
GUEST: Brooke Gladstone, Host of WNYC's *On the Media*

AGENDA ITEMS:

- Presentation from Brooke Gladstone
- Q&A with Brooke Gladstone
- Public Comment
- Community Advisory Board business

PRESENTATION FROM BROOKE GLADSTONE

Introduction of Brooke Gladstone, who is “best known for the pause that Bob Garfield inserts before introducing her on [On the Media](#),” which she hosts. (Bio for [Brooke Gladstone](#)).

Gladstone came to speak about *On the Media* and how it has evolved in the seventeen years since it was relaunched by WNYC. Gladstone was lured from NPR by Dean Cappello.

***On the Media*'s initial gambit, January 2001**

- Gladstone initially thought: “If I’m going to cover media, I’m not going to cover it the way that I was covering it for NPR. I wanted to do all the different ways that the media holds up the mirror to who we are — the means by which we tell ourselves the stories of who we are and the stories we tell ourselves about who we are.”
- Show changed after September 11, 2001, when George W. Bush wasn’t particularly responsive to the press.
- They explored the subcategory of stories called “Pre-existing conditions”: the conditions that make journalism possible — freedom of expression, public access to documents (FOIA), privacy, protecting anonymous sources, it meant any number of things that were abstract, but were related to media.

Media During the Obama Administration

- During the Obama Administration media experienced a huge problem with access and surveillance; issues related to The State Secrets Act — couldn’t argue a case in court if there was an implicit national safety threat.

Media in the Era of Trump

- Emphasis during Trump administration: less about freedom of information and surveillance, and mostly about narrative. There is an argument over the nature of itself: “What is true and what isn’t?” How do we have a democracy when we can’t agree on a common pool of facts? There have been efforts by Trump administration to delegitimize the interests of the free press itself.
- *OtM*'s purview is now to examine the stories that the media tells itself: not believing that this person could be elected opens up a whole new category of what the show could cover.
- An effect of Trump is that reporters are now trying to report the world as accurately as they can.
- “Lie” implies that someone is consciously saying something that they know it isn’t true. It doesn’t imply that they don’t realize it isn’t true. The first time that the *New York Times* used it was in reference to Trump’s birther

scandal. NPR avoids the use of the word ‘lie’ in the context of reporting on Trump because their rationale is that you can’t see what is inside someone’s head.”

The Business of Media

- The financial problems media are experiencing are an inherent consequence of media being a public service funded as a business: “you have the tail wagging the dog all the time.”
- Consequence of previous coverage of public radio’s “liberal slant”: Gladstone does think that there is something called “Fairness Bias” in media. The built-in biases in media are mostly business based, but not political. “Fairness Bias” is to give the one outlier equal time with the entire community of voices. It’s an effort by the media that is concerned with charges of liberal bias. Reporters will bend over backwards to make sure that no one can accuse them of that.
- Media does err in leaving stuff out and are prey to fairness bias. They are prey to the civility that dominated the media in the middle of the twentieth century.

On the Media Today

- Since 2014 they have created *Breaking News Consumer Handbooks*: documenting the arc of coverage of significant events, what is always wrong in first news cycle. Producing, periodically, other *Breaking News Consumer Handbooks* of what is reported routinely in news cycle. The *Handbooks* present bullet points that they derived from a show, which they devoted to something, which they’ve then assembled into a book. Helping consumers to navigate the news cycle.
- *On the Media* staff: Brooke, Bob Garfield, Katya Rogers (executive producer), four full-time producers and an intern. Segments take a huge amount of work — editing down from an hour to eight minutes, roughly. If they can do two full interviews a week, that’s amazing. The preps are very extensive. Jen, the technical director, mixes the show. Katya notes that they’re “news adjacent” — they have to stay aware of what the news is so that they can do the meta thing, take the news apart. Brooke: “I’m about as comfortable with the size of our staff as [I am] with the size of [my] bank account.”

Q&A WITH BROOKE GLADSTONE

- How would Gladstone assess media’s current speed in reportage versus its authority of a response?
- Seventeen years is a long time to be doing show. How does *OtM* stay current and differentiate itself? BG: They have an organizing principle: they put things through the *On the Media* play-doh extruder. They take the big issue of the day and then take a step back from it — they don’t report the news. They never do a main take on the main story. Fundamentally, they produce a show that they would want to listen to. How do you ensure that you’ve communicated the stakes? Where’s the beef? “Why should I care?”
- Where did Fake News come from? BG: Doesn’t use the phrase “fake news.” She feels it no longer has meaning. Fake News started with content farms outside of the country — a money-making enterprise. It could be left or right, though they made more from the right. Lies that confirmed peoples’ biases. It was literally fake. But now it is a term that makes things fuzzier than more real. It dignifies the term with the term news. All it means now is, “I don’t believe this story.”
- Criticism of Bob Garfield. Member of public doesn’t like that he “tips his hand” when interviewing people. He should let people hoist themselves by their own petard and not cast himself as biased in asking the questions. BG: responds that Garfield was a professional critic in his most recent role and was paid for his opinions. He was hired in part as a contrast to Brooke. They tend to give Garfield the interviews wherein someone is so clearly wrong, because he is so good at them and he loves them. Serving as the listener surrogate is one of the functions of a public radio host: Garfield is serving as a stand-in for the listener’s interest. It’s when the media has most expressed what the public is feeling that the media is most popular — not when they have been the most accurate. Katrina, 9/11, etc. They are not operating by polls. Gladstone didn’t want the job of doing *OtM* until Bob Garfield was mentioned.

- Any other program regularly broadcast on radio or TV that Brooke would recommend that we consume? BG: Doesn't watch cable news anymore. It seems all about confirmation bias now. WNYC newsroom series have taught her a huge amount, and have not been about offering one perspective.

Public Comments

- Expressions of concern by listeners about how WNYC and NPR can take money for good programming from sponsors who are purportedly morally questionable. Listeners turn to WNYC because they trust the station. It doesn't reflect well on the station when listeners hear about station sponsorships (Koch Industries, Exxon or Williams) that embody qualities that the listeners don't share.
 - The "halo effect" of sponsorship/advertising on NPR by compromised by companies can be insidious.
 - Listener raised *Brian Lehrer Show* segment featuring an interview with Daniel L. Doctoroff. Listener did not think it was apt that he should have a platform on Brian Lehrer's gentrification series. While listener did support the series, the public has been coming out in big numbers to protest development and gentrification; opponents are not getting a chance to be heard on WNYC.
 - Public comment: having attended NYPR Board of Trustees meeting, does CAB chair Gerolimatos get a response from the board after mentioning concerns that are perennially voiced in CAB meetings? Chair: The board internalizes concerns voiced during CAB meetings, voicing concerns during the BOT meetings is a way of providing feedback that has impact that can't be ignored. Gerolimatos keeps a list of what people ask and then provides feedback. The BOT chair and Laura Walker want to know and hear what is going on. Board members do attend the CAB meetings and hear directly from the public.
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COMMUNITY BOARD BUSINESS:

- Approval of Minutes dating from June 6, September 11; Agenda October 18, 2017. Minutes have been changed to a shorter high-level summary of minutes and can include hyperlinks.
 - Structure for meeting of November 28: [Hal Trencher](#), VP of Sales Sponsorship will be host, along with [Ivan Zimmerman](#), General Counsel. CAB members and the public are asked to pre-submit questions, they will be able to get better answers. Members of public would like to understand how sponsorship at the station works.
 - Motion to adjourn.
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NEXT MEETING DETAILS:

Tuesday, November 28, 2017

Station Tour: 5:30 pm, 160 Varick Street, 8th Floor Lobby

Meeting: 6:30 PM, The Greene Space, 44 Charlton Street, New York ([Google map](#))

Guest: Hal Trencher, VP of Sponsorship Sales with Ivan Zimmerman, General Counsel, New York Public Radio

CAB MEMBERS (ALPHABETICAL)

Adam Wasserman
Andrew S. Greene
Anita Aboulafia
Barbara Gerolimatos, Chair
Carole Chervin
Chad Bascombe
David N. Szytk
Donna Blank
Erica Johnson
Grace Clarke, Vice-chair
Jacob Wojnas, Vice-chair
John Bacon

Kathryn Tornelli
Lisa Nearier
Liz Buffa
Marlene Birnbaum
Merwin Kinkade
Michael Brown
Michaela Balderston
Nancy Walcott, Vice-chair
Peter Kentros (excused)
Samantha "Sam" Pedreiro (excused)
Stan Ince
Theodore Schweitzer (excused)

**italics = not present*

OTHERS

Alex Murry, CAB Liaison and *Mary White, BOT Liaison (excused)*
Members of the Public: 20 attendees signed-in