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February 5, 2007



A voice of dissent

Amy Goodman is back in Brevard with her alternative political views

BY BREUSE HICKMAN
FLORIDA TODAY

Amy Goodman is unapologetically opposed to the war in Iraq. She says so in her latest book, "Static: Government Liars, Media Cheerleaders, and the People Who Fight Back" and on her syndicated radio show, "Democracy Now!" which airs at 9 a.m. weekdays on WFIT-FM (89.5).

She's gone so far as to call President Bush a liar.

No doubt, that would make her land somewhere near the top of author/conservative pundit Ann Coulter's treason list.

And radio and Fox talk show host Sean Hannity certainly would never call her "a great American."

But she begs to differ when she's labeled a liberal counterpart to Rush Limbaugh, Hannity and other conservative talk fixtures.

The way she sees it -- and how listeners describe her -- her aim isn't to reflect a political viewpoint.

Instead, listeners tune her in because

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Heard across the nation. Amy Goodman's "Democracy Now!" program is carried by 500 radio station's, including Melbourne's WFIT-FM (89.5). Photo by Michael Keel

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she's offering a perspective outside the view of the major news outlets.

Listeners will remind you she's taken Democrats as well as Republicans to task.

She was once called "combative" and "disrespectful" by former President Clinton.

"There is a hunger for political voices across the political spectrum that is not represented in mainstream media," Amy Goodman said from New York City's "Democracy Now!" headquarters.

She often invites guests with opposing political views on her show, "where we provide a forum for debate. What we don't do is bring out that small circle of pundits who know so little so much."

Though "Democracy Now!" has been on the air since 1996, the show has experienced its greatest popularity in the past two years. In 2005 and 2006, it picked up 200 affiliates, bringing the total to 500.

"We're picking up about two or three (new radio affiliates) a week," she said.

Her Melbourne appearance last year was a near sell out -- almost 300 people attended. Organizers of this year's event are expecting the same.

She credits her growing listenership and the demand for public appearances to the current administration and Americans' growing skepticism of the news media that doesn't reflect the blurring of conservative and liberal lines.

"President Bush not finding weapons of mass destruction (in Iraq) did more than expose his administration, it exposed the media that acted as a conveyor belt for the deception," Goodman said. "The media should be covering power, not covering for power. They should be the fourth estate, not for the state."

Though Fox News often has been categorized conservative -- and its from those ranks that White House press secretary Tony Show hails -- and CNN decidedly more liberal, rarely does Goodman make a distinction.

Both are guilty of "beating the drums of war," she has said.

She shrugs her shoulders at former President Bush's recent admonishment of the media for what he sees as personal attacks against his son.

"The media has acted as a megaphone for the establishment," she said. "Democrats are just as guilty for enabling the invasion."

Cammy Donaldson, past president of Space Coast Progressive Alliance, was instrumental in drumming up interest in having Goodman's show heard in Brevard County.

Donaldson said she found it refreshing that Goodman offered diverse political

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The details

What: Amy Goodman's "Static" book tour **When:** 7 p.m. Saturday (VIP session starts at 5:30)

Where: Gleason Performing Arts Center at Florida Tech, 150 W. University Blvd., Melbourne **Admission:** \$20, \$15 in advance **Information:** www.wfit.org



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Last year. Amy Goodman drew quite the crowd at her last appearance at the Gleason Performing Arts Center at Florida Tech. FLORIDA TODAY file

opinions that weren't always in step with popular Republican or Democratic party lines -- much like those found among Space Coast Progressive Alliance members.

While the term progressive conjures images of anti-war protestors and embracing liberal agendas, the 13,000 Brevardians who receive online newsletters from the group "are pretty diverse," Donaldson said. "In fact, our people are pretty sensitive to being boxed in a category. We have people who are pro life, an issue that is typically deemed conservative. We have people who are anti-gun control, myself being one of them."

The common thread among members, she said, is a desire to find information unfiltered by corporate interest.

"Air America," the erstwhile once ballyhooed flip side of conservative mouthpieces, just didn't cut it, she said.

"Like conservative talk radio, many of us found it to be loud and noisy," Donaldson said of the AI Franken venture that has filed for bankruptcy. "Many of us are looking for straight-forward exploration of the issues. And that's what we're finding through 'Democracy Now!' "

WFIT station manager Terri Wright said the station picked up the show because of "the local movement of people who had contacted the station about the show," she said. "We thought we'd give it a try and see if it gets support."

Based on how well the "Democracy Now! has done during two fund drives, officials at the listener-supported station have called it a success.

At 49, Goodman's journalism background dates back to her Bay Shore High School in Long Island where she was editor of the school newspaper. She graduated from Harvard in 1984 with a degree in anthropology.

In 1991, she survived a massacre of 250 in East Timor when Indonesian soldiers opened fire on thousands of people.

"She goes where the story is, talking to the people who are actually living the story, not just the government mouthpieces," said listener David Musgrove. "Her approach is often called advocacy journalism, but really what she's advocating is the importance of independent media that's not influenced by corporate interest. Of course, the consolidated media will call her liberal because she's not in their camp."

Contact Hickman at 242-3789 or bhickman@floridatoday.com.



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