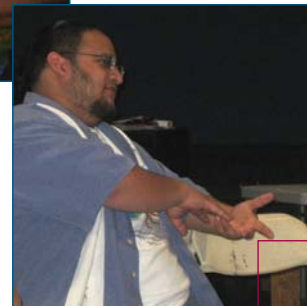


MEDIA, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: HOW DO WE ORGANIZE AND WIN?

Insights and recommendations from the May 10, 2005 Austin
Community Meeting on Media, Technology and Social Justice

KEY THEMES
NEED: Meaningful relationships
Translate the tech/media
issues into relevant language
- Prepare for next battles
Remember the possibility of
'old' tech like broadcast TV



*Sponsored by the Media Justice Fund of the Funding Exchange, organized by
a local planning committee, and hosted by ALLGO.*

BACKGROUND

On May 10, 2005, twenty-one social justice organizers, community media and technology advocates came together to talk about the value of media and technology infrastructure for social change, and what's needed. Nearly all were working in Austin, Texas, with one participant from Houston and two from San Antonio.

The meeting participants included community journalists and media trainers, organizers who work with youth, seniors, disabled, queer, Latino/a, African-American, Native and other communities, media/technology policy activists and consumer advocates, university researchers and educators, radio pirates and "hacktivists," parents, artists, writers, public access TV and community technology providers, and representatives from cultural arts centers, environmental justice groups, international projects and the City of Austin—with many people holding more than one role. (See attached bios.)

This was an opportunity to explore strategies and opportunities to build stronger connections among these communities. Participants were eager to engage conversations and tensions that emerged previously in other spaces: How can we counter trends of commercialism, privatization, decreasing public services and ongoing inequality? What would it take to get communities involved in media and community technology issues? Where are the opportunities for social justice groups to tell media and tech groups their needs? How can media and technology groups better communicate what they do and can offer?



WHY AUSTIN?

The meeting had been initiated by the Media Justice Fund (MJF) of the Funding Exchange, a national public foundation supporting social justice and community organizing. The MJF is sponsoring a series of meetings on issues that connect media and technology advocacy with social justice. CIMA: Center for International Media Action, a New York-based organization that helps groups work together for media and communications policies that serve social justice and human rights, provided coordination and support for the meeting. The convening was generously hosted by ALLGO, a Queer People of Color organization.

Our intention in working together is to provide logistical, resource and coordinating support for meetings and to enable interested people from the local community to determine the goals, the agenda and the participants.

Austin was proposed as the first location in a new series of community meetings sponsored by the MJF due to the vibrancy of the community media, technology and social justice work there, the strong leadership of people of color and women doing the work and the urgency surrounding current telecom/wireless bills in Texas.

HOW WE ORGANIZED

We began exploring Austin as a meeting location by talking with media/technology organizers we knew who worked on social justice issues in Austin. Interest was confirmed by the enthusiastic response and help from several leaders in the community, particularly from Austin Free-Net, the Telecommunications & Information Policy Institute at University of Texas, Austin, and Save Muni Wireless. With their help, the Media Justice Fund team began outreach to other community members and assembled a list of eight local co-sponsoring organizations and a 10-member planning committee reflecting diverse constituencies and groups. The planning committee determined the rest of the invitations for the meeting, the agenda, goals and themes for discussion.

Crucial to a successful meeting was the presence of a skilled and experienced facilitator who was respected and trusted by participants. We were fortunate to have Dr. Leslie Jarmon, the Community Engagement & Outreach Coordinator of the Science, Technology & Society Program of the University of Texas to lend us her expertise in developing the agenda and to lead us through the deep and sometimes provocative conversations of the day.

At the end of the meeting, participants each made commitments to each other about how they could work with each other and support more relationship-building going forward. Several participants held a follow-up meeting for early June and others are working on ideas for online networking for the group and future meetings, including in San Antonio.

This report seeks to share some of the discussion from that day and to lift out some of the wisdom and lessons that emerged. The bios of participants, information about the meeting planners and the meeting agenda are attached at the end for more information.



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Appendix A: Meeting participants

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Appendix B: Meeting Agenda (revised somewhat during meeting)

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(We can provide additional materials available to anyone interested in learning more about this meeting, including information on key policy issues for Austin right now as well as the original proposal we used to bring in the planning committee.)



Notes from the May 10, 2005 Austin Meeting

As the meeting participants shared stories, raised concerns, posed questions and responded to the topics on the agenda (see appendix), their comments were captured by scribes writing on large paper that soon covered the walls of the space. Because of the diversity of people in the room, there were many comments that echoed each other while other comments were in opposition or contradiction. In order to preserve all those voices, we have avoided paraphrase or synthesis that could overshadow subtle differences in emphasis or language. We have attempted to capture the full range of discussion. Their comments have been organized into three broad categories, representing both the opportunities and challenges for media, technology and social justice advocates to work together.



I OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE CHANGE

LAWS ARE BEING WRITTEN AND RE-WRITTEN NOW TO RESPOND TO NEW AND UPCOMING TECHNOLOGIES

- As media converge - phone, TV, internet, radio all over the same cables and wireless systems - policymakers are reconsidering all the regulations that affect them
- As TV and radio broadcasting converts to digital, the numbers of available channels will multiply: who will control them and for what uses?
- Communities can assert their needs and demands as new technology and infrastructure is being developed
- Laws- such as the Telecommunications Act - are being rewritten at the federal level; need to do advocacy at the federal level
- Need to stop Texas from becoming a showcase for deregulation
- Suggestion: Advocate for Austin to become a "community media sanctuary" - an "FCC-free zone" where anyone can broadcast and have access

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS INCREASINGLY WANT AND NEED TO USE MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

- Organizers need tools/systems to network, connect and organize across communities
- "We need the votes, and to get the votes we need to use and manage the media"
- "We need to find new and innovative way to get message out"
- Community groups want to better document and disseminate the histories of their communities and the stories of struggles; want to archive their research and publications in lasting, searchable digital formats
- Nonprofit and community-based organizations are seeking tools to help them manage fundraising, administration, outreach and messaging

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND MEDIA/TECHNOLOGY GROUPS CAN JOIN FORCES TO MEET NEEDS

- Need to build trust and relationships now to prepare for the next fights
- Social justice groups can become more media literate with the help of media groups and then open those resources up to their communities
- Community-based organizations can become media, communication and information-access centers as well as production centers;
- Youth can train older folks to use technology and then the elders (who have the time) can call/write politicians on issues (they do this at Lyons Gardens Senior Housing Complex Computer Center, with tech support supplied by Austin Free-Net)
- Could set up local nonprofits to be broadband (high-speed internet) providers instead of the city - to get around state bans on municipal broadband
- Fight for regulatory and systemic solutions that meet the challenges communities are currently facing
- Need to create spaces/opportunities for collective visioning and for rapid-response to policy crises and organizing moments

WE CAN UTILIZE EXISTING PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY MEDIA OUTLETS TO GET THE MESSAGE OUT AND TO GROW SUPPORT FOR THEM

- Remember the possibility of "old" tech like broadcast TV and radio (Radio KOOP, KAZI, others)
- Public Access TV can help groups make TV programs about their issues and air those programs onto local cable; recording, broadcasting, shows produced by groups; training community producers,
- Public radio has a huge audience: contact decision-makers to encourage them to look at issues in-depth and truly represent the community (eg: local Nation Public Radio station KUT)
- The black, ethnic, progressive and social justice press has continued to survive
 - Local examples: Nokoa, The Observer (Austin weekly paper), La Voz de Esperanza (San Antonio monthly magazine)

NEW TECHNOLOGIES CAN OFFER MORE ACCESS FOR MORE VOICES

- "Blogs," podcasting, video blogging and other tools for online self-publishing can be used for citizen/grassroots journalism
- "Open-source" - non-proprietary free and low-cost software, operating systems and hardware are being developed around the world and anyone can use and adopt them; need more dialogue between the developers and the activist users
- Low-power community-based broadcast TV and radio could be a new alternative
- Satellite connectivity (to the internet) may be the best option for rural communities
- Local wireless and high-speed networks are possible even with out internet access, connecting nonprofits, community centers, schools, government, people in a particular community; free to use if people have the computers at home or nearby

MEDIA GROUPS AND TECHNOLOGISTS CAN BUILD THE CAPACITY OF COMMUNITY GROUPS

- Technology needs to be located in communities and training needs to be relevant—to come from communities articulating their needs
- Groups need consistent, well-skilled, culturally sensitive people to do training and support; need resources to find, hire, coordinate, place and manage them
- Help set up systems to meet current needs: (Example: set up free or low-cost phone-over-internet (VOIP) services)
- Teach people to put their content online and archive it, provide the tools to do so
- Create relationships and long-term commitments to ensure there is ongoing, relevant and sustained access to technical support
- Train/support community groups to have skills to address their own technical needs
- Arrange for donated equipment for staff and public use in centers, but also make sure groups have the software, programs and training they need to use it
- When providing equipment, choose cost-effective tools that are not prohibitively expensive to upgrade and maintain (eg: open-source software over Microsoft)
- Explore the possibilities of co-locating: sharing space, equipment, technology support also provides opportunities for networking
- Provide pictorial tutorials and multilingual how-to materials

WE NEED NEW PARADIGMS FOR COMMUNITY MEDIA

- Public access can respond to many needs (outreach, media literacy) but must be transformed
- We need to use public access TV -- more use will lead to more funding; "use it before we lose it"
- "We need thousands of people to converge on and start using public access"
- Wireless network locations ("hotspots") could be turned in to access centers with hardware, training and other resources available
- It's not just about access and tools but supporting the effective and relevant use
- Activist venues (bookstores, organization offices, community centers) could become public access sites for wireless, new technologies, workshops



KEYS TO EFFECTIVE ORGANIZING AROUND MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

"WE NEED TO BUILD COALITIONS, COOPERATION AND EMPOWERMENT"

- Diverse ethnic groups need to get to know each other; need to build a coalition to raise the voices of constituents
- There needs to be a better understanding of how to build relationships; Meaningful relationships need to be built from the start, not just bringing groups in at the last minute or late in the game when there's a particular battle
- Seek out and build relationships with community leaders
- It may be possible to form specific tactical alliances with companies, such as cable companies, if they support our position
- Organize a "coalition of the cut" - people who have lost services—before it's too late and further budget cuts create more division and competition among constituencies
- Need to consider all issues and constituencies in the vision as it moves forward
- "They will hang us separately if we don't hang together"
- "We'd need a long-term commitment from media/technology groups to be able to engage with them around these issues"

TO BECOME A PRIORITY FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUPS, ANY ISSUE MUST BE A "MEAT & POTATOES" ISSUE

- Instead of activists coming to "teach" communities about tech policy, policy agendas need to be driven by community concerns- with a race, class and gender focus
- Work with social justice organizers and community groups to understand what their priority, urgent and current concerns
- Enable communities to define what they need
- People facing survival issues may be most concerned about phone service (as a starting point for involvement in telecomm policy issues)
- Critical issues include health impacts of disposed technology and manufacturing
- Focus advocacy efforts on issues of urgent concern to communities
- Look at priorities in terms of what affects the largest number of people

ANALYZE, EXPLAIN AND FOCUS ON THE DIRECT IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY AND TELECOMM POLICY AND MEDIA/TECHNOLOGY ACCESS ISSUES

- Communities don't care about bills & laws- they want to know the impact on their civil rights, civil liberties, economics, education, healthcare, etc (Example: "grandma's gonna lose her phone")
- Technology assessments depend on how information is described: by county much of Texas has broadband yet 19 have none; within counties it's much more limited
- Connect media and technology to issues like economics and public services- (senior citizens and AARP already working on this)
- Show how families in the community, city, state are affected
- We can all write one-pagers on issues for each other, especially local issues
- People need to be empowered to understand what they have to lose, before they feel they have a stake in this

SUPPORT COMMUNITY EDUCATION

- Need to reach the catalysts in communities. Reach the "influentials" not everyone
- Media and technology groups need to join forces with social justice and community groups to develop educational campaigns for grassroots constituencies
- Social justice and community organizations need additional resources to do education around these issues and how social justice issues converge with media and technology.
- Work with organizations do outreach to poor communities, teach about technology, create "advocacy manuals"
- Teach people how to use tools, be content creators
- Need to empower community groups to do things for themselves
- Create spaces and opportunities for elders and youth to work and learn together
- Be open to communities, pass on knowledge, educate on issues

ENABLE PEER-TO-PEER COMMUNICATION: ONLINE AND OFFLINE

- If a peer contacts someone about an issue it will have much more relevance. Consideration leads to action
- Online peer-to-peer is connecting people directly to each other: through discussion group email lists, websites, file-sharing, instant messenger
- Networking offline is key; "peer-to-peer networking is also having coffee"
- Senior advocacy councils as a way for elders to learn and act together
- Youth communicate peer-to-peer
- People need systems to communicate with each other and the power structure

TARGET GROUPS WITH RELEVANT MESSAGES: APPEAL TO SELF-INTEREST

- Identify specific target audiences
- Partner with community organizers and leaders to craft relevant messages
- Craft messages from specific constituencies, not just vice versa.
- Eg: for gays and lesbians - how are you represented on TV? For Latino families—what communication are your children getting about college options? For independent artists and musicians—here's why you can't get on the radio
- Communications have to be meaningful- why should they care?
- Policy struggles need to be connected to communities. We have to address issues of class, race, gender, sexuality
- Messages need to be simple and constituency-specific—"sing their song"
- Need short "elevator pitches" to explain specific issues to particular constituencies
- Show people who's doing it to them; emphasize prices, rates
- Need to translate to say "this isn't about phone and cable but it's about control"; "the internet must be for everyone, not just the rich;" "this will increase your phone bill"
- What does broadband mean to people who don't have computers?
- Understand and target the self-interest of the decision-makers you are seeking to influence; in another campaign in the city, when organizers wanted officials to address the rat problems in the poor part of town, they threatened to release 100 rats into the rich part of town- that got attention!

USE APPROPRIATE, UNDERSTANDABLE LANGUAGE, MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION FORMS

- Need to go into communities- use word of mouth, not just high-tech
- When trying to reach people through the 'net, remember the "digital divide" and also illiteracy
- Translate all materials into Spanish or other native language of the communities
- Create multilingual resources
- Comic books, pictorials, cartoons, posters, t-shirts are all media
- "The message is as important as the medium"
- Public access TV is a resource for getting the message out

USE THE LESSONS OF THE CURRENT BILLS AND POLICY STRUGGLES TO PREPARE FOR THE NEXT AND FUTURE BATTLES

- We need to be working for the next two years of fights—need to look 1-2 years ahead; need to build now to be ready for the next round
- Don't always want to be reacting to legislation; also need to be setting agendas, policy
- Educate people about what happened with this bill, why and what the consequences are—get credibility for future fights
- In order to make the "public good" argument we need to understand the perspective of companies operating in a monopoly structure (such as telecom companies like SBC in Austin)
- Deal with the legislature on a personal level—directly with specific policymakers - makes it easier to hold them accountable

WE ARE TRYING TO TAKE BIG STEPS HERE BUT WE NEED TO START SMALL

- Need to recognize the limited resources of all groups involved
- Funders need to support the collaborations, the media/technology policy work and organizing around these issues
- Develop a collective vision around these issues and a sense of a strategy
- Don't try to create something new or big or it will be hard to get off the ground



CURRENT CHALLENGES WITH MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY VITAL

- "Everyone has to be computer literate to be a part of society. There's an assumption that we all have the same access."
- "Mainstream media define public issues"
- "We are living in imperialist times and the media is all the more important"
- Highly concentrated ownership of corporate media makes it harder for community activists to participate in public debate and get the message out on their issues
- Use of the Internet is becoming an essential requirement for access to social and public services information: from immigration to social security, including finding legal advice, setting appointments with agencies, and filling out forms for incarcerated family members; internet provides directories of resources
- Internet is needed for job searches, entrepreneurial concerns; research for legal, personal and educational uses; public health providers are using telemedicine
- Broadband (high-speed) internet is becoming part of economic development, a community need like electricity was in the early 20th century—yet many people still don't know what is meant by the word "broadband"
- Activist groups are increasingly using email and websites for networking, fundraising, advocacy and organizing
- Advocates need access to information to learn what's happening with legislation
- New media and communications technologies can be set up to help - or to further exclude people with disabilities; efforts must be made to be inclusive at all times

MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT—INCLUDING INFRASTRUCTURE AND REGULATION—IS BEING LEAD BY LARGE CORPORATIONS THAT HAVE NO PRIORITY BUSINESS INTEREST IN SERVING LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES

- "They (corporations and lawmakers working for them) don't play nice"
- We're seeing a movement towards private service providers for all media and technology infrastructure—eliminating public-interest regulations on price caps, service quality, access
- Increasing consolidation of the media is reducing local ownership and control
- Companies see media/technology as a business, not as a "public good"
- It can be difficult to overcome the perception that tax dollars shouldn't be used to compete with a private company—even if, for example, municipal programs will provide services and access that corporations won't
- Telecommunications infrastructure funds were cut in Texas and at the federal level; cutting off funds to rural and urban communities
- With phone, TV and internet services converging, we are moving towards local duopolies where just two companies - telecom and cable - control all media and communications services

CURRENT MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS ARE NOT SERVING SOCIAL JUSTICE NEEDS

- Social justice groups (and media/technology advocates) are not making use of public access TV resources
- Some online services allow only one sign-up per computer (IP address); prevents multiple users from accessing a service through a shared computer at a community organization (eg: to register online to speak at Austin City Council you need your own email address so only one person can sign up at a time. Signing up by phone allowed groups to sign up for several people at a time)
- Cell phone, cable and internet access prices are too high for low-income families; plans are often too confusing for people to make informed decisions
- Computer rental services target low-income consumers with predatory lending
- Automated phone services as a barrier: how can you push the right buttons if you don't know who you need to talk with? Problematic for people who already don't have access to information resources, can't spend all their time pushing buttons.
- There's a lot of hype around newest technology—but the need isn't always there
- "Technology Opportunity Grants" (foundation, corporate and government grants meant to bridge the "digital divide") were often helpful for building infrastructure and providing access to technology resources but were also prohibitively bureaucratic and often allocated to the wrong groups; now they are mostly gone or underfunded

THE "DIGITAL DIVIDE" REMAINS: DISPARITIES IN ACCESS, LITERACY, TOOLS AND RESOURCES

- Wireless hotspots (internet access areas) often don't exist in poor communities; where they do have them, they don't have the sufficient computers
- In rural communities there is often no infrastructure for internet access at all
- New ideas such as local community networks (connecting community institutions to each other, not just the internet) still require hardware, software and training
- Technologies change so fast it's hard for community groups and individuals to have access to updated hardware and software, upgrades and relevant training; many groups are working with old "outdated" equipment
- Community-based organizations face a serious lack of consistently available technical support, repair and maintenance services; meanwhile they are struggling just to keep the doors open
- Lack of knowledge and information about how to broadcast your own information using old or new media (public access cable, podcasting, blogs, digital equipment)
- Existing community-based media/technology groups are severely strapped for resources (such as NOKOA newspaper and Austin Free-Net); the progressive community doesn't always know about or use these resources as tools for activism
- Limited availability of community access centers, "they are all full in the summer"; public access centers need to provide relevant workshops so computers not just used for games or by youth that know how to use computers already
- There is a "generation gap" where elders - who have time for activism, needs to access public services, and stories to share—have even fewer resources to learn and use technology
- Literacy and language barriers are an issue (in central Texas, 20% of adults can't read past a 5th grade level)

CURRENT BILLS UNDER CONSIDERATION (IN TEXAS, OTHER STATES AND NATIONALLY) COULD FURTHER REDUCE ACCESS, QUALITY AND RESOURCES

- Bills could prevent municipalities from developing and supporting free or low-cost public internet access and wireless networks, alone or with small/nonprofit providers
- Current bills could hurt community access providers and program centers such as Austin Free-Net, depleting municipally-supported community technology initiatives
- Price caps on phone services could be removed, raising costs to consumers
- Quality standards for phone and cable services could be reduced or eliminated
- Emergency services (such as 911) could be less available with new technologies such as cell phones and phone-over-internet ("Voice Over IP" - VOIP)
- States could remove local control over cable franchise agreements, decreasing the city's negotiating position; leading to reduced funds, equipment and support for public access cable TV. Cities and towns would have to allocate from budget (often already limited); customer service standards and regulation at the city/town level could be avoided
- As phone and cable companies compete with each other, regulations could be reduced to lowest common denominator; companies are pushing for public-interest and public-service obligations to be removed with no requirements to serve all areas and all communities
- Anti-pornography and censorship laws, outdated intellectual property and strict copyright laws, surveillance, privacy regulation, the Patriot Act and other "legal cans of worms" all affect community media/tech groups and further restrict content and communication without community influence on policy-making
- Resources are being put into public "safety" instead of public services

THERE ARE PERCEIVED RACE, CLASS AND RELEVANCE GAPS BETWEEN MEDIA/TECHNOLOGY ADVOCATES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ORGANIZERS, CONSTITUENCIES AND COMMUNITIES

- Media/communications policy is technical, specialized and increasingly professionalized field; there's a very small group of public-interest experts on this; hard to keep up with increasingly concrete work
- Many technology/media policy activists are perceived to be white, mostly men; little visibility of women and people of color doing this work, not much diversity
- Community media/technology groups are perceived to be better resourced than social change groups; media reform/access advocates and issues not perceived as interested in or connected to social change movements
- Technology/telecommunications policy activists are thought to only come to communities of color, poor people when they need them for winning a fight but otherwise they're not involved in issues prioritized by those communities
- Social justice groups often don't see the relevance of media/telecommunications policy to their immediate priorities and don't have resources—people, money or time—to take on new issues or to "translate" for/inform their constituents

MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY ADVOCATES NEED "PEOPLE POWER," ORGANIZING EXPERTISE AND COMMUNITY COALITIONS TO WIN BETTER POLICY—BUT SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUPS HAVE OTHER PRIORITIES

- Social justice and community organizers are facing urgent life-and-death issues: homelessness, hunger, affordable housing and evictions, racial profiling, incarceration, lack of living-wage jobs, healthcare v. technology issues
- There is little publicized information about how current media/communications policy issues would impact social justice and grassroots communities; the main message through TV ads is that two companies or industries (ie. cable and phone) are fighting
- Policy discussions aren't made relevant to those who could mobilize to help
- "The content of the issues is too technical and removed from everyday life" but if people could be made to understand in terms they connect with that would be better (e.g. "Grandma's phone bill could go up a lot in a couple of months" conveys urgency, relevance)



APPENDIX A: MEETING PARTICIPANTS

* = MEMBER OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Librado Almanza, PODER Young Scholar for Justice, Coordinator of TEAM (Technology, Education, Advocacy and Mobilization)

*Susana Almanza, Executive Director, PODER

Susana Almanza is founding member and Director of PODER (People Organized in Defense of Earth and Her Resources). Formed in 1991, PODER is an economic and social justice organization that brings East Austin neighborhood residents together to fight unsafe industrial development in residential neighborhoods.

PODER, which means power in Spanish, was instrumental in relocating the East Austin Tank Farm and in closing the Holly Street Power Plant, which were both located in residential areas. The community group trains community members to administer neighborhood surveys, trains young people to take leadership, and produces a weekly radio show.

Susana is a native of East Austin, Texas. A longtime community organizer, she was active in the civil rights movement as a Brown Beret taking on issues of police brutality, and equity and quality in education and health care. She served as coordinator of the Electronic Industry Good Neighbor Campaign (EIGNC), which brings together community, labor, and environmental organizations, to demand genuine democratic high tech development based on community and worker empowerment. She also is a founding member of the Texas Network of Environment and Economic Justice, formed to build a unified voice among people of color in the state and offer direction and leadership for the future.

Gary Chapman, Director, 21st Century Project, University of Texas

Gary Chapman is director of the 21st Century Project and a member of the faculty at the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin. He is also associate director of the university's Telecommunications and Information Policy Institute and a regular editorial columnist for The Austin American-Statesman.

DeAnne Cuellar, Project Director, Texas Media Empowerment Project (San Antonio)

Texas Media Empowerment Project (TexasMEP) of San Antonio embodies a diverse collection of individuals from various communities, industries, and cultures within the San Antonio area have come together under the common goal of advancing media empowerment. The project includes media activists, a co-op of individuals, grass-roots organizations, volunteers drawing inspiration from the independent media movement, professors and professionals, low-income people, people of color, women, queer people, youth and elders, students, and many others.

TexasMEP is united to take back the power to define ourselves, our needs, and our vision.

What is Media Empowerment? It means giving ourselves the knowledge and skills to make media work for social justice in our communities.

All around the country, various communities are organizing to hold their media accountable, to have a voice in media policy and to increase the power of various communities in media.

The Texas Media Empowerment Project (TexasMEP) of San Antonio, with the support of The Esperanza Peace and Justice Center, Centro Cultural Aztlan, Fuerza Unida, Council on American Islamic Relations, P.E.A.C.E. Initiative, National Association of Independent Latino Producers (NALIP), and Mexican American Advancement Project Cable Show are working together progressively to provide the cultural capital necessary to reinvent media policies by obtaining long term goals in the name of social justice.

DeAnne Cuellar, TexasMEP Project Director, has been active in volunteerism and the local music community since she organized her first music event at 16 years old with the help of her parents. She is Latina, a native Texan coming from a family line of migrant workers and self-employed parents. While attending a University program abroad she was introduced to international social issues through friends working with Amnesty International. After

returning to San Antonio she began to use the skills she learned from other students to promote the burgeoning local talent in Texas. Frustrated with the local media coverage of the community, and cultural events, she was inspired by the independent movement of media activists and local community organizers to work towards media reform. While attending school she facilitates many local projects that focus on underrepresented communities within the San Antonio area. She is currently a student at the University of Texas at San Antonio completing a degree in Technical Media and Public Relations, a Vice President of the Public Relations Student Society of America on campus, and politically active in Media Reform. After completing her education she will pursue a career in new media technologies with a focus in digital literacy, and will continue to advocate for social justice and media reform.

Tim Eubanks, Community Organizer, Austin Voices for Education and Youth

Tim Eubanks is the Community Organizer for Austin Voices for Education and Youth; he coordinates its Youth Action for Educational Change project. Prior to coming to Austin Voices, Tim worked at the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression (ABFFE) in New York, where he helped coordinate efforts to exempt booksellers and librarians from the business records provisions of the Patriot Act. He also worked with booksellers to coordinate the annual Banned Books Week educational campaign. While in New York, he co-founded two grassroots peace and social justice groups which successfully fought for passage of an anti-war resolution by the New York City Council and sought greater visibility of LGBT folks at gatherings, calling for peace and justice. He is a graduate of Antioch College where he worked on organizing campaigns at four non-profit organizations in three states as part of Antioch's cooperative education program. Tim is an alumnus of the Center for Third World Organizing's (CTWO) Movement Activist Apprenticeship program (MAAP). He is the proud product of a public school education.

Akwasi Evans, Publisher, NOKOA-the Observer

Akwasi Evans founded NOKOA-The Observer, a multicultural, progressive, political weekly, 18 years ago. He has been a human rights activist since the early 1960s, marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, worked with Jesse Jackson, traveled to Libya with Louis Farrakhan and was active in the anti-apartheid movement. His articles are often syndicated nationally through BlackPress USA, and he serves on the board of the National Newspaper Publishers of America, the association of black papers.

***Martha Fuentes, board member, Austin Free-Net**

Research Associate, UT-Austin Telecommunications & Info Policy Institute
Originally from Venezuela where she was a journalist and international correspondent working throughout Latin America, Martha Fuentes has lived in Texas for 5 years. Before coming to the US, she worked with NGOs to form "telecenters" (public access IT initiatives) in Peru, Colombia and Venezuela. After volunteering for two years with Austin Free-Net, she joined its board last year, where she helps design programs, fundraises and is involved in the "revisiting" of what more the nonprofit can do to promote public internet access in low income neighborhoods. She also has served as a media monitor of the Latin American press for the Miami-based Knight Foundation. She is completing her dissertation on public internet access and how activist and government interventions have changed over the past ten years. She has also studied internet use in poor communities.

Pat Garlinghouse, Executive Director, Houston MediaSource

I landed in the media justice movement partly due to my lifelong belief in "justice for all" and that no one should exercise 'their rights' at the expense of another's. Over the past sixteen years it has been my privilege to inform citizens in the 'southwest' and beyond about local media distribution, media literacy functions and the art of organizing around common media issues. Three years ago, a group of us from around the country, working to ensure that media groups and social justice groups interact, formed what is now called 'The Albuquerque Project' (TAP). We remain vigilant that community media includes everyone and provides unlimited opportunities for anyone to turn their beliefs into action.

Rondella Hawkins, Telecommunications and Regulatory Affairs, City of Austin

Rondella M. Hawkins is the Manager of Telecommunications & Regulatory Affairs for the City of Austin. She has direct responsibility for negotiating and administering cable TV, electric and gas utility right-of-way franchises as well as license agreements with wireless communications providers. She oversees the administration and utilization of cable-company provided institutional networks and the public access television management contract. Her office also provides staff support to City Council Committee for Telecommunications Infrastructure and to the Austin Telecommunications Commission, an advisory board to the City Council whose members are Council appointed. She advises City Council on telecommunications policies. She is also responsible for developing the City's Community Technology Initiative, which consists of City-initiated programs to provide community access to and training for information technologies and media. This initiative includes our contractual partnership with Austin Free-Net and the City's Grant for Technology Opportunities (GTOPs). Rondella serves as the President of Texas Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (TATOA).

Valerie Hutchison, Program Coordinator, Another Way Texas Shares

Valerie Hutchison, 25, has spent most of her organizing life at Another Way, which allows for workplace giving for the nonprofit organizations in Texas that are in its membership. She began her work there as a student intern placed from St. Edwards University in Austin. As program coordinator, she works with giving campaigns and with the 41 nonprofits that are part of the Another Way network. The organizations range from anti-poverty, civil rights and arts organizations to environmental, relief, affordable housing and health groups.

***Dr. Leslie Jarmon, (facilitator), UT Science, Technology and Society Program**

Dr. Leslie Jarmon is on the faculty of UT's Graduate Studies Professional Development Program, and the Science, Technology & Society Program, where she also serves as the Community Engagement & Outreach Coordinator. A graduate of UT herself, her interests especially lie in people's access to low cost technologies in developing countries. While working with the US Peace Corps, Dr. Jarmon coordinated Micro-Business development for its Latin America and the Caribbean program. Her research on public-private partnerships led to Americorps/VISTA volunteers working with micro-lending organizations and other grassroots community economic development entities across the country.

***Jon Lebkowsky, President & cofounder, Electronic Frontier Foundation--(EFF)-Austin**

Jon Lebkowsky is currently President of Electronic Frontier Foundation, Austin, which was revived in 2002 after being dormant for five years. EFF-Austin is a nonprofit civil liberties organization founded in 1991 to advocate around the social implications of new technology, protect digital rights and educate the public about the social implications of emerging technologies. EFF-Austin is independently incorporated from the national EFF after national dropped chapters from its organizing structure.

Jon, CEO of a consulting firm, is also a cofounder with Rich MacKinnon of Austin Wireless, a nonprofit supporting the spread of wireless access to the internet and the ability of municipalities to provide their own form of internet access for its residents and businesses. He also has been involved in Austin Wireless's City Project, which has installed and maintained over 75 free wireless (Wi-Fi) connections ("hot spots).

A longtime proponent of Internet activism, he is co-editing a book on technology, democracy, and advocacy, and served on the organizing committee for O'Reilly's Digital Democracy Teach-In (February 9, 2004). He recently completed a year-long engagement with IC2 Institute at the University of Texas, where he managed Wireless Future, a project that produced a major economic development report as well as a national wireless track within South by Southwest Interactive. He is the creator of weblogsky.com, and has written about technology for publications such as Mondo 2000, 21C, Whole Earth Review, Fringe Ware Review, Wired Magazine, and the Austin Chronicle.

Richard MacKinnon, President, Austin Wireless, Inc. / Founder, Austin Wireless City Project

The leader of the volunteer organization that helped make Austin the "free-est wireless city in the world." After 15 months of operation, the cooperatively-owned and community-operated network includes 100 hotspots and over 40,000 registered users who combine for over 10,000 monthly connections. The network is adding approximately 50 new users per day. Venues include coffee shops, restaurants, bars, city parks and libraries, and the state capitol. Richard is also a founder and CEO of Less Networks, a company which provides free WiFi services to non-profits, service providers, and municipalities.

***Erin McCarley, local coordinator, CIMA**

Erin is a master's student in photojournalism at the University of Texas at Austin. With a background in sociology and social work, she is currently working toward a career in social documentary photojournalism. With a particular interest in the human impact of U.S. foreign policy, neo-liberalism, and globalization, Erin hopes to tell stories that are often evaded by commercial, corporate-owned media. She is interested in learning more about community-based media projects in Austin and how to more effectively collaborate with them.

María Martin, GraciasVida Center for Media

Martin has more than 20 years experience working in Latino public broadcasting. She was Latino affairs editor at National Public Radio's national desk and was the founding producer of Latino USA, an NPR program heard on over 250 stations. She is the executive producer of the recent CPB-funded series "Despues de las Guerras: Central America After the Wars." Before joining NPR, Martin was the editor and host of the Latin American News Service (LANS), a seven-minute daily modular service of Latin American affairs. She also worked as a freelance reporter and independent producer for NPR, Crossroads, Soundprint, and Noticiero Latino. In 1986, she worked in Managua, Nicaragua, as a freelance reporter. She also was a reporter and producer at KUOW-FM in Seattle, Washington, an NPR affiliate. From 1983 to 1984, she was the executive producer of Elecciones '84, a nationwide bilingual news feature service on Latino election issues, the first independently produced Latino program distributed by National Public Radio.

Her first post in radio was as news and public affairs director for KBBF, a bilingual radio station in Santa Rosa, California. She started as a volunteer reporter and co-producer of Somos Chicanas, one of the first radio programs to address the needs and concerns of Hispanic women. She is the recipient of multiple awards, including a Fulbright Fellowship and the Ruben Salazar Communications Award from National Council of La Raza. She holds a master's degree from Ohio State University.

***Tim Morstad, Policy Analyst, Consumers Union/Southwest**

As Policy Analyst for Consumers Union's Southwest Office in Austin, Tim coordinates the office's legislative advocacy work on electricity and telecommunications issues in Texas. He also is member of Consumer Union's EscapeCellHell team, promoting a national campaign to increase the power of consumers and improve service and options in the wireless phone market. Tim holds a B.A. in political science from the California State Polytechnic University and an MPA from the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin. The Southwest Office works to represent consumers, especially low-income consumers, in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, and provides support to other public interest organizations and community groups seeking to advance the interest of consumers. The Southwest Office, one of only three regional offices maintained by Consumer's Union, manages the following advocacy Websites: StopHospitalInfections.org; FinancialPrivacyNow.org; EscapeCellHell.org; and SafeCarsForKids.org.

Pat O'Neil, Acting Executive, Austin Community TV

***JoAnne Reyes-Boitel, director of community organizing, ALLGO**

JoAnne Reyes-Boitel is Director of Community Organizing at ALLGO, a queer people of color organization founded in Austin, TX. JoAnne works the transgender and women's programming at ALLGO, as well as civic participation initiatives and coalition building with other organizations also working within a social justice context. JoAnne is also a published poet and writer, homegrown activist, mother and woman-loving-woman. In between all that, she works as a do-it-yourself graphic designer through working class graphics and has a background in music research.

***Sharron Rush, co-founder and Executive Director, Knowbility**

(unable to attend on day of meeting)

Sharron Rush is the co-founder and executive director of Knowbility, a seven-year-old nonprofit dedicated to barrier-free information technology, connecting people with disabilities to technology opportunities. Sharron organized the first Accessibility Internet Rally (AIR) Austin in 1998 and is replicating this renowned community development program in cities throughout the country. Because of AIR, hundreds of professional Web developers from over 60 technology companies have learned about the benefits, tools, and techniques of accessible Web design. They have used their accessible Web design skills to create sites for more than 80 nonprofit groups, affecting the lives of thousands, if not millions of clients.

A Texas native, Sharron comes to the nonprofit community from a small business management background. She believes strongly in the power of technology to support the independence of people with disabilities and in the value of dynamic, ongoing collaboration to strengthen communities. Her work has won recognition for excellence and innovation by the Peter F. Drucker Foundation. She is a frequent presenter at national disability and technology conferences. In April of 2001, she was named one of the Top 25 Women of the Web, and in March 2002, she received the Dewey Winburne Award for Community Service at the SXSW Interactive Media Conference. Her book, *Maximum Accessibility*, co-written with John Slatin and published by Addison Wesley, was published in September 2002.

Rene Saenz, Esperanza Peace and Justice Center (San Antonio)

Esperanza works to help individuals and grassroots organizations acquire knowledge and skills so that we can control decisions that affect our day-to-day lives in a way that respects and honors shared goals for a just society. We believe that by having a place with resources available we can come together to facilitate and provoke discussions and interactions in a variety of ways among diverse groups of people who believe that together we can bring positive social change to our world and address the inherent interconnection of issues and oppressions across racial, class, sexual orientation, gender, age, health, physical and cultural boundaries.

***Ana Sisnett, executive director, Austin Free-Net**

Ana Sisnett came to community technology as a paid and volunteer activist teaching human rights activists about computers and the Internet as tools for activism through her work with "Technomama" and the Foundation for a Compassionate Society. She is an immigrant, cultural activist, and author of the children's book *Grannie Jus' Come!* Sisnett was a participant of the 2002 Highlander Media Justice Gathering, and is a member of the Advisory Council of the St. Louis WizKids wireless project. Recognition for her work includes Austin's 2001 Susan G. Hadden Telecommunity Award.

Austin Free-Net (AFN), a nonprofit formed in 1995, works to ensure that underserved communities can access and effectively use the Internet and computer technologies in public spaces throughout Greater Austin. AFN works in partnerships with the City of Austin, area nonprofits and community supporters to launch and support free, conveniently located public computer labs offering access to the Internet and classes in sites such as the Austin public libraries, affordable housing complexes, faith- and community-based organizations, and senior centers. Austin Free-Net also offers Fix-Net, an affordable technical support, training, and technology

Planning for nonprofits, community-based organizations and Public agencies. Austin Free-Net was voted the Austin Chronicle's 2003 "Best Internet Safety Net and Digital Divide Bridge."

***Clint Smith, co-convenor, Gray Panthers of Austin**

In addition to the Gray Panthers, Clint Smith is a leader in a variety of Austin's community-based organizations, including the East Austin Social Action Coalition, and Campaigns for the People, whose mission is to restrain the influence of money on state government and help create an ethical climate that builds public confidence in the state's democratic institutions. He served previously in several Federal government management positions. The Gray Panthers seek to bring together groups of young, old, women, men, persons of all ethnic, racial, and economic backgrounds for the study and promotion of social justice. Believing that governments exist as the agencies of the people for attaining social justice for all, Gray panthers invite the affiliation of all Nations who share these beliefs and goals. The common welfare is served by policies that preserve peace, heal the wounded environment, and respect the rights of all persons to share in determining policy.

***Rene Valdez, Resistencia Bookstore, Red Salmon Arts**

Born and raised in El Paso, Tejas, Rene came to Austin in 1996 and became involved with community media and activism. For 2 years he was a programmer for Free Radio Austin (FRA), a 24 hour non-licensed community radio station which was eventually raided by the FCC twice before being permanently shut-down in 2001. The goals of FRA were to provide anybody/everybody access to radio while at the same time challenging the monopoly of the radio dial by such companies as Viacom and Clear Channel. He was also co-editor of the Javelina, a community based newspaper, which was inspired by the movement of non-licensed micro-radio broadcasting. Eventually he became involved with Resistencia Bookstore and Red Salmon Arts. Since 2001, he has been a volunteer at Resistencia Bookstore, the only independent Chicano bookstore in the region. Resistencia Bookstore is a neighborhood center for aspiring writers, providing literature to Austin indigenous communities since 1983. Specializing in Native, Chicana/o, Mexicana/o, Latina/o, African-American, feminist, and children's bilingual literature. For Red Salmon Arts, Rene is a cultural worker who organizes events and manages the daily operations. Red Salmon Arts is a grassroots Native American/Chicana/o cultural arts organization with a history of working within the indigenous communities of Austin since 1983

Stefan Wray, Austin Indymedia, Iconmedia

An Austin media maker performing in print, radio, public access television, video documentary, and on-line. Most recently involved with the struggle to reform and save Austin's public access TV channels 10, 11, and 16. Creates work under the banner Iconmedia (www.iconmedia.org). Still putting the finishing touches on a documentary about the Los Alamos National Laboratory called The WMDS Are In New Mexico. Got involved with media activism in the 1990s while at San Francisco State. Attended the first two Media and Democracy Congresses. Later helped to start the first rendition of the Austin Independent Media Center. Has an MA in Journalism from the University of Texas at Austin with some post-graduate work at NYU. In New York co-founded the Electronic Disturbance Theater that achieved international acclaim for its early "hacktivism" theater.

** We are deeply grateful to the members of the planning committee and especially to two of our early co-planners, Ana Sisnett and Martha Fuentes, our local coordinator Erin McCarley and our volunteer facilitator Leslie Jarmon who kept the discussion rich and flowing.*

MEETING SPONSORS: THE MEDIA JUSTICE FUND

CIMA: Center for International Media Action

Aliza Dichter, Catherine Borgman-Arboleda, Co-Directors,

Charlene Allen, Director of Grantmaking, **Antwuan Wallace,** Program Consultant

The Media Justice Fund of the Funding Exchange

The Funding Exchange is a national progressive, public foundation dedicated to social justice and community organizing. CIMA: Center for International Media Action is a nonprofit organization that helps build alliances, resources and strategies for media and communications policies that serve social justice and human rights. The MJF works with CIMA to support organizing in pursuit of accessible and accountable media systems and community-based media technologies. They came to Austin to deepen their understanding of the needs and strategies for this work.

APPENDIX B: MEETING AGENDA

(REVISED SLIGHTLY DURING THE MEETING)

AUSTIN COMMUNITY MEETING ON MEDIA, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

MAY 10, 2005

11AM – WELCOME; AGENDA REVIEW; DISCUSSION OF THE DAY'S "MEETING CULTURE"

11:10AM – INTRODUCTIONS:

each person takes up to 2 minutes to reply to 3 questions:

- 1) who are you and what does your organization do? (the one-line explanation)
- 2) why are you here? what hooked your attention and attracted you to this meeting?
- 3) mention one accomplishment you are very proud of

12:00PM–BRIEF INTRODUCTIONS FROM THE MEDIA JUSTICE FUND

about our goals for the community meeting overall

12:05PM-1:30PM– "THE INTERSECTIONS OF MEDIA, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE"

- 1) Ana Sisnett talks about the social and economic justice core of community media and technology, key trends and the key issues at the grassroots
- 2) People in the room share stories about their work at the intersection of media, technology and social justice:
 - lessons learned, successes or biggest challenge in working with media and technology for social justice
 - biggest challenge right now, biggest challenge long term
 - communication and information needs of social justice groups: what are those; how media and technology groups can better serve them?
- 3) Tim Morstad introduces the handout circulated before the meeting about current bills, legislation and other regulations facing media and communications technology at the national, state and local level. (Texas bills HB 3179; HB 789; SB 332)
- 4) Group discussion: identify what social justice communities need from communications policy

1:30PM-2:00PM–WORKING LUNCH: BREAK INTO SMALL GROUPS OF 4 OR 5 PEOPLE.

- 1) Small group discussion: what are the major issues affecting social justice and tech groups with an eye toward intersections? What exists and where are the gaps?

Examples:

- how to address issues of access, relevance and value across platforms of wireless and broadband, internet, community TV, community radio and other technologies

- public access and new technological platforms: reclaiming public spaces
- media convergence and opportunities for multimedia projects: does Austin need a media access center?

2) Last five minutes of lunch—Each group pick the top 1-2 key theme(s) from their discussion to share with others

2:00-2:15—REPORT BACK, EACH SMALL GROUP REPORTS ON THEIR TOP THEME(S)

2:15-3:15—DISCUSSION "WHAT IS THE RELEVANT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUPS? WHAT ARE THEIR PRIORITIES AND NEEDS?"

3:15-4:00—DISCUSSION: OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

1) Examples:

- how to create sustained space for networking and collective visioning, planning and rapid response to opportunities -- online and offline.
- using trust established from existing media outlets (like Nokoa, Texas Observer, etc) to build community across new and emerging platforms
- media access including access to hardware/software, accessible design, citizen journalism and blogs
- explore how social justice constituencies and groups can participate in and shape current/anticipated communications battles at the local, state and federal level.

2) Groups pull out the key two things that emerged from the discussion that they want to move forward with.. what are the key answers and how can we build strategies on them? are they valid? ... two most important questions and your answers to them

4:00-4:15—BREAK

4:15-4:45—NEXT STEPS: OUR COMMITMENTS

>>> Individuals speak to what they and/or their organization plan to do towards the issues raised at the meetings, making a commitment to the larger group

- does not need to be a major activity or new project; can be as basic as making a commitment to share within our own organizations and colleagues what took place at the meeting
- option to speak to the intention of working/acting together for those who are interested in the intention to form a coalition, network or ongoing process

4:45-5:00—CLOSING COMMENTS AND THANKS YOUS FROM EVERYONE TO EVERYONE.

Everyone says one thing. It can be a feeling, a lesson learned, an observation.

5:00-5:30—BREAK

5:30-7:30—RECEPTION/PARTY (open to others invited from the community)