MEDIA, CULTURE, AND THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT
teractive,” but such interactivity is limited to the opportunity for listeners to phone in during certain shows. The information circulated nationally by NET is important for right political organizing in terms of influencing governmental policy (for example, on-air speakers can elicit faxes and phone calls to key elected officials on a moment’s notice) and teaching electoral campaign strategies (for example, Christian Coalition members often meet to watch and discuss certain shows).

Julia Lesage, in Chapter 12, analyzes a series of leadership training tapes used by the Christian Coalition, noting these tapes’ electoral “savvy” and the potential effect such training and face-to-face organizing might have on coalition activists. The Christian Coalition has been especially effective in establishing good relations with the mainstream press, and its leadership training tapes present a methodology for “framing” issues in a way that will win public favor for the conservative Christian viewpoint, now no longer presented using “theocratic” rhetoric. The consequences of such kinds of framing as they have been worked out in campaigns against homosexual rights are analyzed by Laurie Schulze and Frances Guilfoyle in Chapter 13 in regards to Colorado’s anti-gay rights initiative, Amendment 2, and by Ioannis Mookas in Chapter 14 as evidenced in a propaganda film, Gay Rights/Special Rights, comparing the gay rights struggle to African Americans’ civil rights movement. As described by Linda Kintz, codified gender role definitions are part of the symbolic structure that unites the religious right, so it is no accident that these electoral initiatives against homosexual rights have elicited the active support of all three sectors of the right—the secular right, the theocratic right, and the hard right.

Discordant themes of right-wing political ideology illuminate center stage as public discourse shifts stage right. The success of the political and religious right in shaping public debates is in part due to a network of right-wing institutions that package and disseminate their propaganda using diverse modern technologies. Some right-wing information outlets have general public visibility, such as the National Review, Rush Limbaugh’s radio and TV talk shows, the Washington Times newspaper, and to a more limited extent, Pat Robertson’s 700 Club TV show. The vast majority of right-wing media, however, seldom step from behind the curtain into the spotlight of mass culture; instead, they circulate backstage among specific subcultures. Nevertheless, the depth and diversity of alternative right-wing media have played a leading role in building a mass base for the reactionary backlash movements now negotiating the script changes for the U.S. political drama.

Change in the societal tug-of-war can be assisted by ideas, elections, or actions. In all three realms, the role of popular and elite information dissemination is critical, but the role of alternative media in this important process is often overlooked. The major mainstream media in the United States include corporate print media, with a core of nationally distributed newspapers, magazines, and books, and corporate electronic media, with a core of commercial radio and television stations, many of which carry nationally syndicated programs through networks.

The term “alternative media” has traditionally referred to dissident, topical, regional, and campus-based newspapers, magazines, newsletters, and journals; small topical or ideological book publishers (often with distribution primarily through mail-order catalogs); and small public, nonprofit, noncommercial, or college-based radio and TV stations. The underground and alter-
Frame established for pro-pesticide industry

Persons who do not oppose pesticides or DDT
• Are pro-science and pro-logic
• Have support from the "real scientific community—the community of controlled studies, double blind experiments and peer review"
• Are on the side of U.S. consumers and farmers and save them money

The rhetoric in other articles attempting to frame the environmental movement is equally biased and vivid:

• "Willing to sacrifice people to save trees."8
• "We are in a war with fanatics...they will go to any extreme."9
• "Behind the Sierra Club calendars...lies a full-fledged ideology...every bit as powerful as Marxism and every bit as dangerous to individual freedom and human happiness."20
• "Blinded by misinformation, fear tactics, or doomsday syndromes."21
• "The core of this environmental totalitarianism is anti-God."22
• "An ideology as pitiless and Messianic as Marxism."23
• "Since communism has been thoroughly discredited, it has been relabeled and called environmentalism."24
• "The radical animal-rights wing of the environmental movement has a lot in common with Hitler's Nazis."25

This type of countersubversive rhetoric exposes environmental activists to threats and assaults by angry persons inflamed by the scapegoating. This rhetoric also has consequences in the policy-making arena. For instance, in 1994 a right-wing campaign to block U.S. Senate ratification of the International Convention on Biological Diversity succeeded in stopping ratification by the 104th Congress. According to the Environmental Working Group: "Suddenly and unexpectedly opposition in early August 1994 from 'wise use' groups and farm organizations" was based on a widely circulated report containing alarmist and conspiracist claims authored primarily by an associate of the neofascist Lyndon LaRouche organization.26

Hard Right and Apocalyptic Millennialism

The armed militia movement formed as the militant wing of the broad patriot movement following the government's excessive use of force against the Weaver family in Idaho and the Branch Davidians in Texas. Patriots, especially militia members, have an antigovernment agenda laced with paranoid-sounding conspiracist theories, many of which echo the apocalyptic millennialism of some Christian fundamentalists.27 Persons in the patriot movement fear impending attack by government or U.N. troops and the establishment of a dictatorship as part of a New World Order. They distrust all mainstream media. The patriot movement, which coalesced during the Gulf War, makes aggressive use of alternative electronic media such as fax networks, radio talk shows, shortwave radio, and online computer telecommunications.28

Much of the information circulated in this sector of the hard right is undocumented rumor and irrational conspiracist theory, some of it merely paranoid lunacy, some of it based on classic white supremacist and segregationist legal arguments or anti-Semitic allegations of secret plots by international Jewish bankers that can be traced to the hoax text The Protocols of the Meetings of the Learned Elders of Zion.29 Print sources frequently cited as having "proof" of the conspiracy include the New American magazine from the reactionary John Birch Society, the Spotlight newspaper from the anti-Semitic Liberty Lobby, and Executive Intelligence Review (EIR) and The New Federalist from the neofascist Lyndon LaRouche movement. Most of the contemporary conspiracist allegations in the United States are variations on the themes propounded in the late 1700s by John Robison in his Proofs of a Conspiracy and by Abbé Augustin Barruel in his Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism, which claimed that the Illuminati had subverted the Freemasons into a conspiracy to undermine church and state and create one world government.30

One of the earliest examples of the use of online computer networks for mass organizing occurred during the 1992 presidential campaign of independent candidate Ross Perot. Libertarians and populist conservatives, who appear to have strongly influenced the politics of early cyberculture and the Internet, helped circulate organizing documents and position papers for the Perot campaign, quickly reaching a large audience.31 Perot's antigovernment themes also attracted support from some persons in the hard right who later went on to promote the patriot and armed militia movements. These preexisting online relationships were a factor in the use of computer networks and other emerging technologies by the patriot and militia movements, which was apparently the first major U.S. social movement organized extensively via horizontal telecommunications networks.32

A voluminous amount of information and numerous discussions about tactics and strategy for the armed militia and patriot movements moved across the Internet, appearing in Usenet newsgroup conferences such as alt.conspiracy, talk.politics.guns, alt.sovereignty, misc.survivalism, and alt.politics.usa.constitution. Eventually a militia conference was established at misc.activism.militia. Information also appeared online at individual BBSes set up by patriot and militia technophiles, tossed to multiple BBSs through Fi-
Articles in the right-wing alternative press escalated hyperbolic rhetoric concerning homosexuals starting in the late 1970s as gay rights activists moved out of the closet. Anita Bryant’s early antihomosexual campaign caused a media flurry but couldn’t sustain momentum. Attempts to find the right formula to inflame homophobia continued, nonetheless.

Dr. Ed Rowe, author of *Homosexual Politics: Road to Ruin for America*, provides an example of rhetoric used to outlaw a targeted movement. In his book he states: “Homosexual politics is a moral cancer eating at the fabric of America. It is an unholy, satanic crusade…this evil movement must be stopped.” Senator Jesse Helms’s introduction to Rowe’s book also demonstrates nonrational zealousness: “Homosexual politics continues in fanatical pursuit of its goal of carving out a new ‘civil right’ based on the sexual appetite of its adherents.”

Neofascist hatemonger Lyndon LaRouche was among the first in the paranoid right to move the homophobic campaign into the political arena. LaRouchians spawned restrictive propositions that were placed on the California ballot and that were successfully defeated only after broad-based organizing efforts reversed early polls showing passage of measures that essentially called for firings and quarantines for persons with signs of AIDS. LaRouche even obliquely suggested murder as a tactic, writing that history would not judge harshly those persons who took baseball bats and beat to death homosexuals to stop the spread of AIDS. One 1985 pamphlet published by LaRouche’s National Democratic Policy Committee (NDPC) was titled *AIDS Is More Deadly Than Nuclear War*, which turned out to be a repackaged attack on the International Monetary Fund and the Federal Reserve. There are hundreds of other right-wing books and pamphlets that marginalize the lesbian and gay men’s movements and frame them as threats to the American way of life.

The right’s major strategic ideological counterattack against gay rights began in 1982 after Free Congress Foundation (FCF) president Paul Weyrich asked staff member Father Enrique Rueda “to research the social and political impact of the homosexual movement in America.” The result, *The Homosexual Network*, was “intended primarily for academics and legislators,” according to one FCF memo. Rueda concluded that “the homosexual movement is a subset of the spectrum of American liberal movements.” Rueda was alarmed by “the extent to which it has infiltrated many national institutions.” One jacket blurb writer gushed that Rueda had revealed “the widening homosexual power-grab in our society.” Rueda’s book served as the FCF’s first campaign against homosexuals and was widely quoted in political and religious right-wing publications. Still, just like Anita Bryant’s earlier antihomosexual campaign, interest soon dwindled.

The FCF conducted a marketing survey at the American Bookseller’s Association convention in 1987 and found a consensus that Rueda’s book was not selling well because it was “too long and expensive” and it needed to be “updated and include information on AIDS.” The FCF responded with a marketing plan for a revitalized homophobic campaign built around a new, shorter book suitable for mass distribution. It would promote the idea that a “Homosexual Network is benefiting from AIDS to the considerable detriment of family life and our culture.” The book was titled *Gays, AIDS, and You*.

*Gays, AIDS, and You* was commissioned after the FCF concluded it was “a hot topic” and obtained tentative commitments from the Reverend Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority to purchase 5,000–10,000 copies and from the Conservative Book Club for 6,000–7,000 copies. Both commitments were “subject to their approval of the manuscript,” according to an FCF memo date 20 May 1987. *Gays, AIDS, and You* includes text drawn from Rueda’s earlier, seminal effort, *The Homosexual Network*, and new material on AIDS by Michael Schwartz, director of FCF’s Catholic Center.

Though Rueda and Schwartz are credited as authors, according to FCF memos the book was actually compiled and edited at Storm King Press, then based in Washington, D.C. The FCF signed a $10,000 editing contract with Storm King Press, owned by Herb Meyer, whose writing skills were honed while he was an associate editor at *Fortune* magazine. Meyer was a former executive assistant to late CIA director William Casey.

Although the FCF coordinated the entire process of producing *Gays, AIDS, and You*, an FCF memo reveals “the new book will show Devin Adair as publisher (which will keep FCF out of the Gay’s [sic] clutches).” Devin Adair negotiated with the FCF for royalties from the derivative *Gays, AIDS, and You*, since it had originally published Rueda’s *The Homosexual Network*. Promotion plans—including an FCF search for endorsements—went into high gear in July 1987, even before *Gays, AIDS, and You* was completed. As one draft letter from Paul Weyrich explained:

> You will find enclosed a prospectus of the new book and I would particularly appreciate it if you would be good enough to send me an endorsement by return mail. I realize that it is a bit unusual to ask for an endorsement on the strength of a prospectus, but time is of the essence. I should add that Dr. Ben Armstrong, President of the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB), has already agreed to help us to the maximum extent with the promotion of this book.

Beverly LaHaye, president of CWA, sent in the following endorsement:

> “The efforts of the homosexual network to gain special legal rights, to undermine family and church, and to resist sensible public health measures
14. Lawrence Soley, "Right-Think Inc.," City Pages (Minneapolis, Minn.), 31 October 1990, 10.
15. Portions of this section were originally published in Covert Action Quarterly and The Humanist.
25. Ibid., 4.
28. See Brian E. Albrecht, "Hate Speech," The Plain Dealer (Cleveland), 11 June 1995, 1, 16–17.
32. Some of my research into the right wing online was carried out in preparation for an interview by Grant Kester that appeared as "Net Profits: Chip Berlet Tracks Computer Networks of the Religious Right," Afterimage, February-March 1995, 8–10.
33. A BBS in its simplest form is a single computer hooked to a phone line through a modem that allows off-site computer users with a modem to connect through a phone line to a menu-driven list of information and messages. More elaborate BBSs can handle multiple phone lines, and some are networked through systems such as FidoNet or linked into the Internet. For an excellent overview of the phenomenon, see Ted J. Schroer, "White Racialists, Computers, and the Internet," Paper presented at American Sociological Association annual meeting, Toronto, 1997.
35. Ibid., 65. Kelly, in his New Yorker article, writes of this phenomenon of seeping from alternative to mainstream in terms of conspiracist antigovernment allegations.
38. From A World of Prophecy, hosted by Texe Marrs, broadcast over WWCR, 5:065 megahertz shortwave, 23 December 1995, 8:00 a.m. eastern standard time. Downloaded in late 1995 from alt.conspiracy and posted to private e-mail list of persons studying the far right. Original posting by John DiNardo. Spelling corrected as a courtesy.
41. In the United States many skinheads are culturally identified youth rebels who are not explicitly racist and who in some cases are actively anti racist.
42. Rebuts to Holocaust deniers is collected globally at http://www.nizkor.org.
43. Newsletter from Fall 1995, located and downloaded in early 1996 and posted on private e-mail list for persons studying the far right. Stormfront homepage was at the time http://www.stormfront.org/watchman/watch-on.html. Spelling and punctuation corrected as a courtesy.
44. According to the Coalition for Human Dignity, the phrase "fourteen words" is a coded white supremacist greeting that originated with David Lane, a member of the Neo-Nazi terror cell the Order. Another coded phrase is "88," in which "8" represents the eighth letter in the alphabet; thus, "HIT" for "Hell Hitler.

45. Although the FBI infiltrated some ultraright groups during the 1960s and 1970s, it also formed alliances with the paramilitary right to infiltrate left groups and people-of-color groups, which sometimes faced extralegal and sometimes lethal repression not experienced by the right until the 1980s. See, for example, Frank J. Donner, The Age of Surveillance: The Aims and Methods of America's Political Intelligence System (New York: Knopf, 1980); Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement (Boston: South End Press, 1988); Kenneth O'Reilly, "Racial Matters": The FBI's Secret File on Black America, 1960-1972 (New York: Free Press, 1988); Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, CONTREPROT: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars against Dissent in the United States (Boston: South End Press, 1989); Brian Glick, War at Home: Covert Action against U.S. Activists and What We Can Do about It (Boston: South End Press, 1989).


47. Author's visit to gun shows in Ohio and Massachusetts.


49. Jorgensen, "AM Armies.


52. Satcoml, transponder 15, audio channel 7.56.


59. Direct mail fund-raising letter on file at Political Research Associates.

