

# OUT OF SIGHT

*Our expanding police state tops the Project Censored list*

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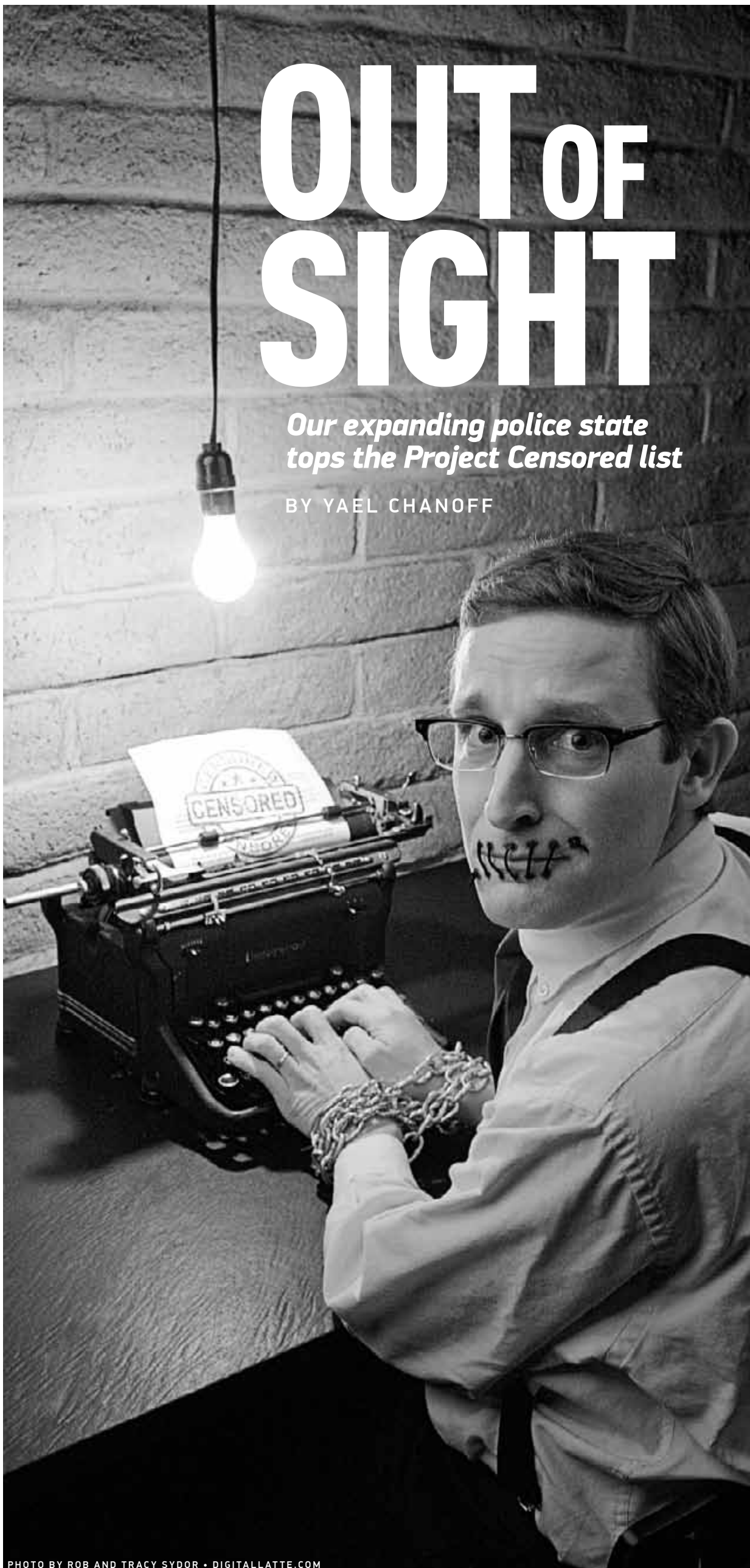


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**P**roject Censored has been documenting inadequate media coverage of crucial stories since it began in 1967 at Sonoma State University. Each year, the group considers hundreds of news stories submitted by readers, evaluating their merits. Students search LexisNexis and other databases to see if the stories were underreported, and if so, the stories are fact-checked by professors and experts in relevant fields.

A panel of academics and journalists chooses the Top 25 stories and rates their significance. The project maintains a vast online database of underreported news stories that it has “validated” and publishes them in an annual book. *Censored 2013: Dispatches from the Media Revolution* was released Oct. 30.

For the second year in row, Project Censored has grouped the Top 25 list into topical “clusters.” This year, categories include “Human cost of war and violence” and “Environment and health.” Project Censored Director Mickey Huff said the idea was to show how various undercovered stories fit together into an alternative narrative, not to say that one story was more censored than another.

“The problem when we had just the list was that it did imply a ranking,” Huff says. “It takes away from how there tends to be a pattern to the types of stories they don’t cover or underreport.”

In May, while Project Censored was working on the list, another 2012 list was issued: the Fortune 500 list of the biggest corporations, whose influence peppers the Project Censored list in a variety of ways.

Consider this year’s top Fortune 500 company: ExxonMobil. The oil company pollutes everywhere it goes, yet most stories about its environmental devastation go underreported. Weapons manufacturers Lockheed Martin (58 on the Fortune list), General Dynamics (92), and Raytheon (117) are tied into stories about U.S. prisoners in slavery conditions manufacturing parts for their weapons and the underreported war crimes in Afghanistan and Libya.

These powerful corporations work together more than most people think. In the chapter exploring the “Global 1 percent,” writers Peter Phillips and Kimberly Soeiro explain how a small number of well-connected people control the majority of the world’s wealth. In it, they use Censored story number 6, “Small network of corporations run the global economy,” to describe how a network of transnational corporations are deeply interconnected, with 147 of them controlling 40 percent of the global economy’s total wealth.

For example, Phillips and Soeiro write that in one such company, BlackRock Inc., “The 18 members of the board of directors are connected to a significant part of the world’s core financial assets. Their decisions can change empires, destroy currencies and impoverish millions.”

Another cluster of stories, “Women and Gender, Race and Ethnicity,” notes a pattern of underreporting stories that affect a range of marginalized groups. This broad category includes only three articles, and none are listed in the top 10. The stories reveal mistreatment of Palestinian women in Israeli prisons, including being denied medical care and shackled during childbirth, and the rape and sexual assault of women soldiers in the U.S. military. The third story in the category concerns an Alabama anti-immigration bill, HB56, which caused immigrants to flee Alabama in such numbers that farmers felt a dire need to “help farms fill the gap and find sufficient labor.” So the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries approached the state’s Department of Corrections about making a deal where prisoners would replace the fleeing farm workers.

But with revolutionary unrest around the world, and the rise of a mass movement that connects disparate issues together into a simple, powerful class analysis — the 99 percent versus the 1 percent paradigm popularized by Occupy Wall Street — this year’s Project Censored offers an element of hope.

It’s not easy to succeed at projects that resist corporate dominance, and when it does happen, the corporate media are sometimes reluctant to cover it. Number seven on the Top 25 list is the story of how the United Nations designated 2012 the International Year of the Cooperative, recognizing the rapid growth of co-op businesses, organizations that are