

My name is Lisa Davis, and I'm a WBAI Local Station Board member, who is proudly with the Justice and Unity Campaign. I am also one of the people that John Tarleton interviewed for his May 15th article entitled "WBAI SHOWDOWN." However what Tarleton actually wrote wasn't an article about WBAI in as much as it was an abject lesson in how biased reporters can deliberately manipulate information to write the story they want to write, as opposed to writing a truthful and balanced article.

Case and point – what Tarleton writes about the Arbitrons. First of all, for years there have been complaints about Arbitron's unfair methodologies and biases when documenting the listener habits of communities of color, who comprise a large, if not majorit, segment of WBAI's listenership. Tarleton writes:

The station's [WBAI's] number of listener sponsors has fallen from 18,600 in January 2004 to about 15,000. While audience numbers fluctuate, the number of people who listen to WBAI at least once in a week has declined from an average of 240,000 in the fall of 2003 to 180,000 in spring of 2008, according to Arbitron ratings compiled by pacificana.org.

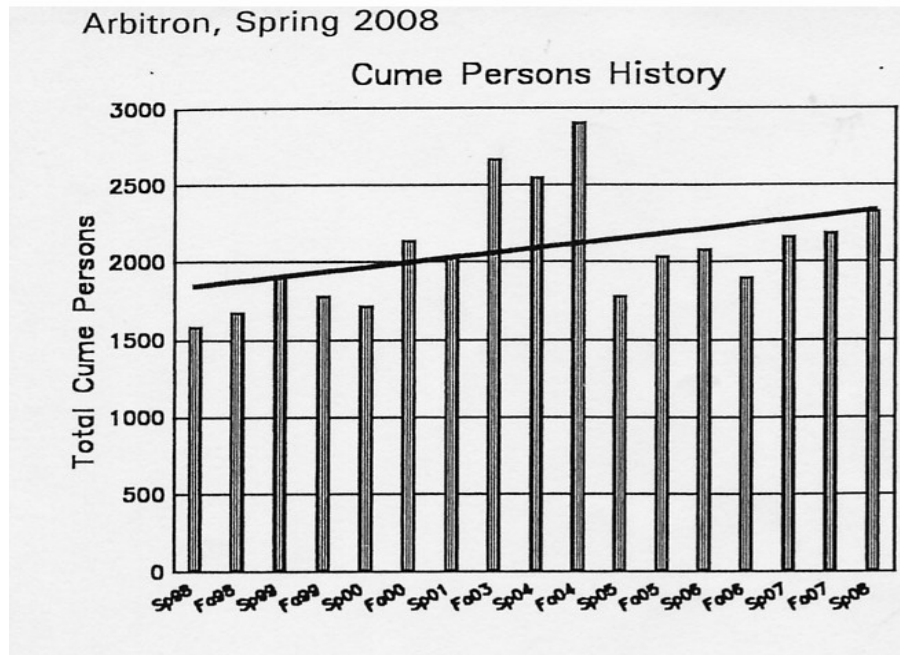
What Indymedia readers don't know is that Tarleton deliberately ignored the report from Tony Riddle (the former WBAI General Manager, who was recently unfairly removed from that position) I emailed to him on May 11th. Riddle's report to the WBAI Local Station Board proves that the station's listenership has actually increased over a 10 year period from 1998 to 2008. In addition to emailing him this information, I talked at length with him about this report and how anything showing an increase in WBAI's listenership is ignored by the other side. What Tarleton chose to do was direct people to information prepared by those supporting the coup who assert that the listenership is declining. This analysis was put together by Frank LeFever, a Grace Aaron supporter, who is with the WBAI Programming Committee. At the very least Tarleton should have referenced the other chart showing an increase in the WBAI listenership over a 10 year period. That would have been the fair thing to do. Instead, he chose to deliberately misinform the public by presenting biased and misinformation about the station's audience.

WHY THE SEEMING DISCREPANCY IN THE DATA BETWEEN LEFEVER'S REPORT AND RIDDLE'S REPORT????

At first glance it may appear that the information in LeFever's graph and Riddle's graph is completely contradictory. But in actuality, it is not. What is very different is their narrative, what they chose to focus on, and their presentation of the information. Tony Riddle chose to look at information spanning a 10 year period, from 1998 – 2008; for reasons unknown, LeFever only chose to look at information spanning a 5 year period, from 2003 - 2008. (For the record, as LeFever and I are currently on the programming committee, I have repeatedly asked him to see the information upon which he based this chart. He has refused to give it to me.)

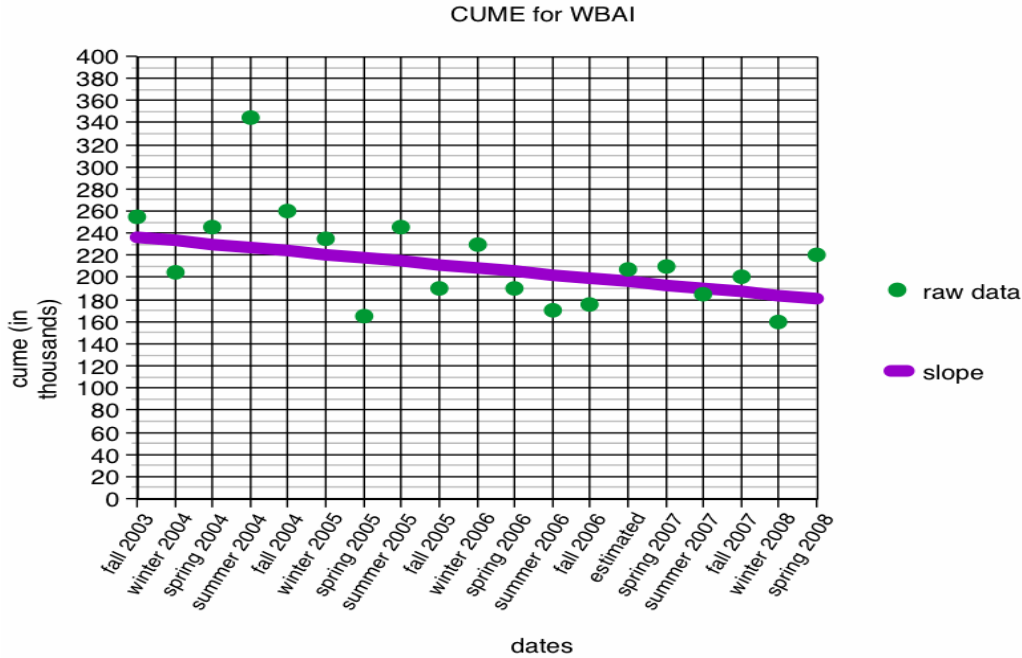
In his report Riddle explains that from 2003 - 2004, there was a tremendous documented increase in audience nationwide for public affairs programming due to the heightened interest in the run up to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and that in 2005 there began to be a drop off in audience due to war fatigue. WBAI followed this pattern. Riddle astutely points out that since 2005 there has been a slow, but steady increase in the WBAI listenership and more importantly, is able to chart this slow but steady progression over a 10 year period. Accordingly, WBAI's cumulative monthly listenership has steadily increased from approximately 150,000 in the Spring of 1998 to approximately 220,000 by the Spring of 2008. (Tarleton had this information, but chose NOT to report it.)

Graph from Tony Riddle's Report analyzing a 10 year period



On the other hand, LeFever presents his statistical data in a social vacuum and begins his analysis with the fall of 2003. Only if you perceive his information as cold figures, divorced from social issues, and begin with the fall of 2003, does WBAI's listenership show a decline. But if you take into consideration Riddle's social analysis, even LeFever's chart shows that since the Spring of 2005, there has been an overall increase in the WBAI listenership.

Graph from Frank LeFever's Report Analyzing a 5 year period



WHAT ABOUT THE TREMENDOUS ACTIVITY REGARDING THE WBAI ONLINE PROGRAMMING ARCHIVES????

I also spoke with Tarleton about how the ACE camp, who support the coup, chose to ignore the statistics about the WBAI online programming archive. In 2006 the data showed that there were over 6,000,000 downloads of programming files for that year. As of 2009, the data is showing that there have been over 8,000,000 program files downloaded for the year. I will be the first to profess that this is not an exact science and that my understanding of this data is limited. But none the less, it is an indicator that there is a huge amount of activity going on with the programming that needs to be studied and examined closely. What's more, the data shows that WBAI's programming archive is getting hits from over 80 countries. However, those who want to portray WBAI's programming as a failure completely ignore these stats. And it is very revealing that Tarleton chose not to mention that I said any of this in his article.

While it is certainly no secret that there has been a long and racist history of distorting and manipulating data as a mechanism of control to disenfranchise communities of color, especially the Black community, it is an especially bitter pill to witness this type of dynamic at WBAI/Pacifica. The current coupsters are using the false rationale of "bad programming" and "declining listenership" for purging not just WBAI, but the entire Pacifica network. In September of 2008, the former National Program Coordinator for Pacifica, Nathan Moore, presented a report from Arbitron, using its new

Portable People Meter (PPM) system, which has proven to be very controversial and highly unreliable (the Attorneys general for New York and New Jersey have taken Arbitron to court for deliberately under representing communities of color) to erroneously show that listenership has dropped drastically for Pacifica and for WBAI in particular. Subsequently, the National Board has begun to implement policy giving the Executive Director a broad hand in making programming decisions that could drastically affect not just the programming, but the political direction of the network.

Yes, WBAI and the Pacifica network are facing dire financial times in an economic downturn that rivals that of the Great Depression. And as is true throughout history, communities that have the least, suffer first and foremost. And as is also true, there are those among the ruling class who seek to exploit people's suffering in an attempt to ensure a permanent underclass. The people who are behind the Coup, are backed by money. Steve Brown, the multi millionaire who is currently on the WBAI LSB, is a strong friend and ally of Lavern Williams and Grace Aaron. He is also one of the primary architects of the current coup who is known for launching vicious, racist and virulent campaigns with purpose of undermining the recently removed, banned and fired management at WBAI. (for more info on this go to : [Steve Brown's Accusations and Racist Code Language Against Opponents](#) and [Who Is Steve Brown?](#)

In 1967 King said that if it was not for Black radio there would have been no Civil Rights Movement. Today, media ownership by people of color has declined precipitously since the Communications Act of 1996 and fewer and fewer broadcast avenues exist that provide a voice for these communities. WBAI is the only radio station in New York that has remained a true champion of the people. And now the coupsters are threatening to take that away. We can't let this happen. We MUST TAKE WBAI BACK NOW. What good is it if the coupsters make the trains run on time if they bypass the communities that need them the most?

For more facts to deconstruct the myths running rampant, I urge everyone to visit: www.justiceunity.org and www.takebackwbai.org.

Lisa V. Davis
Listener Representative of
the WBAI Local Station Board