

National Radio Project 2001 Annual Report

The National Radio Project is a division of the International Media Project, a 501(c)3 organization.

Making Contact is the flagship program of the National Radio Project (NRP). Now in its 7th year of production, this weekly public affairs program features voices and perspectives not often heard in the mass media. Making Contact is aired by approximately 160 stations across the United States, Canada, S. Africa, and is distributed via the world wide web and international short wave. Making Contact is intentionally not overly time-dated and examines the underlying structural elements of the issues it covers.

Live Wire Independent News was piloted for one month during February. This half-hour daily international news program garnered extremely positive feedback and enthusiasm from listeners and program directors from forty non-commercial radio stations across the U.S. The mission of the news show, which was determined through an in-depth survey of 45 non-commercial stations was two-fold: 1) to offer stories that are not covered by the mass media; 2) to cover angles and perspectives of current news stories that are overlooked by mainstream outlets. To this end, NRP does not subscribe to the wire services, but relies instead on grassroots networks to feed us story ideas and angles. This resulted in the strengthening relationships with many of our sources and developing new relationships with grassroots groups across the country and around the world. In addition, it became clear that many grassroots groups needed some coaching to effectively pitch stories. NRP developed materials and provided some training to groups in this regard as a part of the Live Wire project. NRP used the one month pilot period to gather data regarding the budgetary and staffing requirements to do an ongoing daily international news program. Through this process NRP learned that the requirements were too high for it to meet in the short term. Whether a daily news show should continue to be a part of NRP's long term plan remains a question to be answered by strategic planning and a re-examination of the market needs for international news.

Beyond Headlines was launched as a 4 month special series on November 8, 2001. The half hour weekly public affairs show looked specifically at the post-911 world and considered the international and domestic ramifications of that day as they continued to unfold. This program was designed to provide up-to-the minute information and analysis. By nature of its mission, Beyond Headlines, unlike Making Contact, covers the time-dated elements of the story. Funding for this project came from the major contributor to the Live Wire pilot who was disturbed by the lack of analysis regarding the social justice, human rights and civil liberties implications of actions taken by the U.S. government after September 11th. The show was carried by approximately 20 stations across the U.S. and Canada.

The Women's Desk is the oldest and most mature of the desks and serves as a model for what each of the desks might become. In 2001, the Women's Desk offered a series of training classes and one-on-one mentoring that taught aspiring women journalists (primarily low-income and women of color) all aspects of radio production: interviewing techniques; how to use recording, mixing and editing equipment; the art of digital editing; writing scripts for radio; and training for on-air voicing. The Desk produced programming on a variety of topics including "Women and Welfare: Organizing for Survival," "Breaking Barriers to Women's Health Care," and in response to U.S. foreign policy...

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... post-September 11th “War: Enemy of the Poor.” By happenstance, a program that the Women’s Desk was working on for many months, “Beyond the Burqa: the Taliban, Women and the C.I.A.,” was scheduled to uplink on the public radio satellite on September 12th. NRP rebroadcast the program due to its timeliness. Sixteen stations aired this program as a special. Seven stations, including one commercial station that had not previously aired Making Contact, took the special. Three of those stations, including the commercial station, became weekly subscribers to Making Contact. The Women’s Desk also produced special programming for KPFA radio on Afghan women. This also was aired as a special by nine stations. For WINGS (The Women’s International News Gathering Service), a syndicated womens news service, NRP’s Women’s Desk produced a special program on women and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Desk also collaborated on a live webcast of a forum on the World Conference Against Racism with FIRE (Feminist International Radio Endeavor), and AMARC (the World Association of Community Broadcasters).

The Globalization Desk serves as an outreach, editorial and production unit. Production by the desk was prolific in 2001 and included shows like, “Rethinking Large Dams,” “Digging for Profits: Impacts of Large Scale Mining,” “Free Trade Area of the Americas: Who Will Benefit?,” “Thirst for Profits: Privatizing the World’s Water,” “Power in Numbers: Activism and Corporate Globalization,” “Reining in the World Bank,” “Trade Coup: Plan Puebla Panama,” and “Trumped? National Sovereignty and Globalization.” In May, the Desk had a special focus on racism and immigration: A representative of the NRP Globalization Desk, along with a grassroots non-profit expert on the topic spoke together on the topic for KPFA’s morning show. This was followed by an evening public forum on the topic with discussion led by grassroots experts from the Women of Color Resource Center and the National Network on Immigrant and Refugee Rights, moderated by David Barsamian. The recording of this event was turned into a round table edition of Making Contact, “Beyond Borders: Immigration and Racism.” In September 2001 the Desk was able to leverage the convergence of many Global South advisors in Washington DC to hold its first ever face-to-face Global South Advisory Summit! Through this process the Globalization Desk was tasked with producing programming related to privatization, the disproportionate impacts of globalization on women and the implications of prevailing macroeconomic policy on global food security.

The Prison Desk, during 2001, temporarily suspended its training efforts, and minimized its outreach and production, due to a dip in funding. The Desk produced “Criminal Punishment: Human Rights and U.S. Prisons” and continues to seek funding to revive its other aspects. In October, NRP connected with a new family foundation that expressed an interest in the Prison Desk.

The Environmental Desk received seed money in 2001.....don’t know what else you might want to say, since I wasn’t aware we had a desk.

Democracy 911 Series Post September 11th, the NRP team delayed the release of a number of programs for which production was already underway. (Each program has a minimum 4 week...

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...lead time from concept to production.) The team quickly modified its production calendar and worked overtime to produce programming relevant to the particular historical moment. These programs include, "As we Sow: U.S.-Arab Alliances," "Whose Beacon of Freedom? U.S. Foreign Intervention," and "When the Media Report for Duty: War and Truth." (The series also includes the two Women's Desk productions previously mentioned.)

Office Relocation As a result of the Dot Com boom, the Oakland commercial real estate market skyrocketed in price during 2000 through the middle of 2001. NRP's lease at 1714 Franklin was due to expire in January 2002. The 1714 building had undergone a complete renaissance during the period of our tenancy. When we moved in the building was nearly empty, save three non-profits, a self-employed individual and a small family run insurance company. By 2000, the other two tenants had been persuaded to leave and the building was fully occupied by dot com tenants. The building owner made it clear to NRP that NRP would be unable to stay at a rate NRP could afford. Taking into account long-range growth plans, NRP found a 3000 square foot space in downtown Oakland at a reasonable rate with a 4 year lease. The Radio Project invested heavily in building out the space out with the help of many talented pro bono volunteer architects, electricians, plumbers, and more. Eight subtenants joined us as we took occupancy of the building in November. The building was designed to provide maximum flexibility for NRP, with subtenants each leasing for only one year and aware that we might not want to renew them, depending on our own funding and growth.

Station Relations The Live Wire experiment, while it may not lead to a daily news show in the short-term, did much to help cement relationships between NRP and a number of community and public radio stations. Station managers across the country told us that they appreciated the thoroughness of the process by which we engaged them in considering Live Wire. They also report that Making Contact is not only well-received by their listeners and well produced, but that they appreciate the responsiveness of the NRP team. NRP added two commercial stations to its list of weekly subscribers for Making Contact in 2001, bringing the total number of commercial stations airing the program to three.

Educational Materials Tapes and transcripts of NRP programs have been used in high school and college classrooms, senior centers, parish education programs, social change campaigns, newsletters, libraries, and many other public forums.

Fiscal Sponsorship Programs The International Media Project acts as fiscal sponsor for FIRE based in Costa Rica, Arpas, a network of community radio stations based in El Salvador, and ML Productions.

Looking Ahead Due to continued interest by stations, listeners and donors, Beyond Headlines will be carried over in 2002 through the end of May. The National Radio Project's Board and staff will work together closely to undertake a thoughtfully planned executive transition, to enable Founder and Executive Director, Peggy Law to take on a new role with the organization.