

# THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

## Declaration of Principles Vision of Communications for Social Change

We recognize that the practice and systems of communications have the power to transform lives, and to influence the behavior of organizations, institutions, communities and nations. We also believe that for too long processes and systems of communications have been concentrated within the power of too few in industrialized countries who attempt to use such power to homogenize cultures and ideologies. Recognizing this, and that communication systems and processes are not easily accessible to all the world's people, we the following joined together to propose a vision of communications for the 21st century that animates our collective commitment to positive social change.

This vision is shaped by the following principles:

- I. Every voice has the right to be heard and should have the means to be heard.
- II. Communications systems and technology must, therefore, be affordable and accessible to all.
- III. To work best, the process of communication must allow a free flow from many to many, rather than from one to many.
- IV. Communities must play an essential role in finding their own communications solutions and developing their own communications strategies.

We believe that unmediated communication processes, in which all of us may communicate freely, directly and horizontally with one another, will endow each of us with a greater sense of our own possibilities, enrich our cultures through direct contact with other cultures, create a conversation without limits in which each voice may be heard equally, and from which may evolve enlightened societies that value tolerance, self determination, and active participation.

We believe in the power of strong, vivid and personal images to transform consciousness. And we believe that the images and stories that define and shape a group, a community or a people are primarily theirs alone to make. For we believe that the cultures of the world need not be subsumed by those cultures of industrialized nations which dominate control of channels of communication.

We believe that ideas with the power to enhance our lives are arising from voices too long excluded from the larger human discourse. These are too often the voices of people from the edges of the world, from the margins of society. They may own neither presses nor broadcasting towers, but they do have the capability of taking responsibility for their futures. We've seen how many previously marginalized people, given the opportunity, can create solutions for complex world problems, and may, in fact, well possess the energy and vision that will help ensure the future for all of us.

We believe that communication is essential for strengthening cultural identity and human values, encouraging further world development, allowing people in communities throughout the world to participate in their own governance, to organize, and to shape our future world.

420 Fifth Avenue  
New York, New York  
10018-2702

Telephone: 212.860.8500  
Facsimile: 212.764.3468  
Facsimile: 212.398.1858

Cable: ROCKFOUND NEW YORK  
Telex: 224862 ROCKFEL (RCA)

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Moved to action by these principles, we have agreed to work together toward free and open access of all people to the methods, means and tools of communication, to reach out to communities around the world for their ideas and their strength, and to embrace and promote new understanding and new knowledge from wherever it might arise.

Having traveled from 12 countries in late April of 1997 to convene in Bellagio, Italy we are:

Alan Alda, New York, NY  
Marlene Arnold, Millersville, PA  
Michael Backes, Los Angeles, CA  
Oguz Baburoglu, Istanbul, Turkey  
John Perry Barlow, Pinedale, WY  
James Deane, London, England  
George Gerbner, Philadelphia, PA  
Sushmita Ghosh, Calcutta, India  
Julie Gipwola, Kampala, Uganda  
Denise Gray-Felder, New York, NY  
Alfonso Gumucio, Port-au-Prince, Haiti  
\*Myoung Joon Kim, Seoul, Korea  
Jim Lowenthal, Rabat-Agdal, Morocco  
Susan Mach, Kearny, New Jersey  
Matthew Moonieya, East London, South Africa  
Jemmy Richards, London, England  
Marcia Sharp, Washington, D.C.  
\*Nadya Seryakova, Moscow, Russia  
Julic Su, Los Angeles, CA  
Adelaida Trujillo, Bogota, Colombia  
Galina Venediktova, Arlington, VA  
Muhammad Yunus, Dhaka, Bangladesh

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420 Fifth Avenue  
New York, New York  
10018-2702

Telephone: 212.869.8500  
Facsimile: 212.764.3468  
Facsimile: 212.398.1858

Cable: ROCKFOUND NEW YORK  
Telex: 224864 ROCKFEL (RCA)

\* Translation by Hye-Jung Park and Edward Kuleshov

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9 June 1997

Dear Bellagio Friends:

I've heard from several of you, very passionate about our declaration. I've tried to make as many changes as possible without stepping on too many toes. But as with most things in life, it isn't perfect. I take comfort in the fact that I'm not perfect either, and I've long since stopped worrying about that.

Therefore, I'm sending the declaration to you in its near final form. Please take one last look and send me comments.

We need some advice from the Broadening the Discussion subcommittee as to the types of groups we should be sharing this document with, and about which of you will be sending it out.

For my part, I can send this to the foundation community and to my communications counterparts at the World Bank, and UN agencies based New York. If there are others that you think should receive it, please let me know.

Unless we hear from you by June 16, we will be using the document as is, with all the names listed. You need to let me know if you cannot or do not want your name used.

As I'm travelling this week, I will not be mailing this to the other groups until the week of June 16.

Hope all is well with each of you.



Denise Gray-Felder  
dgray-felder@rockfound.org  
fax: (212) 852-8441

420 Fifth Avenue  
New York, New York  
10018-2702

Telephone: 212-852-8430  
Facsimile: 212-852-8441  
Facsimile: 212-398-1858

Telex: 224862 ROCKFEL (RCA)  
Cable: ROCKFOUND NEW YORK

\* We don't have consensus on whether to include the words "industrialized countries" in the second sentence. Please "weigh in" with your opinion.

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420 Fifth Avenue  
New York, New York 10018-2702

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Fax No.'s (212) 764-3468 & 398-1858 Telephone (212) 869-8500 Telex 224862ROCKFEL(RCA)

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**TO:** George Gerbner

**FROM:** Denise Gray Felder

**TELEPHONE NUMBER:** (212) 852-8450

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