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BY NORMAN SOLOMON

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## ***Conformist Media Outlets Hide Realities of Power. Noam Chomsky Exposes Them.***

One of the rare times that Noam Chomsky’s name has been mentioned on a big national NPR program came two months ago. On “Weekend Edition” in mid-October, a week into Israel’s murderous assault on civilians in Gaza, a correspondent reported while visiting a bookstore owned by a Palestinian in Jerusalem: “I’m seeing a lot of books by Noam Chomsky.”

Across the globe, people suffering from illegitimate power and violence have a lot of books by Noam Chomsky. A recent interviewer aptly introduced him this way: “One of the world’s most-cited scholars and a public intellectual regarded by millions of people as a national and international treasure, Chomsky has published more than 150 books in linguistics, political and social thought, political economy, media studies, U.S foreign policy and world affairs.”

Ever since his meticulous writing and strong activism against the U.S. war on Southeast Asia in the 1960s and ’70s, Chomsky has been exposing Orwellian and often-deadly maneuvers by the most powerful government on Earth. Along the way, he has been tireless, humanistic and uncompromising.

For many decades, the core of corporate greed and militarism has remained basically the same. So has the core of Chomsky’s message.

In 1982, while visiting Philadelphia, he appeared as a guest on “Fresh Air” — back then only a local program on WHYY Radio. Host Terry Gross asked: “Your radical thoughts in linguistics completely changed the field. Your radical thoughts in politics hasn’t

completely changed America. Has it been interesting for you to watch how your contribution to politics and linguistics has or hasn't affected things?"

"I see them very differently," Chomsky replied. "For one thing, in my view, linguistics is — well, it's basically a branch of sciences, it's hard intellectual work. Political analysis is not, quite frankly. I think it's easily within the range of an ordinary person who doesn't have any particular training and is simply willing to use common sense to pay attention to the available documentary record and to use a little diligence in searching beyond what's on the surface."

Chomsky continued: "There's an elaborate pretense that this is an area that must be left to experts. But that's simply one way of protecting power from scrutiny. So, my own interest in political analysis and writing and so on is simply to bring information to people who I think can use it for the purposes of changing the world."

His anti-elitism has endured, and so has enmity from some elites. One response is to block access to mainstream media. "Fresh Air" is a case in point. A search of the program's full archive shows that after it went national on NPR in the mid-1980s, "Fresh Air" never interviewed Chomsky again. The program's local interview with him back in 1982 was the first and last.

With few exceptions, in major U.S. media — notably unlike major media in most of the rest of the world — Chomsky has been *persona non grata*.

A key reason is Chomsky's implacable opposition to the many wars of aggression that the U.S. government has launched or supported. And a particularly unacceptable deviation from approved views has been his illuminating condemnations of Israel's historic and ongoing suppression of Palestinian rights. For several decades, as a result, vast quantities of hostility and distortion have been directed at him.

Here's a sample: In the mid-1990s, the longtime host of NPR's "All Things Considered" program, Robert Siegel — operating within a lofty "public radio" bubble — wrote a letter to the industry newspaper *Current* declaring that Chomsky "evidently enjoys a small, avid, and largely academic audience who seem to be persuaded that the tangible world of politics is all the result of delusion, false consciousness and media manipulation."

Chomsky, who turned 95 last week, has been spotlighting the inherent and expansively violent cruelties of Zionism for a very long time. His landmark 1983 book "Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel and the Palestinians" dispelled many readers' illusions about the goals and consequences of U.S. support for Israel.

In 1986, journalist David Barsamian launched “Alternative Radio” — a national one-hour program that got underway by bringing Chomsky’s voice to listeners around the United States and far beyond. In the nearly 40 years since then, the weekly show has aired several hundred speeches and interviews with Chomsky (whose website also overflows with a cornucopia of vital information and analysis).

“Solidarity is not some abstract concept for him,” Barsamian told me. “If you needed advice, a signature, a check, a fundraising talk, Noam would be there.”

Behind the scenes, working with Chomsky for so long while seeing him interact with a wide array of people, “what always impressed me was his kindness and decency,” Barsamian said. “Behind the mental acuity, stunning level of knowledge and intellectual brilliance is a mild-mannered gentle man. Working with Noam over many years has been the most rewarding experience of my life.”

If you ever receive an email from David Barsamian, the bottom lines of it will be this quote from Noam Chomsky: “If you assume that there is no hope, you guarantee that there will be no hope. If you assume there is an instinct for freedom, that there are opportunities to change things, then there is a possibility that you can contribute to making a better world.”

*Norman Solomon is the national director of [RootsAction.org](http://RootsAction.org) and executive director of the Institute for Public Accuracy. His latest book, *War Made Invisible: How America Hides the Human Toll of Its Military Machine*, is published by The New Press.*

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