

Liberal radio station promotes obnoxious rhetoric

CJ Ciaramella

The Clackamas Print

Air America, the first nationally syndicated "progressive talk radio" station, has recently celebrated its first anniversary. Ratings are up, and profits are coming in. This is a victory for the left, right? Wrong.

Punk rock legend Jello Biafra once said, "Don't hate the media; become the media."

He was implying that people should take an active role in transforming the media instead of being bystanders — invade and conquer, if you will. This is where Air America gets it all wrong. They invaded, that's for sure, but rather than providing something new or vital, they simply aped the format of the other stations ("ape" being the operative word).

The only thing that is fundamentally different about Air America from their conservative adversaries is the rhetoric — same obnoxious talk-boxes, same uninformed commentaries, and same biased news. In other words, it's the same spin cycle, just in a different direction.

All this comes at the expense of their listeners, who will invariably become as ill-informed and

annoying as Rush Limbaugh's dreaded army of "ditto-heads." We already have droves of these pudding-heads around the country. Do we really need any more?

Air America fashions itself as a "progressive" radio station. This is actually a misnomer, but you have to give them credit for trying. Let me make it clear: Air America is to progressive as Kenny G is to jazz.

I subjected myself to listening to Air America for a while, but after listening to anti-corporate rants shoved in between commercials for vacuums and pain-killers, I had to give up; the irony was too thick. It turns out "progressive" radio sucks the same corporate teat as other radio stations.

Their actual programming is

in a flavor I like to call "vanilla Democrat." Yeah, it's a dissenting opinion, but remember, these are the people that told you voting for Kerry was a good idea.

time slots nice and moderate, so they have plenty of time for Al Franken to make Jew jokes.

If you want liberal radio with no apologies and no attempt to please the masses, Portland is home to its own community radio station. 90.7 KBOO is a member-driven, commercial-free station that's so liberal it makes Janeane Garofalo look like Michael Savage. In fact, last time I listened to their news program, I think I heard them say that the Bush Crime Syndicate eats babies on a daily basis. ^^^ right, not really, but close enough. Hooray for bias.

What it comes down to is this: Without a passionate desire for informed, balanced debate and for truth and accuracy in reporting, projects like Air America fall into the same murky depths of partisanship they are trying to combat. It doesn't matter if I agree with the politics or not. If what a radio station passes for news is politically-driven bile, I'm turning it off, and I hope more people start doing the same. Better yet, call in and voice your opinion, write letters, or start your own radio station. Remember: Don't hate the media; become the media.



Illustration by Jeff Sorensen Clackamas Print

To be fair, around midnight I actually heard a host pushing some 9/11 conspiracy theories. Of course, that was obviously why he was on at midnight. Air America keeps their prime-

Letter to the Editor

To the person who placed all those ripped up pieces of paper in the Chartwells suggestion box. If you have a suggestion, please fill out a suggestion card. This is not elementary school, and we do expect a certain level of maturity. If you have a valid compliment or complaint please use the proper form. Thank you.

Peter Morrow
Office Manager
Chartwells Dining Services

Write letters to the editor

Please keep letters under 200 words and sign them. They may be e-mailed to cccprint@clackamas.edu or can be dropped off at RR135. We reserve the right to edit letters for content and clarity.

Quake conference inadequate

Laura Cameron

The Clackamas Print

I recently got a chance to view the leadership of Clackamas County in action. What I saw was not very comforting.

On Thursday, May 11, Clackamas County conducted an earthquake drill. A hypothetical press conference was called for 11:30 a.m. where the effects of the earthquake were described for four members of the *Print* staff.

In this exercise, two major earthquakes had hit Clackamas County; the first, a magnitude 6.8, on May 10, and a 6.5 the next morning. Extensive damage to buildings and roads had been reported, broken water mains had flooded downtown Oregon City, and power was out to most of the county. At the time of the press conference, several bridges were no longer available for use; the I-205 bridge over the Willamette and the Highway 224 bridge.

At the press conference, county chairwoman Martha Schrader said that the county had signed an emergency declaration that morning and had asked Gov. Kulongoski to declare a state of emergency in Clackamas County. She went on to say that the full scope of the quake was not yet known and encouraged everyone to make the safety of their families their first priority.

Mike Machado of Emergency Operations spoke after Schrader, saying that they did not yet have specific numbers on casualties, but that updates would be provided by

fax and scheduled press conferences. Machado stated firmly that 911 should only be used for true emergency calls. He also announced that two emergency shelters had been opened, one at King of Kings Church in Milwaukie and one at CCC, and that PGE was already working on bringing power back on in the county.

Ted Kunze, the Fire Chief, said that the number of fires reported was smaller than expected. However, three fire task forces had still been granted to the county by Gov. Kulongoski, along with at least one search and rescue unit.

I was unimpressed.

Despite the professional manner in which this drill was conducted and the air of authority with which the county officials spoke, several things seemed a little off about this exercise. For instance, if the earthquakes were strong enough to cause the collapse of the I-205 bridge, how did the old Oregon City bridge — a good 50 years older and lacking any retrofits to protect it from quakes — escape completely unscathed? Why, more than 12 hours after the initial quake, were there no numbers on casualties — not even rough estimates? Why had no one checked to see if material was leaking from the holding ponds at Smurfit Paper Mill?

More disturbing and aggravating was the lack of readily available information. When I asked about areas at risk for liquefaction — the ground turning to quicksand when shaken — they replied that they had "no information at this time." This same answer was given when

we asked about the fault lines running under Portland's West Hills. That is information they should already have on file, and they should be consulting that information immediately if a big earthquake actually hits. The constant use of "no information" as an answer to tough questions suggests to me that this whole exercise was precisely scripted, and anything not on the script was simply ignored, an attitude that cannot be allowed in the event of an actual quake.

Another strange aspect of the drill was the statement that the hospitals were filling up, but that they weren't filling up with injuries. If a large quake were to strike, anyone not sick or wounded would be turned away at the doors of the hospitals. How was it, then, that the hospitals were full, but not with injuries?

While I do not claim to be an expert, I do know enough geology to know when others aren't doing their homework, and what the county was telling us — and not telling us — made me suspicious. To check it out, I ran the county's information and answers past my father, Ken



Isaiah Creel Clackamas Print

Chairwomen Martha Schrader announced that she had signed an emergency declaration in a hypothetical press conference for an earthquake drill.

Cameron, a professional, state-registered geologist who spent 10 years with the United States Geological Survey working on volcanic hazards.

"There was no substance to what they told you," he said, giving his professional opinion on the county's earthquake drill. "Is there a structure in place to handle this sort of situation? What is it? Who's in charge? Is someone out there actually doing an assessment of potential hazards like chemical tanks and dams? Are there structural engineers out looking at the bridges and main roads? That's what they should have been telling you, instead of just stating obvious things like 'Oh, in case you hadn't noticed, your power is out!'"

That was certainly the feeling I

got from the press conference. I left feeling a little curious; does county think it actually accomplished anything?

Such questions and the lack of pertinent information suggests that Clackamas County needs to take a hard look at earthquake drill scenarios and the information it prepares for the media.

"I don't know what they were trying to accomplish, but it seemed like they were treating themselves on how to do questions," said Editor-in-Chief Isaiah Creel. "It just seemed like they didn't trust or respect that they treated us like children but we surprised them. They weren't prepared for our questions."

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