

# Participatory Culture Foundation

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## Get Democracy: free and open-source internet TV

### About the Participatory Culture Foundation

The Participatory Culture Foundation was born in February 2005 with a mission to facilitate a new, democratic mass medium through internet TV. Through free software and an expanding community of individuals and organizations, the Participatory Culture Foundation will be a catalyst for the democratization of online video, enabling a diversity of voices across the nation and the world.

The Participatory Culture Foundation (PCF) is based in Worcester, Massachusetts and works with volunteers all over the world, including the open-source software community. PCF's work has been made possible by seed funding from the Rappaport Family Foundation and Mitch Kapor's Open Source Applications Foundation.

### Problem: a closed-off video landscape for independent publishers

Internet TV is quickly becoming the next mass medium, as more websites feature video content, thousands of people tune in to daily video blogs, and millions of people watch "viral" videos online. Television is the defining medium of our culture and it is moving online.

But until recently, there's been no easy way for individuals and grassroots organizations to fully participate in this emerging mass medium. Major software, web, and media companies are spending millions of dollars developing closed-off internet TV players that only accommodate proprietary video content and freeze out independent publishers.

### Democracy: open and independent internet TV

PCF has built an internet TV platform that covers the whole equation, from publishing to viewing to sharing video, with software that is free, open-source, and open to everyone. For individuals and organizations, the PCF platform provides instant video capacity and dramatically levels the playing field, allowing anyone to publish high-quality video to 50, 5,000, or 500,000 people – with virtually no cost. It is crucial for the public interest that the PCF platform exists as an open and independent alternative to closed and proprietary commercial players.

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2006, PCF will conduct the full launch of our flagship product, the DTV video player, including new versions for Windows and Linux and an updated Mac version, with a new name: **Democracy**. PCF will also unveil a supporting community website – **GetDemocracy.com** – dedicated to the peer-to-peer spread of the Democracy platform. The Democracy platform is entirely free, open-source, and built on open standards.

In addition, PCF has done outreach to groups that need this video capacity the most: independent media, non-profits, grassroots organizations, community access television, citizen journalists, public education, independent video creators, bloggers, and more. Democracy: internet TV will birth new types of video programming and facilitate a diversity of voices and opinions in civic discourse. We're working to ensure that the emerging medium of internet TV is open and independent, one where anyone can create and everyone can watch.

# What is the Participatory Culture Foundation?

*What people are saying about PCF: ““This type of software might be covered in the ‘10 Things that Changed the World’ specials in the next decade.” – Kristina Rizga, AlterNet.org*

The Participatory Culture Foundation is based in Worcester, MA, home of four of its core staff people. PCF has five other additional full-time programmers who work remotely, along with dozens of volunteers. PCF's core staff brings significant experience in open-source software development, user interface design, and online marketing.

The PCF internet TV platform is open to everyone, large or small, for-profit or non-profit, but PCF has worked closely with several diverse partner organizations to popularize our platform and demonstrate the potential of independent internet TV. Here are some of PCF's partner organizations that already use the PCF platform to distribute video:

- Current TV, the new cable news network founded by former Vice President Al Gore
- Democracy Now!, the progressive independent radio and video program
- MediaRights, the socialissue media group
- SEIU, the fastest-growing labor union in the country
- Pancake Mountain, a cable-access television show from Washington D.C. that features innovative educational programming for children
- ... and hundreds of individuals, video bloggers, independent videomakers, documentary filmmakers, and more. For more on PCF partner organizations, please see below.

Since Feb. 2005, PCF has been incubated by Skyline Public Works in San Francisco, C.A., and we are working closely with the New Progressive Coalition. PCF enjoys a strong partnership with the Oregon State University Open-Source Labs, which provides world-class, secure, and reliable hosting for PCF websites and serves as a hub for public-interest web projects.

## 2005 goals achieved:

- Released video publishing software Broadcast Machine – makes publishing high-quality video virtually free, currently in use on over 500 websites.
- ParticipatoryCulture.org homepage was visited by over 1 million people. Conducted outreach and training with dozens of partner organizations. Received extensive coverage in press & media websites.
- Released beta versions of flagship product, Democracy Player (also known as DTV), for Mac. This early version for Mac has been downloaded more than 50,000 times.
- Built the Democracy Channel Guide, home base for internet TV channels, with over 200 channels of diverse video content, free and open to public submissions.
- Launched VideoBomb.com, the social bookmarking site for watching and sharing the best video on the web.

*“The revolution will indeed be televised, it seems – thanks to the judicious combination of ethics, technology, and imagination that this project embodies.” - Cory Doctorow, PCF Board Member, BoingBoing.net*

## The problem: a closed-off video landscape

*"This project fascinates me because it's a continuation of the open source, open community work that's bubbling up all over the Internet in order to make it easier for you and me and all the rest of us to create and share creative works." - Heather Green, Blogspotting, BusinessWeek Online*

Until recently, only large commercial companies have had the resources to publish high-quality video to large audiences, thereby controlling access to the mass markets of television and movie audiences. In the process, these commercial ventures are freezing out independent publishers, warring over incompatible video formats, and releasing video players that don't accommodate viewers' choice. Several problems have traditionally held back independent publishers from participating in this emerging mass medium:

- **Cost:** hosting video online is expensive – even a short video watched by a small audience can cost up to hundreds of dollars per month in bandwidth. It's especially expensive to host television-quality, long-form video that really engages audiences.
- **Difficulty:** video publishing software to date has been technically demanding to use, with no easy solution for average web users, bloggers, and grassroots organizations.
- **Poor quality:** think of online video in its current state, and you probably think of watching a small, low-resolution video in an otherwise blank web browser... not to mention long download times, frustrating waits for "buffering," and struggles with different file formats.

PCF is taking advantage of recent advances in technology to remove each of these hurdles and open up self-publishing of video – just like blogging did for text and podcasting did for audio. We've simplified the technical details to make tools that simply work for anyone, with any level of technical expertise, and are as immediately engaging as turning on your television.

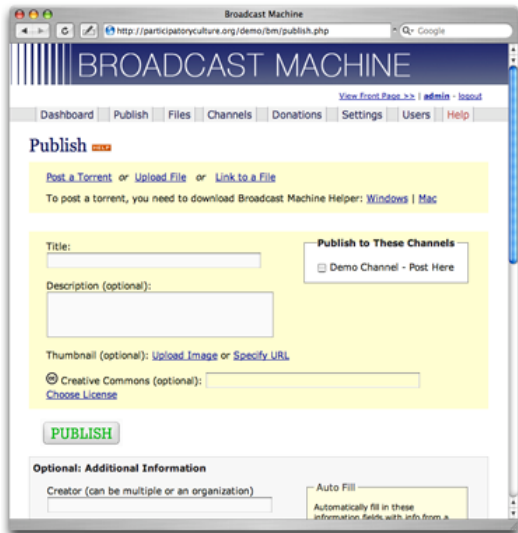
## The PCF Internet TV Platform: GetDemocracy.com

PCF has built the Democracy platform to cover the whole equation, from publishing to viewing to sharing of video, with tools that are 100% free, open-source, and based on open standards:

- **Broadcast Machine** is like blogging software for video. Installs on any website and provides groups with the ability to publish video to a webpage and to create internet TV channels. Optional BitTorrent publishing makes video sharing affordable for anyone.
- **Democracy Player** is the centerpiece of the PCF platform. It's like TiVo for internet TV: subscribe to any channel you like; new video is automatically delivered to your desktop. Enjoy fullscreen video at your convenience, with no annoying "buffering". ("DTV" for short.)
- **Democracy Channel Guide** is your home base for internet TV. Built-in to DTV, the Guide allows you browse and subscribe to over 200 available channels, everything from news to art to videoblogs to education. Anyone may submit their channel to be listed for free in the Guide, searchable by name, tag, or category.
- **GetDemocracy.com** - a community website for Democracy users and supporters, with user forums and tools for "televangelists" to spread Democracy to their social networks. Modeled after the successful SpreadFirefox.com campaign, which involved tens of thousands of volunteers.
- **VideoBomb.com** – a social bookmarking site, combining elements of digg.com and del.icio.us. Encourages aggregation of best video content and facilitates sharing of video with friends and family.

*"Creative Commons was made with projects like DTV in mind: to support independent voices with flexible copyright licenses. DTV is a perfect environment for the spread of CC licenses." - Neeru Paharia, Former Executive Director, Creative Commons*

# Broadcast Machine: easy video publishing



**Broadcast Machine is free software that any individual or organization can install on their website.**

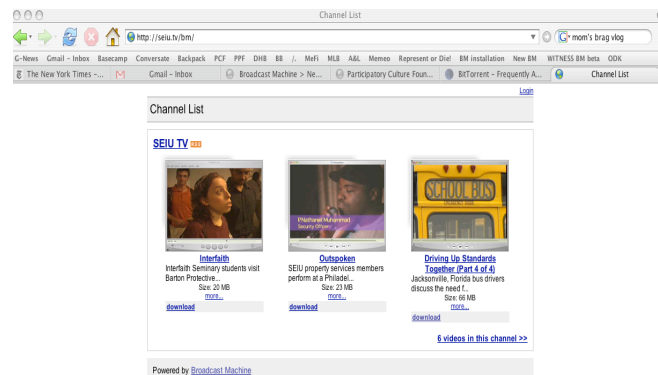
It's like blogging software for video, free and easy to use. Installs in just minutes, publish in seconds.

Broadcast Machine adds instant video capacity to any website:

## 1. Upload a file.

Viewers can watch videos on your website or download to their computers. It's built for video, but it also works well for audio files ("podcasts").

*(Right: a sample installation of Broadcast Machine, where visitors can watch SEIU videos online.)*



## 2. Link to a file anywhere on the web.

Just like blogs, Broadcast Machine allows you link to any video or file that is available on the web. This also allows you to store your videos on other sites or use free video hosting services, like OurMedia.org. So you don't need to be a video maker yourself - or even publish video on your own website - to have a personalized internet TV channel.

## 3. Publish using BitTorrent.

BitTorrent is the powerful peer-to-peer file sharing technology that makes sharing even high-quality video virtually free. This is a crucial part of the democratization of online video: BitTorrent makes it possible for small publishers to distribute video to hundreds of thousands of viewers, who share the video among themselves, dramatically reducing the publisher's bandwidth costs.

Broadcast Machine also creates internet TV channels: RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds with video enclosures. Anyone can subscribe to these RSS feeds, allowing users to stay continuously connected to your content, whenever you publish something new. It's a good way to build a fan base - think of it as a **video e-mail** distribution list.

Want to get everyone involved? Broadcast Machine has a simple user management system - much like blogging software - that lets you **accept submissions of videos** and video links from visitors to your site. It's perfect for online communities and grassroots organizations - timely and engaging video feedback.

# Democracy Player: like TiVo for internet TV

**Browse, subscribe, download, watch.** Democracy Player provides a fullscreen, TV-like experience watching video on the internet. No more herky-jerky web video, just sit back and enjoy:



- **Subscribe** to any channel with a single click; new videos download automatically in the background. Get new videos as soon as they're available. Democracy lets you know when there's new content ready to watch.

- **Cross-platform**, Windows, Mac, or Linux. Combines VLC video player, an RSS reader, and a BitTorrent downloader.

- Plays **fullscreen, high quality** digital video in a welcoming interface with helpful info about the video's publisher.



- The builtin **Channel Guide** (left) organizes hundreds of internet TV channels. It's the easiest, most accessible way to find new videos to watch. **Search** for videos by name, category, tag., popularity, or what's been recently added. Everything from news to art to video blogs to education.

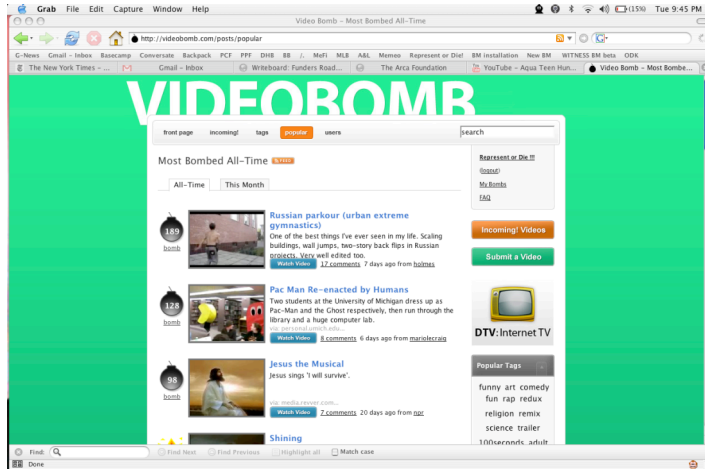
- Democracy **can play any RSS feed** with video enclosures, even if it's not already listed in the Guide, and VLC plays most video formats, so the viewing options are limitless.

- **Spread the word** - with one click, Democracy launches your e-mail application to tell your friends about an interesting channel. Coming soon, features that allow viewers to **donate** directly to independent videomakers.

*"DTV will enable, for the first time, a large-scale Internet video creation and distribution platform which, because it is based on open standards and open source software, will be available to everyone." - Mitch Kapor, Chair, Open Source Applications Foundation*



# VideoBomb.com – share & vote for video online



Videobomb.com is a new website from PCF for the social sharing of video with your friends and family.

It's like Digg + Del.icio.us for video.

VideoBomb.com, launched on February 7, 2006, is a fun, free, and innovative website built by PCF to encourage the social sharing of interesting videos. Anyone can submit videos to be listed on Videobomb, and users can “bomb” the ones they like, adding them to their personal channel. The most “bombed” videos are promoted to the front page and move up in popularity. Every Videobomb page has video RSS feeds to which anyone can subscribe and watch in the Democracy player.

Videobomb also serves as an innovative bridge for videos between Democracy player and the web, Democracy will soon be integrated with Videobomb such that if you're watching a video and “bomb” it using the built-in “bomb” button, it will be added to your personal Videobomb channel – thus showing up again in Democracy for everyone who's subscribed to your VideoBomb channel. It's an effortless and engaging way to take your videos “viral,” build community around your video content, and introduce new users to Democracy.

PCF's work has been covered on major cultural and technology websites such as BoingBoing.net, Slashdot.org, Waxy.org, MacNewsWorld.com, PCWorld.com, as well as media such as the technology magazine Red Herring and the *Boston Phoenix*. PCF also coordinates with the work of Creative Commons, the non-profit organization advocating for flexible digital copyright laws. Cory Doctorow, formerly the European Affairs Coordinator for the Electronic Frontier Foundation and an editor of the popular weblog BoingBoing, serves on PCF's board.

## More of What People Are Saying about PCF:

- *“Broadcast Machine is the best interface to BitTorrent I've ever seen.” - Jason Kottke, graphic and web designer, Kottke.org*
- *“As a pastor I am very excited about the project over at the Participatory Culture Foundation called DTV: Internet TV. Just imagine being able to take our churches' video content and placing it on the net using their Broadcast Machine...” - Pastor Mike Norton, First Baptist Live Oak Church*
- *“The PCF's Internet TV platform is a powerful step in making new technologies available to every citizen and organization and creating entirely new realms in news, current-events, arts, and entertainment programming.” - Andy Rappaport, PCF Funder, Technology Entrepreneur*
- *“Another Oh My moment today... [Broadcast Machine] could be an excellent way...to distribute educational video..” – Tim Merritt, Digital Video [DV] for Teachers*

## How can individuals and organizations use Democracy?

People from different backgrounds – non-profits, community groups, small businesses, independent artists, bloggers – are all looking for a strategy to publish video online.

The Democracy platform is flexible and powerful enough to provide a solution for anyone:



Above: DTV playing fullscreen video of an SEIU rally.

**Internet TV always connects** - for video publishers, Democracy provides a direct link to their constituencies without the inconvenience of TV schedules or commercials. Publishers can create as many specialized channels as they choose, targeted for different audiences, while incurring almost no additional cost. On the viewing end, the Democracy player allows viewers to automatically download their favorite content and watch it at their convenience, without worrying about catching video content during restricted broadcast schedules.

**A video e-mail list** - grassroots organizations can create internet TV channels and post them to their websites, allowing any visitor to subscribe to them easily. This creates a lasting relationship, like being on an e-mail list. Videos can highlight an organization's achievements or showcase their work. And any video can include a fundraising pitch or call to action that links from DTV directly back to an online donation page or signup form. The Democracy platform augments work that groups are already doing, bringing it into an engaging and innovative new medium. For example, arts organizations will soon be able to sell downloads and offer pay channels to support their work. Any channel can be listed for free in the Channel Guide, and users will be able to re-broadcast videos they enjoy (or want to support) to their own personal channels or in e-mails to friends, further widening a video's reach.

**Collaborative publishing** - With Broadcast Machine, members can even upload their own video submissions to an open channel, making it possible for an organization to hold contests, upload member-created videos from the grassroots, and even gather video feedback from their membership... it's like being able to add video comments to a blog post.

**Supports independent media** – Broadcast Machine is perfect for adding video capacity to the work of independent media producers, grassroots organizations, video bloggers, and non-profits. Citizen journalists can publish video footage from places that television news cameras aren't covering. For example, a single video camera in the Houston Superdome after Hurricane Katrina could have used Broadcast Machine to publish hours of up-to-the-minute footage to an unlimited audience watching in the Democracy player. Or on the local level, the Democracy platform can function like cable access television, publishing videos of city council meetings to the community. Make a list of 5, 10, or 100 organizations you support or causes you want to succeed; you'll be hard pressed to find a single one that wouldn't be stronger and more effective if they had this capacity.

*"We believe this has the potential to empower independent voices and assist progressive organizations' efforts to educate and mobilize voters across the country." - Cecile Richards, Former President, America Votes*

*"... Broadcast Machine lets me create my own channel and makes it easy for people to find and watch my past shows. DTV will allow more people to join the citizens media revolution." - Steve Garfield, leading videoblogger, SteveGarfield.com*

## Individuals and groups using the PCF platform, just the beginning...

**CurrentTV** – *[independent media]* – new cable news network Current, launched by former Vice President Al Gore, publishes video using Broadcast Machine to DTV, featuring a mix of viewer-created content and segments produced in its San Francisco studios.

**Digerati University** – *[technology and education]* – Digerati University broadcasts free video tutorials of popular Mac software. The channel is published by the Maine Media Art Project, a volunteer project in Maine working to educate students with free in-school workshops – and now online for everyone.

**Digital Bicycle** – *[community media]* – this project, dedicated to making it easier for Community Media and Technology Centers to distribute media content amongst themselves, will be using Democracy for sharing and publishing content across the nation.

**First Baptist Live Oak : Messages from Mike** - *[religion & spirituality]* – Pastor Mike Norton of the First Baptist Live Oak church in California made his video sermons available to download in DTV, videos highlighting his church's community activities, and a tutorial on podcasting and video blogging.

**Media Rights** – *[socialissue media]* – this community organization used the PCF video platform to distribute videos made for its 5<sup>th</sup> Annual "Media That Matters" film festival. MediaRights uses Broadcast Machine's flexibility by publishing videos both on their website and in DTV.

**Mom's Brag Vlog** – *[family & videobloggers]* – Erin Nealey of Durham, North Carolina, publishes a channel about the daily life of a stay-at-home mother of two. Besides documenting the antics of her young children, her channel offers a new way for family members in other cities to stay in touch.

**Pancake Mountain** – *[children's entertainment and cable access TV]* – Washington, D.C. – based cable access show that broadcasts smart, fun programming for kids featuring independent musicians and artists. By publishing online, Pancake Mountain is able to reach a much larger viewership than its limited cable access reach, all for no additional cost.

**Rocketboom** – *[video blogs & citizen journalism]* – hugely popular daily news video blog, a three-minute burst of current affairs, cultural, and technology news, garnering this homemade video blog enough viewership to make it the first videoblog picked up by TiVo.

**Room 132 - The Classroom of Mr. Pettis** – *[public education]* – In room 132, Mr. Pettis makes a video per week and students submit their assignments by publishing their own video blogs. Other educators are already publishing classroom lectures to DTV, and the potential audience is global.

**SEIU** – *[membership organizations]* – the fastest growing labor union in the country, with 1.8 million members, SEIU uses the PCF platform to publish a four-part documentary about working families in America, as well as news and on-scene footage from workers seeking to unionize.

**telemusicvision** – *[music videos]* – telemusicvision is a new music video channel that features music videos from independent music groups. DTV can serve as a venue both for independent music groups that want to put out their videos and for viewers who want to discover new bands.

**Witness International** – *[human rights groups]* – Witness is using the PCF platform to distribute educational documentaries about the human rights crisis in Darfur, Sudan, and elsewhere, as well as calls-to-action.

**For more information on PCF and the Democracy platform, please contact Holmes Wilson, Outreach Coordinator, at [hw@pculture.org](mailto:hw@pculture.org).**

*"The Participatory Culture Foundation folks are doing great work on making video an online staple. This is potentially pathbreaking stuff."* - Dan Gillmor, Center for Citizen Media