

Tall Tales in RadioLand

“WBAI Indy Caucus” Heralds Disaster for Station

You are rightly concerned about the declining financial and programmatic state of our station. The WBAI Indy Caucus, previously known as “ACE,” has controlled the Local Station Board for 7 years; their allies dominated the Pacifica National Board from 2009–14. The devastating real-life results are clear for all to see.

Now, in a desperate effort to maintain their power, the Indy Caucus has sent voters a tabloid filled with distortions, falsehoods, and rewriting of history. Among their tactics:

- attempting to shift responsibility for disastrous actions/inactions by them, their National Board allies, and installed managers,
- falsely accusing Justice & Unity of advocating harmful positions that *their own leaders and backers* have proposed or supported,
- pledging to overturn cutbacks that they did not oppose when their allied managers instituted them, and

INDY CAUCUS TRIED TO DESTROY WBAI AUTONOMY

In 2009, Indy/ACE endorser, Grace Aaron — then the Pacifica National Board (PNB) Chair and Interim Executive Director — proposed a secret discussion of putting WBAI into “internal receivership,” i.e., taking away local control and running the programming from California. J&U PNB member Nia Bediako moved for a public discussion. She was voted down by, among others, Indy/ACE endorser Kathy Davis, a programmer running for the board again, and Indy/ACE board member Carolyn Birden. Luckily, Ms. Bediako’s whistle-blowing stopped that particular train.

- omitting key facts about destructive actions that happened on their watch.

Therefore, we offer the following reality check on just a few of the egregious misstatements in the Indy Caucus “Herald”:

1. The “conspiracy uncovered” to form a “shadow corporation and sell the WBAI signal” is fictional.

- Two longtime Pacifica leaders from Berkeley station KPFA, Dan Siegel and Margy Wilkinson, signed papers in 2013 for a “KPFA Foundation.” Its purpose, Siegel later said, was “to be used in the event that the Foundation continued in the downward spiral that seemed unstoppable.” But because it has not formed by-laws, opened a bank account, or sought tax-exempt status, “in its present form it could not engage in any business activity as a nonprofit organization, much less qualify to own a radio station.” So that “organization” is an empty shell, and can neither sell, buy, nor “hijack” Pacifica’s assets.
- Justice & Unity did not know about and does not condone this action. Although we believe it was well-intentioned, any structures for dealing with the terrible possibility of a station’s insolvency must be decided only after a public discussion with listeners and staff.
- The “Herald” doesn’t mention a more radical plan proposed in 2012 by Indy/ACE endorser and former National Board Secretary Carol Spooner for “an amicable divorce at Pacifica,” transferring all 5 signal licenses to local non-profits.

2. The accusation that Dan Siegel wanted to break up Pacifica and sell WBAI’s signal is false.

- In 2012, when WBAI was hemorrhaging funds on \$37K **(over)**

WHO IS INDY CAUCUS/ACE?

“WBAI Indy Caucus” is the latest name of a group of listeners and producers pushing the same agenda for a decade-plus.

They have fought to reduce strong voices of Black Liberation on WBAI and bitterly opposed managers who supported it. In 2003 & 2008, General Managers Don Rojas and Anthony Riddle, respectively, publicly chided group members for their harassment. Rojas resigned, and in 2009 they used their by-then board majority to force out Riddle and engineer the firing of longtime Program Director & experienced broadcaster Bernard White. In 2003, when Pacifica was debating new bylaws, they blocked affirmative action provisions intended to guarantee inclusion of disenfranchised groups in governance.

Steve Brown, now a National Board member, has been the group’s main decision-maker. He created the shell “Alliance for Community Elections (ACE)” to send deceptive mailers promoting his slate. Brown made millions as a junk mail entrepreneur, but his deceptive business practices led to actions by the US Postal Service & Attorneys General in NY & other states; he agreed to “consent decrees,” giving up minimal profits and taking no responsibility.

Brown led the racially inflammatory harassment of Black managers at WBAI whose politics he disliked. In 2003, he claimed that “anti-white” programming made up “huge swathes of the daily schedule,” citing “hour after hour of ‘reparations’ programming in the same day, marked by a flitting and fleeting but multitudinous, subliminal, half-veiled hostility to all white people.” The coverage was of a national reparations rally; the “hostility to all white people” was nonexistent. **(over)**

monthly rent at Wall Street and some were reasonably concerned that WBAI was not paying its designated share of common expenses or its own local expenses, Siegel recommended considering an exchange of locations on the dial, with cash paid into WBAI to eliminate station debt. Then and now, Justice & Unity strongly disagrees with moving from 99.5 FM. Even though a signal swap is very different from outright sale, it would reduce broadcast range and thus potential listenership.

- Meanwhile, Indy/ACE has been silent about endorser Spooner's public call for a WBAI signal swap to raise funds primarily for a non-broadcast operation to be called Pacifica.

3. There is NO evidence that the National Board majority supports, let alone is "secretly trying to arrange," the sale of WBAI.

- And no such decision *can* be made secretly! Pacifica's bylaws require a vote of the entire national membership before major assets can be sold; there would then have to be several reviews by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).
- In real life, Steve Brown, the main architect of Indy Caucus and ACE (see sidebar), has publicly called for the sale of ALL 5 PACIFICA STATIONS "while they still have value."
- Justice & Unity has repeatedly declared its opposition to the sale or "swap" of WBAI's frequency.

4. The notion that someone other than the Indy Caucus and its allies is responsible for the failure to conduct audits and for the loss of Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) funds is a fantasy.

- In 2011, when Indy Caucus/ACE and their allies had control of the National Board, the CPB directed Pacifica to stop violating public-meeting notice requirements. Their failure to rectify this led the

CPB to suspend funding in 2013. Justice & Unity and its allies had no responsibility whatsoever for this inexcusable and completely avoidable occurrence.

- Managers chosen by the new PNB majority elected in 2014 remedied the violations later that year, but reinstatement of funds requires updated audits. Finance staff has been laboring for months to recover from the chaos in financial records during Indy Caucus/ACE's dominance and to complete the audits.

5. The promise to restore WBAI's news department is hypocritical.

- In 2013, Pacifica's interim executive, Summer Reese, installed by Indy Caucus/ACE & allies, summarily laid off WBAI's News Department staff, along with many other broadcasters. She rejected alternate plans for new fundraising suggested by listeners and staff, including Justice & Unity members.

Don't be fooled by the Indy Caucus's attempts to attribute its ill-considered actions and positions to us, while claiming credit for our achievements that they fought against!

In 2012, Brown called for the sale of all 5 Pacifica radio licenses — a position he has never repudiated.

Brown cofounded, with vitamin entrepreneur Gary Null, a competing media outlet, the Progressive Radio Network (PRN). During his WBAI show, Null directs listeners to PRN; as Null's publicist, Brown relentlessly lobbies to use more Null products as premiums — expensive to WBAI and giving Null's business long infomercials.

For more on Brown's history, go to whoisstevebrown.info.

Alex Steinberg, ex-LSB member & 2009-12 National Board member, tops the Indy Caucus slate. He supported the Pacifica managers who brought 'BAI and the network to a near death spiral. He may well finish the job if he returns.

Bob Young admits he'll vote for whatever "my side wants" even when it's not the best policy. He touts his "near-perfect attendance," but missed multiple meetings while LSB chair. His absence or refusal to enter the meeting room has contributed to quorum failures.

WBAI SCULPTOR NEEDS STUDIO

Gabriel Koren is the progressive Hungarian-American sculptor who created the figures of Malcolm X (at the Audubon Ballroom / Shabazz Center) and of Frederick Douglass (at W. 110th Street where Central Park West ends). She's also a longtime member of WBAI. She is being priced out of her studio and urgently needs an affordable one to continue creating art. Visit her website to see her work and learn how you can help.

<http://nyti.ms/1LfpXPC>

<http://www.gabrielkoren.com>

