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## Highlights of Pacifica Radio's 50 Year History of Radio Broadcasting



- 1946 Lewis Hill moves from Washington DC to the San Francisco Bay Area and begins work toward creating a radio station dedicated to a "pacific world in our time."
- 1949 Pacifica first goes on the air April 15 as KPFA-FM in Berkeley CA.
- 1950 Opponents to the Korean war are among the many minority viewpoints given freedom of speech on Pacifica during the McCarthy era.
- 1951 Pacifica receives the first major foundation grant (Ford Foundation) for the support of a non-commercial radio broadcast operation.
- 1953 Philosopher/author Alan Watts begins a regular program on KPFA that continues until his death in 1973.
- 1954 An on-the-air discussion promotion of marijuana use results in the California Attorney General impounding the program tape.
- 1955 Poets Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti bring the Beat Generation to the airwaves. A few years later the FCC questions Pacifica's broadcast of some of their works as "vulgar, obscene and in bad taste."
- 1956 Pacifica wins its first broadcast awards for a program on the First Amendment by Alexander Meiklejohn and a children's series of *Robin Hood* by Chuck Levy and Virginia Maynard.
- 1957 Pacifica/KPFA wins its first George Foster Peabody Award for "distinguished service and meritorious public service" for programming that takes strong issue with McCarthyism.

- 1958 Nuclear war and the arms race are debated on the air by Nobel Prize winner Linus Pauling and Edward Teller, the "Father of the H-Bomb."
- 1959 Pacifica begins its second station—KPFK-FM in Los Angeles—with Terry Drinkwater as General Manager.
- 1960-1963 The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee (SISS) investigate Pacifica programming for "subversion." Broadcasts of writings by Bertolt Brecht, Norman Cousins, Carey McWilliams, Dorothy Healey, and W.E.B. DuBois were cited.
- 1960 The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requests a tape of a Pacifica broadcast of poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti that it found "in bad taste" with "strong implications against religion, government, the president, law-enforcement and racial groups"— and demands full information on Pacifica finances and governance.
- 1960 Commercial station WBAI in New York is given to Pacifica by philanthropist Louis Schweitzer. Then-Governor Nelson Rockefeller, Mayor Robert Wagner, Jr. and Attorney General Louis Lefkowitz are among the speakers honoring the first day of Pacifica Radio in New York. Early programs include a documentary on George Lincoln Rockwell and a speech by Herbert Aptheker. The SISS requests files of WBAI programs and program guides.
- 1961 KPFK wins Pacifica's second George Foster Peabody Award for excellence in broadcasting.
- 1962 KPFK broadcasts women's history profiles of Dorothy Healey and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn—programs that are later used in SISS Hearings charging Pacifica is communist infiltrated.
- 1962 WBAI is the first station to publicly broadcast former FBI agent Jack Levine's expose of J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI. The program is followed by threats of arrests and bombings, as well as pressure from the FBI, the Justice Department, and major broadcast networks.
- 1962 The FCC withholds the license renewals of KPFA, KPFB, and KPFK pending its investigation into "communist affiliations." Pacifica was never ultimately cited in any of these or subsequent investigations.
- 1962 Pacifica trains volunteers to travel to the South for coverage of the awakening civil rights movement. Andrew Goodman, son of the Pacifica president, is murdered in

Mississippi with Michael Schwemer and James Cheney.

- 1963 I. F. Stone and Bertrand Russell take to the Pacifica airwaves, leading a long list of luminaries to oppose the war in Vietnam at this early stage of direct U.S. involvement.
- 1964 The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) renews the licenses of all three Pacifica stations after a three-year delay.
- 1965 WBAI reporter Chris Koch is the first American to cover the war from North Vietnam.
- 1966 Leaders of organizations such as the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Congress Of Racial Equality (CORE), Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) discuss the future of civil rights over Pacifica stations.
- 1967 Pacifica broadcasts a live interview with Latin American leader Che Guevara months before he is killed in Bolivia.
- 1968 Pacifica Radio News (originally the Washington News Bureau of WBAI/New York) is established in Washington DC.
- 1970 KPFT in Houston goes on the air and is bombed off twice during its first year by Ku Klux Klan attacks on its transmitter tower. After months of inactivity by federal agents and Houston police, Pacifica mounts a media campaign. Federal agents ultimately arrest a Klansman and charge him with plotting to blow up KPFA and KPFK, as well as the actual KPFT bombing.
- 1971 WBAI station manager Ed Goodman is jailed for refusing to turn over taped statements by rebelling prisoners at the "Tombs," the New York City jail.
- 1972 The Pacifica Radio Archive and Pacifica Program Service are established in Los Angeles to preserve and distribute Pacifica programming to schools, libraries, individuals, and other community radio stations across the country.
- 1973 Pacifica provides gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Senate Watergate hearings.
- 1973 Third World programmers at KPFA organize to demand a programming department with paid staff and control over some airtime. The station management opposes this effort and obtains a court order banning Third World project coordinator Jeff Echeverria from the

KPFA premises. The Third World programmers file a challenge to KPFA's license on grounds of discrimination in hiring practices. The lawyer representing them is David Salniker, later to become KPFA manager and Executive Director of Pacifica.

- 1974 The Symbionese Liberation Army delivers the Patty Hearst tapes to KPFA/Berkeley and KPFK/Los Angeles. KPFK manager Will Lewis is jailed for refusing to turn the tapes over to the FBI.
- 1974 In the summer, KPFA staff and programmers go on strike to demand more democratic decision-making process, the reinstatement of the fired Third World staff, and the firing of station management. After KPFA is off the air for one month, Pacifica agrees to most of the strikers' demands. In the fall, KPFA formally creates the Third World programming department with a paid department head and control over some airtime.
- 1975 Joel Kugelmass becomes the first Executive Director of the Pacifica Foundation.
- 1975 Comedian George Carlin's "dirty words you can't say on television" routine, broadcast by WBAI/New York in 1973, leads to several years of First Amendment litigation and a hearing by the U.S. Supreme Court. No sanctions are imposed, but the Carlin Case sets the limits of broadcasting for over a decade.
- 1976 The Pacifica documentary on the assassination of Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier is instrumental in piecing together evidence that later convicts the murderers.
- 1976 In September, KPFA station manager Larry Bensky lays off two-thirds of the station's paid staff in one of the many financial crises perpetually plaguing Pacifica stations.
- 1977 WPFW/Washington DC goes on the air, after winning a six-year competitive process for the last available frequency in the nation's capital.
- 1977 Jack O'Dell becomes Chair of the Pacifica Foundation.
- 1978 The Pacifica Radio News begins to distribute news services to 20 non-Pacifica stations across the U.S. and Canada and expands international coverage by establishing correspondents in a number of foreign capitals.
- 1979 Pacifica, the League of Women Voters, and congressman Henry Waxman (D, CA) challenge the

constitutionality of the prohibition on editorializing by non-commercial broadcasters.

- 1980 Pacifica interviews Sister Ita Ford a few days before she is murdered in El Salvador.
- 1980 Sharon Maeda becomes Executive Director of Pacifica.
- 1981 KPFT/Houston becomes the first public radio station to broadcast special programs in 11 different languages, serving the multi- ethnic Texas Gulf Coast communities.
- 1981 KPFA/Berkeley creates a Women's Department with a paid director and control over some airtime. Ginny Z. Berson (a member of the collective that created Olivia Records) becomes the first director of the Women's Dept. (Women's programming had been done on KPFA since the early 1970s by a collective called Unlearning To Not Speak.)
- 1982 Pacifica provides the only continuous live national coverage of one million people demonstrating for jobs, peace, and freedom in New York's Central Park during the U.N. special session on disarmament.
- 1982 After years of development by women and people of color, the KPFA Apprentice Program is formally established as an intensive training program in broadcast skills. It is now the most comprehensive program of its kind in the country.
- 1983 WPFW heads up the all-Pacifica team which covers the 20th anniversary of the March on Washington with Julian Bond and Justine Rector as hosts/commentators.
- 1984 The U.S. Supreme Court rules in Pacifica's favor that non- commercial broadcasters have a constitutional right to editorialize.
- 1985 Pacifica broadcasts its first editorial, condemning the apartheid South African government. Pacifica Chair Jack O'Dell calls upon U.S. citizens to bring pressure on the White House to cut all ties with South Africa on the 10th anniversary of the Soweto uprising.
- 1985 WPFW helps launch the Capital City Jazz Festival in Washington DC.
- 1985 WBAI/New York organizes the now-annual Listener Action for the Homeless project to mobilize aid for New York's homeless.
- 1986 The National Federation of Community

