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**Broadcasting Dissent**

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By **ANDREW MacLEOD**  
Oct 26 2006

New York City radio host and author Amy Goodman answers her cell phone as she prepares to get off a train in the state capital Albany. It's taken a week to reach her. She's in the middle of an 80-city tour to launch a new book she's written with her brother David Goodman, *Static*, all the while hosting a daily radio show.



Democracy Now! host Amy Goodman

"It's pretty crazy," she says. We arrange to talk the next day, but at the appointed time, she doesn't pick up. When she calls back half an hour later, she's apologetic. She's in a car on the road to another event, this time in Concord, Massachusetts. The signal is weak and cuts out several times. Repeatedly we call to re-establish the link.

Tuning in to her show, which runs five days a week on the University of Victoria radio station CFUV (as well as some 450 other stations

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across North America) would be an easier way to hear what she has to say. So will heading down to the McPherson Playhouse on Sunday, October 29, where she'll speak on the topic of "Documenting Dissent" as part of the Victoria International Arts Symposium.



"In a time of crackdown, dissent is the first line of defence," she says. "Artists are a critical part of that."

Regular guests on her Democracy Now! show include singers like Harry Belafonte and Pete Seeger, she says, plus authors like Eduardo Galeano and Arundhati Roy. "That is a regular feature of what we do," she says. "They live in this world and they feel the pressure as much as anyone."

There's little doubt, she adds, that there is a serious attack on free speech underway. "Definitely in the United States. There's a very curious pressure to conform," she says. The attack is made in the name of national security, but it's a backwards way to fix the problem. "The answer isn't to close down the dialogue, stop the dialogue in this so-called war on terror. The answer is to open it."

The mainstream media, however, plays along with president George W. Bush and the other promoters of the war. She says, "Our media caves. Our media conforms. Our media embeds itself." Not only does it embed itself with the army, she says, but also with the country's political and business elites. "The media should be covering power, not covering for power."

The result is a "veil of lies and half-truths" that doesn't serve the public well. "This media is no longer even mainstream media," she says. Many, many people never see their views reflected in the stories. Before the invasion of Iraq, for example, millions of people marched in protest, she says, yet their views were still treated as "fringe" in the media.

That left the field open for independent shows like hers, she says, to speak with critics who raised many of the questions that are now being played out in Iraq. "They have just increasingly narrowed the debate, and we expand it."

However, the good news is there's a hunger for critical voices that go beyond the dichotomy of party politics in the U.S.. While she knows that from her radio show, she says, she's seeing it even more on the book tour. "There is an intensity out there, and with younger and younger people," she says. "The response is incredible. The places pack out. A thousand people came out in Salt Lake City, Utah. That's the reddist state in the nation . . . There is a level of discontent, and horror, and organizing that misses the corporate radar screen."

Fortunately, there are people like Goodman—and countless artists who will be the subject of Sunday's panel—working to find those stories and spread them. M

Amy Goodman will speak on "Documenting Dissent" as part of a panel at the Victoria International Arts Symposium, 10 a.m. to noon on Sunday, October 29 at the McPherson Playhouse. Individual sessions are \$15-\$20, full passes \$270. 360-2547.  
[www.victoriaartssymposium.com](http://www.victoriaartssymposium.com)

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