

Financial Summary of Grant Recommended, 18 October 2010

National Security and Human Rights Campaign

Kovno Communications, Inc. (T1: 21095)	\$ 50,000
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Total Recommended: \$50,000

Approval Signature – Ann Beesen Date 10/18/10

Name of Organization: Kovno Communications, Inc.

Tax Status: 501(c)(3) public charity

Purpose of Grant: To support a National Education Campaign that will leverage the television broadcast and online availability of the film, *The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers*

FPOS Grant Description: This grant will support Kovno Communications, Inc.'s National Education Campaign as it leverages the October 2010 broadcast and online availability of the film, *The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers*, and extends the reach of the film and the promotion of government transparency in a democracy into classrooms and communities nationally

Previous OSI Support: None

Organization Budget: \$490,800

Project Budget: \$121,000

Major Sources of Support: Corporation for Public Broadcasting \$75,000

Amount Requested: \$50,000

Amount Recommended: \$50,000 [NSHR Campaign, T1: 21095]

Term: One year (September 1, 2010 – August 31, 2011)

Matching Requirements: None

Description of Organization:

Kovno Communications, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization that develops, produces, and distributes films that advance American democratic ideals and the concerns of youth. Kovno's objectives are to ensure the widest distribution possible of its films in general and educational venues, and to stimulate public discussion and debate on the themes they address. Located in Berkeley, California, Kovno's President is Rick Goldsmith, the co-producer with Judith Ehrlich of the 2009 film, *The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers*.

Description of Program for Which Funding Is Sought:

Kovno Communications seeks OSI support for the launch of a National Education Campaign (the Campaign) that will leverage the special broadcast of the film, *The Most Dangerous Man in*

America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers, on PBS's award-winning program, *POV: Documentaries with a Point of View*, starting on October 5, 2010, and the streaming of the film for free viewing on demand on the PBS website for thirty days following the broadcast premiere. The film centers on an event that made the headlines around the world in June 1971 and resulted in a landmark First Amendment ruling from the Supreme Court that places a heavy burden on the government when it seeks to restrain the press from publishing classified documents. Daniel Ellsberg, then a high-level Pentagon official and Vietnam War strategist, leaked the Pentagon Papers – 7,000 pages of top secret documents showing that the war was based on deception and lies – to *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*, which published the documents to the dismay and disapproval of the Nixon administration.

Airing alongside the film is a panel discussion recorded in New York City on September 13, 2010, that was moderated by Jill Abramson, *New York Times* managing editor, and featured two of the principals involved in the publication of the Pentagon Papers, Daniel Ellsberg and Max Frankel, former *New York Times* executive editor, as well as Adam Liptak, *New York Times* Supreme Court reporter. One of the subjects that the panelists explore is the parallel between Ellsberg's decision to release the Pentagon Papers to the *New York Times* and Julian Assange's decision this summer to release on the whistleblower website, WikiLeaks, classified emails and videos documenting U.S. actions in Afghanistan that some have dubbed the "New Pentagon Papers."

Leading Kovno's National Education Campaign are Suzanne Stenson O'Brien, who has a 20-year track record of promoting socially relevant films as a means of building community engagement, and the film's co-producers Judith Ehrlich and Rick Goldsmith. The Campaign will utilize the power of social media networks, websites, and viral messaging tools to draw audiences to the film and to generate public dialogue on the central questions raised by the film, including:

- How should a democracy balance national security concerns against the right of citizens to know the actions taken by their government in their name?
- When should one take personal risks and reveal government wrongdoing that is causing harm to others, and what special considerations apply in times of war?
- What is the role of the mainstream press and new media outlets in publicizing classified national security information?

The National Education Campaign will extend the reach of the film into classrooms through the distribution of a Teaching Guide to *The Most Dangerous Man in America* that was developed and field-tested by Teaching for Change, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to "encourage teachers and students to question and rethink the world inside and outside their classrooms, build a more equitable, multicultural society, and become active global citizens." The 40-page Teaching Guide is available without charge on the internet as a resource for teachers, students, parents, and the interested public. The curriculum offers eight interactive classroom lessons that examine how the U.S. entered the Vietnam War and what justifications were offered to the public, the importance of a free press in 1971 and in the age of the internet, and how acts of conscience can lead to personal and political change. The lessons lead students through the planning of a film, a reception attended by key players from the Vietnam War era, a mock criminal trial against Daniel Ellsberg, and personal writing on blowing

the whistle. The Teaching Guide is designed for use by a broad segment of the public, including high school, college, and adult education students.

The National Education Campaign will also engage in community outreach to ensure that the film is shown at community and faith-based institutions across the country. To deepen audience understanding of the film and generate debate, the Campaign will aim to arrange panel discussions following film presentations between local journalists, constitutional law scholars, historians, and civil liberties advocates. In addition, the Campaign will promote the film and Teaching Guide at secondary education conferences attended by principals and teachers seeking relevant and innovative course materials for their classes.

Rationale for Recommendation:

This grant will advance the National Security and Human Rights Campaign priorities of reducing excessive government secrecy in national security policy; and building public support for progressive national security policies through the use of the arts, culture, new media, and civics education.

Following a strategic review undertaken earlier this year, the NSHR Campaign has decided to increase its focus on the use of the arts, culture, new media, and civics education to build broad public support for national security policies that promote human rights, civil liberties, and the rule of law. An audience of special concern to the Campaign are high school and college students, whose understanding of the civil liberties guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, and of the role that an informed citizenry can play in checking abuses of government power, were formed in a fear-laced post-9/11 world.

Produced by Judith Ehrlich and Rick Goldsmith in 2009, *The Most Dangerous Man in America* was one of five documentary feature films nominated for an Oscar in 2010, and it has won awards at major U.S. and international film festivals and garnered critical acclaim. The film offers a riveting lesson in civics and civic engagement by capturing a pivotal moment in American history – Daniel Ellsberg’s daring act of conscience and the publication of the Pentagon Papers – and by inspiring viewers to draw connections between the Vietnam War era and our own times.

The National Education Campaign team at Kovno Communications and the Teaching for Change team have jointly developed an innovative and field-tested Teaching Guide to *The Most Dangerous Man in America* for use in high school, college, and adult education classrooms. The Campaign has also mapped out a sound plan for promoting the curriculum to teachers by offering it for free on the PBS and Teaching for Change websites, through listservs, and at the educational conferences attended by high school principals and history and social studies teachers. Additionally, the Campaign has designed a community outreach program that will pair the showing of the film with panel discussions calculated to spark civic engagement.

For the above reasons, OSI staff recommends a project support grant of \$50,000 over one year to support Kovno Communications, Inc.’s National Education Campaign.