The National Radio Project heightens public consciousness, broadens public debate on critical social issues and encourages civic participation by giving voice to diverse perspectives and opinions not typically heard on mass media. NRP achieves this objective by producing and distributing high-quality public affairs and news programs, and by training and supporting independent journalists and individuals involved in community-building activities.

Leadership Transition

This has been a year of transition for the staff and board of National Radio Project:

Lisa Rudman stepped up from Women’s Desk director, to become NRP’s executive director in February, 2003. Lisa’s previous roles at NRP serve her well: Women’s Desk director and development associate; co-director of the Live Wire News pilot; marketing and station coordinator for many NRP specials such as World Trade Watch and UnConventional Coverage. She brings 20 years experience as a grassroots organizer and as a video and radio manager, producer, and trainer. Previous to joining NRP in 1998, Lisa spent five years as a video producer for a large financial services corporation. There, she learned budgeting and business principles that she has since integrated with her progressive values to strengthen NRP’s financial sustainability. Under her leadership the staff and board have developed a strong strategic vision for NRP, including a solid business plan and a blue print for board expansion. Founding director Peggy Law remains involved as a fundraising liaison. The organization bid farewell to Laura Livoti, managing director (1998-2002) and acting executive director (2002). However Laura still supports NRP by sharing her expertise on topics from organizational development to environmental issues and corporate globalization.

Phillip Babich enters his seventh year as managing producer of NRP and producer and host of Making Contact. His connections to grassroots groups and policy think-tanks, his inspired mentoring of new freelancers and interns, and his passion for accurate and provocative journalism have brought NRP and Making Contact superior credibility and recognition.

Rosalyn Fay continues as our part-time office manager. She has also taken on station outreach and communication, drawing on her background as a community organizer. Rosalyn’s commitment to environmental and globalization issues has strengthened NRP’s programming in these areas; and her dedication to airing the voices of, and acting as a liaison to, the labor movement has allowed us to increase our coverage of labor issues and to garner support from local and international unions.

New Staff

Aimée Pomerleau joined the production department in July of 2002. A reporter, producer, engineer, and mentor, Aimée has worked with the New York Times, Democracy Now!, Outright Radio, Free Speech Radio News, and Pacifica Radio. As NRP’s associate producer, Aimée has energized the organization around community training and collaboration and has written, produced, and hosted a number of Making Contact shows concerning everything from economic interests in the U.S.-led war on Iraq to affordable housing in the United States.

Susanna Hines came to NRP as a volunteer for the Women’s Desk, in December of 2001. Now she works full time for NRP as the associate manager and a member of the development team. She is also a community outreach specialist with a concentration on grassroots networking, organizational base-building, and volunteer management.
To trim expenses, we have reduced staff from 5.5 during 2002 to 4.5 starting in 2003. The challenge of being short-staffed has required us to be flexible and creative while we continue to produce a quality show every week and deal with the routine and unexpected twists of a working organization. Our volunteers, interns, and freelancers make all the difference in the world. It is our plan to add staff as we regain full financial strength in 2003-2004.

Broadening our Base

Broadening and strengthening our network of support is critical to our success. We do this by: looking to our peers and mentors (other media organizations and small non-profits) to advise us, expanding our circle of donors, rallying our volunteers and interns who hail from all over the world, and cultivating new volunteers and trainees.

Recent base-building activities have included: two special report-backs with slide and audio presentations from managing producer Phillip Babich’s trip to Colombia; and NRP’s participation in the Human Race, a county-wide non-profit fundraising walk.

As an institution we expressed concern for and opposition to the FCC deregulation of media ownership by participating in community forums and public hearings. We attended and networked at the National Federation of Community Broadcasters Conference in March, and spoke on panels at both the Grassroots Radio Conference and Pacifica’s conference on news and community radio.

We have revised our website to attract more visitors and supporters, and we are working with a volunteer to link NRP to other progressive media sites and to strengthen our searchability on the web. We have unique content on our site including four years of archived shows’ audio files, many with written transcripts available. Yet, our site is underdeveloped due to funding constraints and it falls short of its potential to magnetize and mobilize people.

Board

Board expansion has continued, albeit more slowly than we would like. Reid Hoffman joined the board in fall of 2002 and brought substantial financial donations and entrepreneurial spirit to NRP. However, due to the pressures of founding his second Silicon Valley start-up and other commitments, he was unable to keep the time commitment required for board membership and is stepping down. Reid will continue to provide support and advice. On the eve of his retirement from the stagehands’ union in June of 2003, Gary Heider joined the board. Gary offers energy, new perspectives, and marketing experience as well as a strong interest in labor. Adrienne Hirt, who became a board member in 2002, has led a number of board processes and serves as board–staff liaison. She draws from her own past experience as an executive director and philanthropist. Adrienne provides valuable mentoring to our new executive director. Simon Avakian remains board president, Laarni Von Ruden secretary treasurer, and Ravi Rajan heads up the board recruitment committee.

Making Contact: Securing Broad Distribution, Facilitating Activism, Winning Awards

NRP’s popular weekly public-affairs series, is aired by approximately 160 stations in the U.S., Canada, and around the world (including National Public Radio, Pacifica, community, and college radio...
... stations, as well as tribally-owned Native American stations). Making Contact is distributed via the Public Radio Satellite System (PRSS), CD or cassette tapes, international short wave, and the Internet.

This year, we have been encouraging stations to acquire Making Contact from the satellite system or from the web in an effort to save money on CD and cassette duplication, handling, and postage. Keeping the program free of charge so it can reach the broadest audience remains a top priority, so we will continue to mail cassettes or CDs to any station that needs them. We sometimes find out about community or Internet stations that have been downloading Making Contact from the web; this kind of unplanned distribution is one of the joys of producing free, web-accessible programming. One of the latest additions to this growing list is Radio Lavalamp, which streams Making Contact from Osaka, Japan.

This kind of expansion of listenership is encouraging because the real value of Making Contact is its impact on people across the world; the more people who hear Making Contact, the broader and the deeper this impact becomes. People love Making Contact because they enjoy hearing stories of hope, stories of activists and community members challenging the status quo and fighting for a more equitable world. They also see the program as an educational resource.

Two Making Contact programs were recognized with National Federation of Community Broadcasters awards this year: the program “Let’s Go to Mazar: A Chronicle of Life in Afghanistan After War,” which explored the effects of the war in Afghanistan on the civilian population, and “Biowars: First Do No Harm,” which investigated the threat of a biological arms race. Each program won a Silver Reel. In addition, two Making Contact programs were chosen to play at the Human Peace and Security Festival in New York (September, 2002).

**Media Training**

NRP places a strong emphasis on training for activists and independent journalists. NRP has offered six radio production and writing classes this year, three of which were offered by the Women’s Desk. Classes covered interviewing, field recording, digital editing, voicing, and writing for radio. We conducted broad outreach for class participants and fifty-percent of NRP trainees and volunteers were women and people of color; up to one quarter of them self-identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Queer. NRP also makes an effort to recruit low-income trainees and volunteers, by offering scholarships and/or classes in exchange for volunteer hours. The Women’s Desk is seeking funding for a new welfare radio campaign, which has an important training component to train women on welfare in radio production. Many NRP volunteers go on to teach training classes, become interns at the organization, and then move on to other independent media outlets, such as Democracy Now!, and some mainstream outlets.

**Editorial-Networking Desks**

The Editorial Desks funnel new talent to NRP. They provide issue-specific editorial expertise, ensure continuity of grassroots connections, and attract issue-specific funding. This year saw the revival of the NRP Prison Desk. With a generous grant from the Oringer Foundation, the Prison Desk was able to hire two part-time coordinators who will focus on Desk fundraising, programming for Making Contact, and, in keeping with the mission of NRP’s Editorial Desks, volunteer recruitment and training. NRP is pleased to welcome JP Geyer and Lauren Toker to the Prison Desk staff. The Women’s Desk is now under the stewardship of Women’s Desk associate Kimberly Ross. Kimberly started as a Desk volunteer and then intern before taking this part-time contract position. Pending...