

# Hundreds gather at media discussion

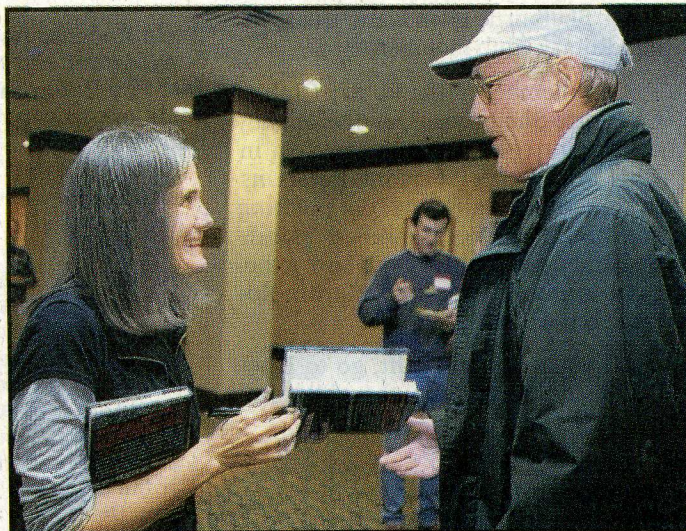
By Adam Silverman  
Free Press Staff Writer

More than 300 people gathered in Burlington this weekend to discuss the media, in its corporate-controlled and independent varieties.

Speakers such as Amy Goodman of Democracy Now, a New York-based independent media voice on radio, television and the Internet, gave impassioned speeches about the duties and responsibilities of a free press. Goodman's hour-long talk Sunday night brought a crowd of more than 200 to its feet for a lengthy standing ovation.

"The media should be covering power, not covering for power," she said. "We are the fourth estate, not for the state."

The three days of workshops, meetings and informal conversations made up the third conference of Action Coalition for Media Education, whose members gather every two years for a convention. Summit attendees came from as near as Chittenden County and as far as Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia.



DARIA BISHOP, for the Free Press

**Amy Goodman, host and executive producer of Democracy Now, hands an autographed copy of her new book "Static" to Henry Scherman of Stony Point, N.Y., before her talk Sunday for Action Coalition for Media Education at the Wyndham Burlington hotel.**

The conference's goal was to help teach people to better access, analyze and produce media, said Rob Williams of Waitsfield, the coalition's president.

"It's about knowledge, skills and civic engagement," Williams said. "It's teaching people to be skeptical, not cynical."

Goodman's Sunday night

keynote address engrossed the crowd, which filled a Wyndham Burlington ballroom. Her speech touched on themes that included the Iraq war, Hurricane Katrina, President Bush, corporate media, local media, nightly news anchors, the White House press corps, censorship and others.

Goodman praised big me-

dia for covering the aftermath of last year's devastating hurricane in New Orleans, especially before the military arrived. "Without troops to embed with," Goodman said, reporters managed to tell the true story of the suffering along the Gulf Coast.

"Could you imagine if for one week we saw those images from Iraq?" she asked, adding that images and stories of wounded and killed civilians and soldiers would have an effect on the U.S. population. "American people are compassionate. They would say, 'No, war is not the answer in the 21st century.'"

The media are more powerful than any missile or bomb, Goodman said, and they have a tremendous responsibility.

"The Pentagon has deployed the media, and we have to take it back," she said. "We have a decision to make every hour of every day, and that is, whether to represent the sword or the shield."

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