

## Filling the Silence: A Chat with *Democracy Now!*'s Amy Goodman

By Kera Abraham

*Amy Goodman is the intrepid host of the TV and radio show Democracy Now!, as well as the co-author of two books: The Exception to the Rule: Exposing Oily Politicians, War Profiteers and the Media That Love Them (2004) and Static: Government Liars, Media Cheerleaders and the People Who Fight Back, due out in September. Goodman will speak at the OCF on Saturday, July 8, at 12:30 pm on the Main Stage and 5 pm on the Front Porch stage.*

### Is *Democracy Now!* reaching a wider audience now than it did before 9/11?

*Democracy Now!* is growing every day. We started 10 years ago, in February 1996. And right around Sept. 11th we started doing television. So it's grown geometrically, with two to three news stations a week coming on board. Now we're broadcasting on over 420 radio and television stations. And we're video and audio podcasting, and that way people around the world get the program.

### Corporate media are gobbling up TV stations and print outlets left and right. Do you see independent media being strangled?

I see media consolidation, but also the reaction to it, and that's across the political spectrum. Conservative Republicans, like progressives, don't like it when one media mogul owns the newspaper, radio and television in a town. And there's been this increasing awareness of the importance of media, more powerful than any bomb or missile. The media are the way we understand the world and the way that the rest of the world understands us. And that's very dangerous right now, because we are projected to the rest of the world through a corporate lens.

### Do you have any hard evidence that corporate sponsors influence the content of mainstream news?

You've got the corporations that own the media. For example, General Electric owns NBC — General Electric, the weapons manufacturer, making many parts for weapons going back to the Gulf War. I don't think it's any accident that what we see on television is a military hardware show. Overall, it's about corporate culture and a kind of consensus in the newsroom with those in power. Reporters know what will move them ahead and what will move them out of the newsroom. Talking about the peace movement is not the greatest career move, and yet these are the movements that shape history.



### The New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman said on your show that the State Department should keep a list of people who say outrageous things. I noticed how politely yet persistently you challenged him. How do you keep your composure?

Well, it's astounding when you have a situation in this country where your government is setting up a national security state, spying on tens of millions of Americans. Thomas Friedman said he knows the difference between a dissident and a terrorist. So I said he may know the difference, but does he really have faith that the State Department does? These are issues of great importance, and we just have to keep asking and challenging and investigating.

### President Bush's abysmal approval rating gained seven points just after he visited Iraq. Why do you think the American public is so easily influenced by publicity stunts?

Well, I think Americans are smart. They are very good media consumers, but the media is spun and spins them in turn. The invasion and the lead-up to it, alleging weapons of mass destruction, has exposed more than Bush; it's exposed the media that act as a conveyor belt for the lies. But it's hard to know what is true when you watch television, especially when fear is played on. That's why it is so critical that the media investigate and not just parrot the official line.

### Do you have faith in the fairness of American elections today?

There are major problems. With Diebold and other voting machines, it's the inability to have any kind of paper receipt of the vote; the vulnerability of the code inside of the machines and how easy it is to manipulate; a former head of Diebold saying he'll deliver the votes to Bush in Ohio. Oh, it's very serious. People can't trust. And when people can't trust, after awhile they become numb. They think they can't have an effect, and people can have an enormous effect. And yes, it matters how votes are counted.

### Do you think that the increasing popularity of blogging will force mainstream media to cover stories that they might normally ignore, like the massacre at Haditha and the Israeli shelling of a beach in Gaza?

Yes, it makes a big difference when there are other sources. I call it "trickle-up journalism." That's what we engage in at *Democracy Now!*. It's absolutely critical to keep on plugging away at these stories, and to keep on uncovering. Because it takes a story more than a day to sink into the consciousness of people; it takes day after day on the front pages. And it's essential to tell the eyewitness accounts. These are not just statistics or philosophies or issues; they are real-life human stories. That's what war is. It's about the taking of life, and we have to make it very real.

A longer version of this interview is available online at [www.eugeneweekly.com](http://www.eugeneweekly.com); for transcripts, and podcasts of *Democracy Now!*, visit [www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org)

## The Power of the Spoken Word

**Alder Stone Fuller**, founder of the local Euglena Edu. where he offers classes & events in complexity, chaos theory and fractal geometry with a focus on biological systems from cells to Gaia.

**Amy Goodman** is an investigative journalist and host of *Democracy Now!*, an independent, award-winning news program airing on over 300 radio stations, and currently expanding into cable and satellite television, shortwave radio and on the internet.

**Asha Deliverance** is the mother of 7 children. She has been sun gazing since she was 15 years old and is promoting the work of her teacher, HRM, since 2002. She has studied spiritual healing for 40 years and is extremely interested in physics and ancient text. She was a midwife for 20 years. Asha taught yoga and prenatal yoga. She was one of the founders of the University of California, Santa Cruz's organic farm project. She is the founder and CEO of Pacific Domes since 1980. In addition she organizes music fests and metaphysical speakers.

**Big Tadpole Puppet Crew** is a San Francisco-based puppet troupe which creates and performs politically and environmentally conscious puppetry.

**Blane Lyon** began writing songs and poetry at age 13 when his mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer. From these intense early experiences he learned to imbue is artistic works with emotional urgency and a level of depth rarely found in today's pop music. Blane attended School of Performing Arts (High School) in San Francisco where he studied dance. He completed an independent music composition and performance major at the University of California at Santa Cruz in 1994. Since 1989 he has been the primary songwriter for 5 different northern California bands.



Blane Lyon

**Cho'Qosh Auh'Ho'Oh** was named by the Seneca and Chumash elders. She is herself an elder of Coastal Native Indian descent. She is a messenger of ancient prophecies and sacred stories. She is a teacher of the moving prayer "The Dance of Life". Radio Host, educator & world traveler, Cho'Qosh will bring to us the Blanket of Hope, its knowledge, comfort and challenge.

**Danaan Andrew** is a 20-year-old spoken word poet, inspired by the poetry of Saul Williams and the hip hop. During the past two years Danaan has written over 100 poems concerning the issues of race, gender and politics.

**Daniel Finnigan**, artist and storyteller has lived in New Orleans, much of it in the 9th Ward, for the past ten years creating image and word. Displaced after Hurricane Katrina, Daniel is now doing the same in Portland.

**Dave Lippman** presents George Shrub, the world's only known singing CIA agent, recently appointed Cultural Director of the Department of Homeland Security. Shrub will be checking up on possible illegal activities at the Fair, such as watching live musicians instead of TV, making purchases at non-chain stores and thinking.

**David Oaks** director of MindFreedom, is a leader in the international psychiatric survivors movement also known as the "Mad Movement." This is his 30th year working as a human rights activist to transform mental health care.

**Dave Room** calls for reinventing normal life in the post-petroleum future. He offers practical information concerning climate change and the end of cheap oil. He builds upon the theory of "relocalization" and smart municipal response to our energy predicament.

**Diane Patterson** is a devoted activist, musician and storyteller — channeling lyrics and poems that cover an expan-

sive range of environmental, social and political justice. Focused on the re-emergence of the Divine Feminine, Diane travels planting seeds of collective transformation and healing. Soul dancing is her potent and peaceful direct action.

**Scott Taylor** and **Amanda Hain** provide guidance on journeys to dolphin sites and run therapy programs. They have recently won first prize at the **Byron Bay Film Festival** for their documentary "The Dolphin People," the first segment of a four-part series about people whose lives have been transformed by the dolphins. **Scott** is an author of "Souls in the Sea: Dolphins, Whales, and Human Destiny."

**Amanda** is Director of the **Dolphin EDventures Wellness Program** providing unique opportunity for adults to interact with dolphins for health, well-being, and spiritual needs.

**Donald Abrams** is a Professor of Clinical Medicine at UCSF. Dr. Abrams spent eight months working in the retrovirology laboratory during the time that the first cases of AIDS were being diagnosed. He is a leader in international clinical trials. Dr. Abrams has received a grant from the NIH to conduct clinical trials of botanical therapies and symptom management in patients.

**Doug Green** has always been a motivational influence toward the recognition and celebration of the Divine Goddess in all Creation. He has spent a lifetime setting the groundwork, organizing and performing in family/tribal celebrations. Doug started with the Floating Lotus Opera company, The Family Dog and The Living Theatre and went on to Reggae on the River. Doug now works as an activist Master of Ceremony at festivals throughout the Northwest.

#### Eugene Slam Team

**Barbara L.M. Handley** eats lemon yogurt, dances in the rain, and writes poetry and other musings in a not-so-English cottage in the Pacific Northwest.

**Dakota Belle Witt** really likes spoken word, and hopes it's not a phase. She has been to London and New York

because of poetry; she also was the performance coach for last year's Eugene Poetry Slam team.

**Ty Brack** is a 21-year-old hip hop loving, English/Writing major at Western Oregon University (WOU) in Monmouth, and is the assistant editor of WOU's student literary and art magazine.

**Samuel Rutledge** has been a member of the Eugene Poetry Slam team for the past two seasons, helping to represent Eugene at national poetry slams. He was a finalist in Eugene Weekly's 2005 Best of Eugene competition for the best local poet category.

**Hira Ratan Manek** was born in Bodhavad, India in 1937. After he retired from the family shipping and spice trading business, he began to research and study the ancient practice of sun gazing in which he had been interested since his childhood. This method was an old but forgotten method which had been practiced in the ancient times in many different parts of the world. Since June 18th, 1995, HRM has and continues to live only on sun energy and water. Occasionally, for hospitality and social purposes, he drinks tea, coffee and buttermilk.

**Iana Matthews-Harris** is an Oregon Country Fair youth — attending 17 of her 18 years. Spoken word has been a great big passion in her life for the past several years. Iana has performed at hip hop shows, countless peace rallies and marches, open mics, and the Fair. She is currently co-manager of the Wayne Morse Youth Program.

**Jefferson Smith** is the Founding Chair of the Oregon Bus Project and has become one of the Northwest's foremost spokespersons on voter mobilization and engaging new people in the political process. His work with the Bus Project—a grassroots political incubator—focuses on civic engagement and forward-thinking public policy. The project has engaged thousands.

**John Halpern, M.D.** is Associate Director of Substance Abuse Research, Biological Psychiatry Laboratory at McLean Hospital/Harvard Medical School. For 15 years he has sought out the educational experiences and official



Dakota Belle Witt