

CENSORED 2015

INSPIRING WE THE PEOPLE

The Top Censored Stories and Media Analysis of 2013–14

Andy Lee Roth, Mickey Huff
with **Project Censored**

Foreword by
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Seven Stories Press
New York • Oakland

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A Seven Stories Press First Edition

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Seven Stories Press
140 Watts Street
New York, NY 10013
www.sevenstories.com

ISBN 978-1-60980-565-4 (paperback)

ISBN 978-1-60980-566-1 (electronic)

ISSN 1074-5998

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Book design by Jon Gilbert

Printed in the USA

Déjà Vu

What Happened to Previous *Censored* Stories?

Susan Rahman, with research and writing from College of Marin students Scott Arrow, McLaren Berhendt, Jonah Birnbaum, Justin Burkhalter, Alex Cutler, Delvante Galon, Christy Gelardi, Lea Islemann, Devon Johnson, Lauren Markel, Alexandria McDowell, Raffi Oughourlian, Shannon Reed, Alex Ritchie, Paige Shave, and Pippa Whelan; with additional contributions by Mickey Huff and Andy Lee Roth; and a special update on Fukushima by Brian Covert

*History, despite its wrenching pain,
Cannot be unlived, but if faced
With courage, need not be lived again.*

—Maya Angelou (April 4, 1928–May 28, 2014)

As in previous *Censored* yearbooks, this year's Déjà Vu chapter reviews a handful of stories featured in prior years' Top 25 lists. These reviews focus on the stories' subsequent coverage, assessing the extent to which they have become part of broader public discourse, or whether they remain "censored" by establishment media and marginal to public attention. Drawing on the insights of Maya Angelou, we revisit previous years' censored and underreported news stories in the belief that, with adequate public understanding, they "need not be lived again."

Typically, the stories featured in Project Censored's Top 25 list have one of two fates, as far as corporate media coverage goes. Either the corporate media continue to ignore these important news stories, or there is a time lag of approximately eighteen to twenty-four months from when independent journalists break the story and the corporate news media catch up and begin to cover it themselves.¹ For those sto-

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Lahav Harkov, "Anti-Migration Bill Passes Final Vote in Knesset," *Jerusalem Post*, December 10, 2013, <http://www.jpost.com/National-News/Anti-migration-bill-passes-final-vote-in-Knesset-334511>.

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Censored 2013 #3

Fukushima Disaster Worse than Anticipated

Update by Brian Covert

SUMMARY: Developing evidence from a number of independent sources suggests that the negative consequences of the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster are far greater than first acknowledged or understood. The Environmental Protection Agency's radiation-detection network (RadNet) has serious drawbacks, including a lack of maintenance and equipment that is often improperly calibrated.

Censored 2013 also featured a chapter, "On the Road to Fukushima: The Unreported Story behind Japan's Nuclear-Media-Industrial Complex" by the author of this summary and update, that looked into the broader historical context of the Fukushima disaster. In that chapter, I showed how Japanese news media played a key role in promoting and advancing nuclear power in the post-World War II era. The chapter spotlighted Matsutaro Shoriki, Japan's first atomic energy commissioner and most influential owner of media companies, and his ties to the US government's Central Intelligence Agency, as well as how the *kisha club* (reporters' club) system, an institutionalized system of press self-censorship in Japan, helps to keep the truth about such crises as the Fukushima nuclear disaster from being fully and accurately reported.

UPDATE: Since last being covered in *Censored 2013*, the crisis at Fukushima has continued to drag on as the government of Japan and the nuclear power plant's operator, the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), sought to gain some semblance of control over both

the physical decommissioning of the crippled plant and the flow of information to the public about the crisis.

A series of mechanical and human error problems plagued the Fukushima plant in 2013, not the least of which was 400 tons of highly radioactive groundwater leaking daily from the plant and into the nearby Pacific Ocean. In a mantra of sorts that would regularly emanate from the authorities—to be dutifully repeated by Japan’s compliant corporate media—such leakage of radioactivity from the Fukushima plant was not officially expected to harm human beings or nature in any way.

In September 2013, Tokyo was chosen to be the site of the 2020 Summer Olympic Games. Seemingly lost in all the celebratory press reporting in Japan was the fact that the Olympic site would be located only about 240 kilometers (150 miles) from the ongoing nuclear crisis at Fukushima.

A couple of months later in November, TEPCO began an unprecedented, highly dangerous operation of transferring about 1,500 fuel rods one-by-one from a Fukushima reactor to a separate storage pool. The operation was expected to take about a year, and if the slightest thing—human error, mechanical failure, forces of nature—went wrong within that year, potentially catastrophic levels of radiation could be released.

It can thus be considered no mere coincidence that right around this same time, the government of Japan also proceeded to ram a vaguely worded “state secrets bill” through its parliament that would, upon becoming law, make whistleblowing a crime of state that could result in a prison term of up to ten years. Any journalist who reported such a state secret could spend up to five years in prison.

The bill was passed into law a month later in December, with the blessing of the administration of US President Barack Obama and despite strong public opposition at home in Japan, as a necessary measure for protecting national security. Technically speaking, if the government of Japan wanted to prosecute a whistleblower or journalist for publicly exposing the sensitive operations at Fukushima, it now had the legal tools to do so.

As the third anniversary of the Fukushima disaster approached in March 2014, the authorities took media matters into their own hands.

TEPCO treated foreign and domestic news reporters alike to tightly controlled press tours of the crippled plant in an attempt to spin news coverage.

Three years after the Fukushima nuclear crisis began, the decommissioning process had barely gotten off the ground, tens of thousands of Japanese evacuees remained stranded in temporary housing, and both the government and TEPCO were moving to cut off compensation payments to victims of the accident. Some evacuees were being officially encouraged to return to their hometowns, despite serious concerns over lingering radiation there.¹⁵

From the local level in Japan to the international level, institutions were indeed anxious to move on, to put Fukushima behind them, and to regain the appearance of things returning to normal.

Both the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations issued reports in early 2014 on the Fukushima crisis. In its report, the IAEA—headed by Japanese career diplomat Yukiya Amano—praised the quote-unquote “good progress” that it felt Japan had made in getting Fukushima under control, while overlooking much evidence to the contrary.¹⁶ The UN’s controversial report downplayed the possible links between the Fukushima accident and future cancer levels, standing in stark contrast to documented cases of rising thyroid cancer rates among children from the Fukushima area.¹⁷

Citizens in Japan have filed several lawsuits against TEPCO, Japanese government officials, and the manufacturers of the Fukushima nuclear reactors. United States naval personnel filed their own lawsuit against TEPCO in 2012 (and again in 2014). The sailors say they have been suffering extreme health problems ever since the aircraft carrier on which they were serving duty, the *USS Ronald Reagan*, was exposed to high radioactivity while on a mission offshore from Fukushima in 2011 to help Japanese victims of the earthquake and tsunami.

As of this writing (April 2014), TEPCO is seeking to get the “wholly implausible” lawsuit thrown out of court. The US Navy, for its part, has dismissed the connection between the Fukushima radiation and the health issues of the nearly eighty US service members who have joined the class-action lawsuit—this despite evidence that has recently surfaced showing that some higher-ups in the navy apparently

knew at the time that the ship was getting hit by high radiation levels from Fukushima.¹⁸

This explosive story has been picked by Project Censored and reported by both independent and corporate media in the US and elsewhere. Yet in-depth news coverage of the US sailors' ongoing lawsuit against TEPCO remains largely missing from Japan's corporate-dominated press reporting.

Meanwhile, some persons working in the fields of media, academia, and scientific research in Japan claim to have been pressured by their organizations not to speak or write critically of nuclear power in general and/or Fukushima in particular.¹⁹ In another case, a nuclear industry front group in Japan has reportedly filed a criminal complaint against an independent Japanese journalist/blogger in an attempt to silence her critical writings on Fukushima.²⁰

The censoring of school textbooks in Japan has long been a contentious political issue, due to Japanese military atrocities committed during World War II being officially wiped clean from the pages of history books. Now, it seems, Fukushima is facing a similar fate: only one government-approved science textbook scheduled to be used in Japanese primary schools nationwide starting in 2015 includes any reference to the Fukushima nuclear disaster and its aftermath.²¹

For more on Fukushima, see *Censored 2015* story #13, "Lawsuit Challenges Nuclear Power Industry Immunity from Liability in Nuclear Accidents," in this volume.

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Notes

1. See *Censored 2014: Fearless Speech in Fateful Times*, eds. Mickey Huff and Andy Lee Roth (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2013), 155–56.
2. For more on media spin, see Stuart Ewen's classic study, *PR!: A Social History of Spin* (New York: Basic Books, 1996). For an overview of the ways that establishment media distort news coverage, see Michael Parenti, "Monopoly Media Manipulation," May 2001, <http://www.michaelparenti.org/MonopolyMedia.html>.
3. "NBC News Exclusive with Brian Williams: Inside the Mind of Edward Snowden," May 28, 2014, <http://www.nbcnews.com/feature/edward-snowden-interview/watch-primetime-special-inside-mind-edward-snowden-n117126>; and Peter Hart, "Meet the Press Snowden Debate: Traitor or Criminal?" Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, June 2, 2014, http://www.fair.org/blog/2014/06/02/meet-the-press-snowden-debate-traitor-or-criminal/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=meet-the-press-snowden-debate-traitor-or-criminal.
4. See, for example, Glenn Greenwald, "Kiriakou and Stuxnet: The Danger of the Still-Escalating Obama Whistleblower War," *Guardian*, January 27, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/jan/27/obama-war-on-whistleblowers-purpose?INTCMP=SRCH>.
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6. "Glenn Greenwald's Partner Detained at Heathrow Airport for Nine Hours," *Guardian*, August 18, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/18/glenn-greenwald-guardian-partner-detained-heathrow>.
7. Michael Calderone, "Glenn Greenwald: 'Meet The Press' Interview Validates 'Incestuous' Washington Media Critique," *Huffington Post*, June 24, 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/24/glenn-greenwald-meet-the-press_n_3491290.html.
8. Katherine Fung, "Glenn Greenwald Reacts To Pulitzer Prize," *Huffington Post*, April 20, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/20/glenn-greenwald-pulitzer-reliable-sources_n_5182297.html.
9. In fact, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms freedom of the press as a *trans*-national right: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression;

- this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." See Article 19, 1948, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml#a19>.
10. For coverage of additional organizations engaged in these efforts, see chapter 4 of this volume. See also the Freedom of the Press Foundation, pressfreedomfoundation.org; and the new whistleblowing organization, ExposeFacts, exposefacts.org.
 11. When *Censored 2014* went to press, Manning had not yet publicly stated the wish to be known as Chelsea. Thus, although *Censored 2014* refers to Bradley Manning, following her wishes, we use Chelsea Manning here.
 12. WikiLeaks, "Collateral Murder," April 5, 2010, https://wikileaks.org/wiki/Collateral_Murder_5-Apr_2010; see also CollateralMurder.com, <http://www.collateralmurder.com>.
 13. By contrast, over the past year, daily news broadcasts by Abby Martin of Russia Today's *Breaking the Set* and Amy Goodman of *Democracy Now!* provided some of the best independent coverage regarding the ongoing war on whistleblowers and journalists.
 14. There are additional controversies surrounding Glenn Greenwald's work, the creation of the *Intercept*, and his financial backer, Pierre Omidyar of eBay. Omidyar's financial ties to establishment types and the Democratic Party, as well as his involvement in the Ukraine and his interests in various political issues, have some people questioning how the *Intercept* may differ from other private media outlets. Some whistleblowers like Sibel Edmonds and Kevin Ryan question the motives and how they affect Greenwald's delay of the release of more Snowden files, while others question whether or not Snowden was a government operative on a disinformation campaign. When this volume went to press, questions about First Look Media and the *Intercept*, Greenwald's funders, and Snowden's intentions, while important to note and ask, were based on circumstantial and speculative claims. Time will tell what influence Omidyar has over what is published at the *Intercept*, and we should all remain vigilant when examining sources of information, even (perhaps especially) if we are inclined to trust and agree with them.
 15. "Withholding of Radiation Readings Exposes Gov't Push for Evacuees' Return," *Mainichi*, March 27, 2014, <http://mainichi.jp/english/english/perspectives/news/20140327p2a0omona0o9o0oc.html>.
 16. Greg Webb, "IAEA Delivers Final Report on Decommissioning Efforts at Fukushima Daiichi," International Atomic Energy Agency, February 13, 2014, <http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/news/2014/decommissioning.html>. The full IAEA report can be viewed and downloaded from this page.
 17. "The Fukushima-Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Accident: UNSCEAR's Assessment of Levels and Effects of Radiation Exposure Due to the Nuclear Accident after the 2011 Great East-Japan Earthquake and Tsunami," United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, April 2, 2014, <http://www.unscear.org/unscear/en/fukushima.html>. The full UN report can be viewed and downloaded from this page. See also Teruhiko Nose and Yuri Oiwa, "Thyroid Cancer Cases Increase Among Young People in Fukushima," *Asahi Shimbun*, February 8, 2014, <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/0311disaster/fukushima/AJ201402080047>.
 18. See Kyle Cleveland, "Mobilizing Nuclear Bias: the Fukushima Nuclear Crisis and the Politics of Uncertainty," *Asia-Pacific Journal*, February 17, 2014, <http://japanfocus.org/-Kyle-Cleveland/4075>. For the US Department of Defense's official radiation registry on this issue, see "Operation Tomodachi Registry," <https://registry.csd.disa.mil/registryWeb/Registry/OperationTomodachi/DisplayAbout.do>.
 19. Tomoko Otake, "Barakan Says Broadcasters Told Him to Avoid Nuclear Issues Till after Poll," *Japan Times*, January 22, 2014, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/01/22/national/barakan-says-broadcasters-told-him-to-avoid-nuclear-issues-till-after-poll/>.-UozR5j3QoU; and Tomoko Otake, "Scholar Quits NHK over Nuclear Power Hush-up," *Japan Times*, January 30, 2014, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/01/30/national/scholar-quits-nhk-over-nuclear-power-hush-up/>.-Uoz-RaCj3QoU. See also David McNeill, "Concerns Over Measurement of Fukushima Fallout," *New York Times*, March 16, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/17/world/asia/concerns-over-measurement-of-fukushima-fallout.html?_r=0.

20. "Nuclear Lobby Still Gagging Independent Coverage Three Years after Disaster," Reporters Without Borders, March 11, 2014, <https://en.rsf.org/japan-nuclear-lobby-still-gagging-11-03-2014.45980.html>.
21. "Fukushima Accident Mentioned in Only 1 Elementary School Science Textbook," *Asahi Shimbun*, April 20, 2014, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201404100036.