional promotional offers for programs that support *The Nation's* journalism. You can read our [Privacy Policy](#) here.

Donald Trump assumed the presidency and immediately attacked the foundations of a free and open Internet. He did this by putting in place a Federal Communications Commission chairman and an FCC majority that overturned net neutrality protections with the commission's [2017 vote](#) to eliminate what advocates identify as "[The First Amendment of the Internet](#)."

[On Tuesday](#), the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit issued a ruling that effectively upheld Trump's FCC's decision, even as one of the judges on the panel

[acknowledged](#) that she was "deeply concerned that the result is unhinged from the realities of modern broadband service."

"With this decision, the Court demonstrates it just doesn't 'get it' when it comes to an open internet," says former FCC Commissioner [Michael Copps](#), who now works with [Common Cause on media issues](#). "Without net

KEEP READING



DO YOU APPROVE OF PRESIDENT TRUMP?  [TAKE THE SURVEY](#)

PAID FOR BY TRUMP MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN COMMITTEE, A JOINT FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED BY AND COMPOSED OF DONALD J. TRUMP FOR PRESIDENT, INC. AND THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE

FOREIGN POLICY EDWARD SNOWDEN US INTELLIGENCE

What the Godfather of Modern Whistle-Blowing Can Teach Us Now

As we face two "existential crises," Daniel Ellsberg's archives are finally being opened.

By [Katrina vanden Heuvel](#) 

OCTOBER 1, 2019

EDGE OF SPORTS WITH DAVE ZIRIN

ESQUIRE NAMED IT ONE OF THE 15 BEST SPORTS PODCASTS OF 2019:

IT'LL MAKE YOU A SMARTER SPORTS FAN

Listen on  Apple Podcasts



Political activist and whistle-blower Daniel Ellsberg speaking at a rally in Washington, DC. (Joseph Sohm / Shutterstock.com)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Each week we cross-post an excerpt from Katrina vanden Heuvel's column at the [WashingtonPost.com](#). Read the full text of Katrina's column [here](#)

Ready To Fight Back?

Sign up for Take Action Now and get three actions in your inbox every week.

SIGN UP

You will receive occasional promotional offers for programs that support *The Nation's* journalism. You can read our [Privacy Policy](#) here.

After House Democrats launched an impeachment inquiry last week, President Trump condemned the person responsible for the whistle-blower complaint that set the wheels in motion, likening the whistle-blower to “spies” who are guilty of “treason.” It may be tempting to attribute this rhetoric to the president’s dictatorial streak, but the sentiment behind Trump’s words is all too familiar. Yes, many are portraying the anonymous intelligence official who blew the whistle on Trump as a hero, but all too often Americans who reveal truths about government misdeeds are treated as traitors.

KEEP READING



Today's Mortgage Rate

2.88%

APR 15 Year Fixed

lendingtree

Terms & Conditions apply. NMLS#1136

LATEST FROM THE NATION

TODAY 11:07 AM

THE IMPEACHMENT CRISIS JUST GOT WORSE FOR THE GOP

Joan Walsh

TODAY 10:57 AM

UNASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT US

EDITOR'S PICKS



