



Dr. Mark Hyman, chair of the Institute of Functional Medicine and director of the Cleveland Clinic Center for Functional Medicine, learned Brogan's lesson early on. "Independent media have been crucial in disseminating my life's work. Given the misinformation being spread by regular news and government channels about weight and health, we deserve to hear the truth about what's in our food, toxins in our environment and how we can truly heal our bodies," says Hyman, a nine-time bestselling author.

Independent Voices

Today's independent media landscape shifts at warp speed. With 24/7 Internet access to websites, both groundbreaking journalism and grassroots perspectives appear in original articles and blogs. Outlets include independent online radio, TV shows, newspapers, filmmakers and "citizen journalists" armed with smart phones instantly transmitting images and updates via YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. From a growing recognition that such media play a vital role in shaping a more informed and engaged citizenry, more attention is again being paid to the need for real news that matters. Breaking the reign of junk food news generators is the mission of *ProjectCensored.org*, a media research program at California's Sonoma State University.

Billions of dollars are spent annually on webinars, podcasts and e-books exploring health and healing, self-help, spiritual enlightenment and creativity, indicating a reading audience with a hunger for deeper wisdom. Since 1973, New Dimensions Radio, co-founded and hosted by Justine Willis Toms, has featured many of the world's most respected wisdom keepers. "Guests exclaim how refreshing it is to speak in-depth and at length. Mainstream, commercially based media consistently present sound bites on how things are breaking down and not working, without opening thought to constructive visions for a future that benefits all life and the planet," says Toms.

"Independent media have broken away from dependence on the moneyed interests holding tight reins on the news and information they publish. Because we're listener-supported, public radio is

In virtually all aspects of life, we are influenced consciously or subconsciously by mainstream media messages. Today, six media giants—Comcast, The Walt Disney Company, Twenty-First Century Fox, Time Warner, Viacom and DirecTV—control the vast majority of what we watch on TV and in movies, listen to on the radio and read in books, newspapers and magazines. According to Ben Bagdikian, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and author of *The New Media Monopoly*, this handful of conglomerates form a cartel that wields enough influence to affect U.S. politics and define social values.

Thirty years ago, before many mergers and acquisitions, 50 corporations owned nearly all of American media. Today's infotainment and rhetoric, misrepresented as news, is leading millions to conclude that these colossal powers do not exist to objectively report the truth.

Mainstream Media's True Colors

Although a recent Gallup Poll reflects Americans' lack of trust in mainstream media's reporting of news fully, fairly and accurately, fair reporting was what HarperCollins, a prominent publisher, expected upon the 2016 release of

New York City holistic psychiatrist Dr. Kelly Brogan's *A Mind of Your Own: The Truth About Depression and How Women Can Heal Their Bodies to Reclaim Their Lives*. They were shocked when the book was boycotted.

"*The New York Times*, *Dr. Oz* and *Good Morning America* refused to schedule author interviews or write book reviews. There wasn't a whisper anywhere on mainstream media about my evidenced-based book on how women can holistically recover from depression without a single prescription. HarperCollins was baffled. I was their first credentialed author who spoke out against pharmaceuticals," says Brogan.

So Brogan turned to independent outlets, including print, online and social media, her own website, newsletter lists and word-of-mouth. Her work soon broke through into three of the top bestselling book lists: *USA Today*, *Publisher's Weekly* and *The New York Times*. That example serves as clear proof of the importance and power of independent media to furnish the public helpful and in-depth information on wide-ranging topics that mainstream broadcast media typically only cover in 30- to 60-second blurbs or not at all.

free to explore a wide range of timely and timeless topics," he says.

Leaning away from one-sided views gives independent media space to expand people's perspectives and positive expectations for the future. The seven-time Pulitzer Prize-winning *Christian Science Monitor* international news organization was established in Boston over a century ago to till human thought and thereby improve human lives via an uplifted journalistic standard. "Its quiet insistence for human rights and against tyranny; for generosity and against selfishness; for intelligence, charity, courage, integrity and most of all, for progress and hope—surely that has helped," remarks John Yemma, current columnist and former editor.

"We work to uncover where progress is occurring, even though headlines proclaim the contrary. There are always two sides to a story," says Susan Hackney, a senior director with the *Monitor*, which consistently resists the sensational in favor of the meaningful.

Magazines such as *Natural Awakenings*, *Mother Jones*, *The Optimist* and *Yes!* are likewise stirring up conversations on meaningful issues via larger perspectives with a focus on tangible solutions. They address such areas as the damaging health and environmental effects of genetically engineered food, championed by Jeffrey Smith, founder of the Institute for Responsible Technology.

"Europe could kick genetically modified ingredients (GMO) out of their food supply because their mainstream media covered the health dangers, while U.S. mainstream media ignored them and kept Americans in the dark. Independent media in the U.S. enable democracy and consumer-inspired transformations of all kinds. Knowledge has organizing power," advises Smith.

Success Stories

With Fran Korten at its helm, the ad-free, subscription-supported, nonprofit *Yes!* is helping to reframe our biggest issues. "Mainstream media, dependent upon advertisers that would have us believe that we can buy happiness, celebrate stories of the rich and powerful, leaving everyone else feeling small and powerless. Independents can help resist such ways of seeing the world, help people see a different path to suc-

cess and happiness and perceive themselves as change agents. Together, we share engaging stories of how people are carving out new ways of living that hold the hope of a world more in balance with the living Earth and where everyone's inherent worth and dignity are recognized," says Korten.

Allan Savory, founder of the Savory Institute and originator of a holistic land management systems approach to recover and preserve sustainable resources, underscores the need for change leaders and independent thinkers. "As we ponder who they might be, we realize it's not those that discover new, counterintuitive insights, but those that spread the knowledge. The groundbreakers are pioneers like writers, poets, artists, speakers and social networkers. After 50 years of trying to understand the intense institutional resistance to and ridiculing of my work of managing complexity in a simple manner, holistic management is now quickly spreading globally. This is only due to social networking, independent writers and my TED talk that went viral," observes Savory.

Laurie McCammon, change leader and author of *Enough! How to Liberate Yourself and Remake the World with Just One Word*, contracted with independent publisher Red Wheel Weiser to get her message out. "It's been building awareness of forbidden knowledge—that we each have unrealized potential to affect reality by changing our thoughts. We can nurture a shift in global culture away from an existing way of life that has bred fear, lack and a belief in scarcity," explains McCammon.

She suggests that to preview a new vision of, "I am enough and have enough," and, "We are enough and have enough," we should look to the fertile fringes; small communities of intentional and conscious people actively reinvent-

We in America are the best entertained and least informed society in the world.

~Neil Postman, media theorist and educator



ing society. "Look at what independent media are reporting on; as well as their unprecedented use of new terms such as organic, wellness, sustainability, permaculture, transition town, sharing economy, social responsibility, biomimicry and the butterfly effect," says McCammon.

The existing worldview, with all of its core assumptions and rules, aims to restrain awakening individual and collective consciousness. McCammon observes, "As long as the 'old story' was told repeatedly by mainstream media with conviction, it could command our attention and make us doubt our inner story. Trusting that the outer world had our own best interests in mind meant that there was no need to turn within. This is changing. Thanks to farseeing, courageous and strong enough independent media, there's been an overturning to a more wholesome story of mind-body-spirit, abundance, innovation, collaboration and cooperation."

Mainstream and independent media coexist like two sides of a coin. Mainstream media's talking heads tell us how to act and think while independent media invite us to engage, educate and think for ourselves, dig deeper and take action. Without independent media, we would know little about the benefits of the ever-evolving grassroots movement of holistic, alternative, complementary, integrative and functional medicine. Nor would we know the truth about climate change; the health advantages of plant-based diets and community gardens; food deserts and nutrition-related illnesses; the prevalence of environmental toxins; signs of spiritual progress; alternative education; and the benefits of eco-villages to people and the planet.

Linda Sechrist is a senior staff writer for *Natural Awakenings*. Connect at ItsAllAboutWe.com.