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The voice of alternative journalism

Amy Goodman is praised for presenting the news from different viewpoint

By **KATE GURNETT**, Staff writer
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First published: Monday, October 16, 2006

TROY -- When Bolivian President Evo Morales came to the United States in September, he gave a one-hour interview. Not to CBS, ABC or NBC. Or PBS.

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It was Democracy Now! that snagged Morales for an in-depth conversation. In the past decade, the show's host, Amy Goodman, has interviewed leaders from around the world while earning herself a reputation as America's top alternative journalist.

Along the way, her five-station broadcast ballooned into an international radio,

television and Internet program with more than 500 outlets. It's the must-catch hour for progressive listeners.

These days, Goodman says, her show is drawing more and more conservatives, too.

In Sarasota, Fla., recently, a 15-year-old military academy student, wearing his uniform, came to hear Goodman speak. "They're opposed to the (Iraq) war," she said. "This is an untold story in this country."

Goodman will speak Wednesday in Troy at a fundraiser for independent media.

As she dashes from city to city on a book tour, Goodman says she sees a trend not reported in the dominant media: Conservative and liberal lines are breaking down. And the level of dissent is often ignored.

"In the two-week period leading up to the Iraq war, all four top newscasts (including PBS' 'The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer') had only three of 390 interviews with anti-war leaders," she said. "That's an extreme media beating the drums for war. We need a media that reaches and reflects the mainstream in this country. Unfortunately, much of the media has left mainstream America behind."

Democracy Now! has gained popularity because it covers dissent, she says.

"The media should be covering power, not covering for power," Goodman said on a cellphone from a taxi in New York last week.

Goodman, 49, became well known in 1991 when she survived a massacre of 250

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people in East Timor as Indonesian soldiers opened fire on thousands of people. In 1998, her documentary "Drilling and Killing," on the role of Chevron Corp. in the deaths of two unarmed environmental protesters in Nigeria earned her the prestigious George M. Polk Award.

She rarely rests as she whizzes through her day. Sleep "is a beautiful word," she said. "And I'm looking forward to it in 2007."

New York Daily News columnist Juan Gonzalez co-hosts Democracy Now! The coverage has been lauded by political and media observers from Noam Chomsky to media watch group Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting. In the Capital Region, the show airs at 9 a.m. weekdays on WRPI-FM (91.5) in Troy.

Goodman has rankled many, from Newt Gingrich to Bill Clinton. She doesn't ease up, even in places where other reporters might fraternize with power brokers. At an Overseas Press Club of America program in 2001, Goodman refused to accept an award because she couldn't question the speaker, then-Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, about Kosovo after his speech.

In an age in which many television journalists cover international affairs through pundits, Goodman contacts leaders herself, talking to Morales, Venezuela's Hugo Chavez or African ecologist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai.

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