

If you live in the New York area and support a sound education for all children, Palestinian human rights, and protection of the environment or you oppose the racially-disparate death penalty, police abuse and brutality, and the exploitation of "Main Street" for the benefit of selected folks on Wall Street, one of your primary sources of information is likely 99.5FM, WBAI – New York's only commercial-free, community radio station and the 3rd of Pacifica's five stations.

In the mold of KPFA and KPFK, its older California sisters, but in its own unique way, WBAI amplified the voices of the movements in the US for civil rights, women's rights, worker's rights and human rights, and expanded the reach of those fighting for national independence from European colonialists at home in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean or in exile.

It was probably on WBAI that you heard in-depth discussions of Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome (Joy DeGruy Leary), the opportunistic tendency of governments to impose otherwise unacceptable conditions upon the populace (Naomi Klein), the blatant refusal of Israel to operate within the bounds of international law (Norman Finkelstein and Phyllis Bennis). Do these names resonate: Sharpeville, Grenada, Jonestown, Srebrenica, Rosewood, Sabra, Shatila? Have these thinkers or activists affected your world view: Samori Marksman, Jan Carew, Amos Wilson, Edward Said, Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael), Alma John, Michael Manley, Steve Biko, John Henrik Clarke, Edward Scobie? Are Linton Kwesi Johnson, Sekou Sundiata, Cesaria Evora, Michael Franti, on your playlist and Chinua Achebe, Peter Breggin, Octavia Butler, on your shelves?

Although occasionally heard as sound bites on other media, where do Cornel West, Wole Soyinka, Noam Chomsky, Haile Gerima, present their ideas in long form?

WBAI is 50, but its continued existence as an independent, alternative voice is not guaranteed. In the past 18 months, it has become less and less the free speech beacon it used to be and more and more "Favored Things Considered."

Since gaining the majority on the station's local board, the group led by marketing millionaire Steve Brown under the grassroots-sounding name "ACE" – Association for Community Elections and its overlapping companion "Independents" have with like-minded cronies from other Pacifica stations, taken over the Pacifica National Board. In the wake of their assumption of power came nationwide firings of 7 senior Pacifica staff (all Black or Latino men who support community self-determination) and arbitrary banning of listeners and staff, and disappearances of producers and programs -- including the slashing by 1/3 of our local morning drive-time show and the non-return of its regular hosts -- the cancellation of a show whose host protested the physical assault on a listener by one of the board majority, and the indefinite suspension of another whose host offered a news retrospective on changes at the station and network.

From a local board chair who disappears opposition items from meeting agendas, violates organizational bylaws and any notion of fairness, and who increased station debt with a fraudulent lawsuit, to a chief financial officer who is unable to explain the budget process, to the proposed tightening of the already reprehensible April 2009 gag rule that virtually bars on-air criticism of management and board majorities, the integrity of WBAI and Pacifica are in serious jeopardy. And you who support the station are being kept deliberately ignorant.

While documenting state repression, exploitation of workers and violations of process for political prisoners, some WBAI journalists and broadcasters ignore or excuse abuses in their own workplace, stating as a point of pride that what happens inside the institution you fund is not news. Others ask you to celebrate the "new" WBAI or tell you that "We're on the upswing!" However, according to their own financial reports, the dollars they are raising do not support those claims. The only thing that is actually increasing is repression and abrogation of staff rights and union contracts!

What Can You Do? Bring in a Justice & Unity Local Station Board this fall! To vote, you must have paid at least \$25 or volunteered 3 hours between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010. Call 212-209-2800 to donate or volunteer. Or contribute \$25 online at www.wbai.org NO LATER THAN JUNE 30; print your receipt. If you can't do either, apply for a hardship waiver by June 28 (request application at 212-209-2919).

WBAI JUSTICE & UNITY CAMPAIGN * www.JusticeUnity.org * 212-591-2111