

Why we are calling for the recall of Steve Brown as WBAI Board Member and Delegate?

- Using his massive e-mail lists of WBAI listeners, Steve Brown engaged in a concerted seven-year defamatory campaign of unsubstantiated allegations against WBAI management, including General Managers Don Rojas and Anthony Riddle and staff whom he sought to remove. In particular, he campaigned relentlessly for the firing of Program Director Bernard White and displayed a pattern of racist language and stereotypes targeting Mr. White. For example, in 2005 he wrote to a station employee, “you should have been at her side whacking Bernard with a baseball bat.”

- In 2007, Steve Brown publicly and unilaterally called upon WBAI listeners NOT to send their membership funds to the station’s authorized address. Brown did this based on unsubstantiated allegations of theft of membership and funds and other misconduct against WBAI Program Director Bernard White and other staff members. Instead Brown asked listeners to send WBAI subscriptions directly to his personal home address. He then ignored an urgent request by Pacifica’s lawyer that he send a follow-up e-mail redirecting listeners to send their donations to WBAI’s official P.O. lockbox.

- During the 2007 elections, Steve Brown, as the principal of ACE (Alliance for Community Elections), was found guilty by the Pacifica National Election-Supervisor of violating numerous election rules with his slick, multi-piece candidate endorsement mailing to WBAI members. This included marketing merchandise (a “WBAI Truth Torch” that falsely implied station approval), raising funds for his organization in competition with WBAI, and for making “improper and misleading statements,” including one falsely suggesting that Justice & Unity board members “would not keep Democracy Now on the air.” These actions undermine and subvert the democratic process of listener elections which the Pacifica By-Laws sought to create.

- In a March 2006 e-mail, Brown falsely characterized the situation at the station in racially charged terms in an e-mail talking about a verbal argument that allegedly took place: “One witness describes coming to the station these days as like living in the South Bronx, where rival gangs are shooting at each other and all you can do is keep your head down to keep from getting beaten up, knifed, or shot. He and others fear coming to the station.”

- And again in 2006, Brown used unsubstantiated allegations and racial stereotyping in yet another of his prolific attacks on Mr. White; “Mr. Rojas [Don Rojas, then General Manager] took no action when his Program Director, Bernard White (6-foot-2 inches tall and 300 lbs), began to physically harass Mike Feder, a popular broadcaster who had accused management of creating a climate of violence, intimidation, anti-Liberal, anti-White, and anti-Semitic sentiment at the station. After months of such harassment, Feder, a 20-year-plus veteran of WBAI, left in

disgust...” As a result of these and many other unsubstantiated allegations, in 2006 the Local Station Board officially voted to disassociate itself from Brown’s stream of abusive and racist comments.

Steve Brown’s history:

Steve Brown is a multimillionaire with a history of being one of the biggest direct mail marketers in the U.S. According to the Seattle Times, at one point Steve Brown claimed to be responsible for 4 percent of all the junk mail in the country. According to the New York Times, in 1986 alone, he earned \$500,000 in salary and up to \$13 million in dividends.

Steve Brown’s direct mail career:

The businesses Steve Brown owned engaged in questionable practices that caused the Attorneys General of seven states, including New York, to step in. They “investigated, filed suit or forced the company to halt various business practices.” (NYT) The Times noted that “The F.T.C. in

1986 issued a consent decree under which Raffoler [one of Brown’s business names], without admitting guilt, paid a \$150,000 penalty and agreed not to violate mail order rules.”

For more information, go to www.whois-stevebrown.info.

In summary, Steve Brown, as President of a large marketing company, has a history of using his skills as a direct marketer to engage in activities that government agencies have found objectionable. He has brought those skills to bear at WBAI to shift control of the station to the hands of his allies by organizing the injection of large amounts of money into WBAI station board politics; creating slick mailings in four elections, the last one of which broke the election rules. This flow of big money into WBAI’s election process has further polarized the station. It subverts the mission and creates an undemocratic playing field.

Among Brown’s key objectives is the return to WBAI’s airwaves of his former business partner, health entrepreneur Gary Null. Null successfully used WBAI to build the brand name of his business, Gary Null Associates with a show broadcast on the station for many years. That show was canceled following Gary Null’s repeated misconduct during the WBAI station election.

Steve Brown’s unsubstantiated charges, negative attacks, and racially offensive rhetoric have been extremely damaging to the station’s reputation and its efforts to increase listenership and raise funds. They run counter to the mission of Pacifica, which includes a mandate to “contribute to a lasting understanding between nations and between the individuals of all nations, races, creeds and colors.” For that reason, we are calling for his removal from the Local Station Board. Recall would make him ineligible to run for the board for three years.



Why Recall Mitch Cohen as WBAI Delegate and Board Member?

As Local Station Board chair for the past two years, Mitch Cohen has furthered the agenda of a group of board members who initially ran as “List-Prog” (Listeners and Staff for Progressive Elections) in the 2003 and 2004 elections and then in later elections switched to calling themselves “Independents.” Still, they willingly accepted the endorsement and well-financed support of the slick, defamatory mailing of “ACE” (Alliance for Community Elections), a paper entity created by board member Steve Brown for this one purpose. This ListProg/“independents”/ACE block on the board has moved aggressively to bring about the discrediting of former WBAI management and then paved the way for the Spring 2009 Coup which has resulted in the firing and banning of management and staff and a gag rule to silence the voice of the people.

- Cohen has repeatedly defended the conduct of fellow board member Steve Brown, the author of a constant stream of racist, false and defamatory e-mails directed against Program Director Bernard White and other WBAI staff whom Brown and Cohen opposed. (Cohen was elected in part thanks to Brown’s expensive, slick, and misleading “ACE” endorsement mailing).



Cohen’s Lawsuit Cost WBAI \$100,000

- Cohen is the lead plaintiff in a lawsuit against Pacifica concerning problems with the 2007 board elections. The suit has cost the station more than \$100,000 in legal bills and is largely based on frivolous, distorted, and untruthful allegations alleging a plot to deny ballots to Cohen’s allies when, in fact, people on all sides failed to receive ballots.

Cohen Violated Due Process

- As board chair, in April 2009, Cohen convened an LSB meeting in secret session which, at his urging, did an on-the-spot instant “evaluation” of General Manager Tony Riddle and Program Director Bernard White, in the absence of any due process for either. This led to a recommendation that both men be summarily terminated. This was soon acted upon by Pacifica management. The due process requirement is in both Pacifica’s by-laws and the LSB’s own rules.

- On other occasions, he has publicly written that the Justice & Unity Campaign includes “COINTELPRO agents,” and, when criticized for this comment by Justice & Unity board member Omowale Clay, who noted that the history of this type of accusation has often led to the accused activists’ lives being endangered, Cohen falsely claimed that Mr. Clay had threatened his life.

- In May 2008, Cohen, as LSB chair, alerted security personnel at a union facility hosting a board meeting that a person whom he described as unstable should be barred from the building if he attempted to attend that evening’s meeting. The security person declined to do so. Cohen added that the LSB might need the security person’s help to remove that listener if he became disruptive. When the listener spoke out during the meeting, Cohen arranged to call security. Security then called police and paramedics, who arrived with a stretcher and the person was voluntarily escorted out. Earlier, on the eve of a December 2007 LSB meeting, the attorney for Cohen’s lawsuit wrote a letter on behalf of Cohen and his allies to Union 1199, where the LSB meeting was scheduled, warning them that the then-board majority (Justice & Unity members) had a “violent” history and might commit violence at the meeting, and thus

that security arrangements should be made; Cohen’s lawyer then cc’d the local precinct of the NYPD.

In summary, Mitchel Cohen’s unsubstantiated charges and his defense of colleague Steve Brown, despite his defamatory, racist e-mails, have been extremely damaging to the station’s reputation and efforts to increase listenership and raise funds; Cohen’s lawsuit against Pacifica has cost the station badly needed funds; Cohen’s role in initiating the firing of Bernard White and Tony Riddle has led to the destruction of the station’s local autonomy; and Cohen’s history of calling security and/or police to intervene or monitor LSB meetings is dangerous and opens the door to repressive violence. For all these reasons, Cohen is unfit to continue serving on the Local Station Board. Removal would make him ineligible to run for the board for three years.