

What's Happening

IN CALIFORNIA ?

BY LAWRENCE GABLE

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Youth Radio Gives Young People a Voice

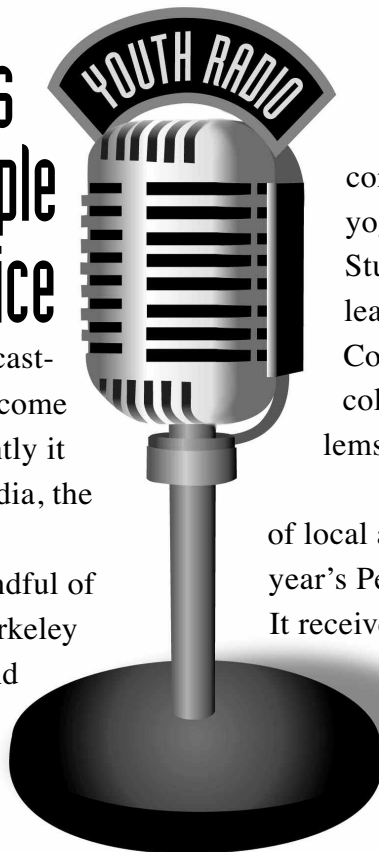
In 1991 a new organization called Youth Radio started in Berkeley. It taught young people about reporting and radio broadcasting. Since then the organization has become an important voice in the media. Recently it won the highest award in electronic media, the Peabody Award.

Youth Radio began with just a handful of high school students. At a studio in Berkeley they learned to produce news reports and essays for the radio. Youth Radio's training programs always have been free. Most participants are people of color or from low-income families.

Participants take a beginning course for 11 weeks. In afternoon and summer classes they learn basic skills in journalism, news broadcasting, music programming, and Web and video production. Some then move on to a six-month course. That includes public speaking and advanced media skills.

Some participants become interns. Of course they continue to learn, but they also become peer teachers. They teach new participants the skills that they have learned. Together they create reports that reflect a viewpoint from teens and young adults. Topics have included the war in Iraq, hip-hop music and violence on city streets.

In 2008 Youth Radio moved to a large space in Oakland. That gave room for broadcasting on TV and running an Internet music station. It also has become something like a



community center. Now it offers yoga and kickboxing classes. Students work in a kitchen and learn to cook healthy food. Counselors help with career and college planning, and with problems like teen dating violence.

Youth Radio has won plenty of local and national awards. Even this year's Peabody Award is not its first.

It received one in 2001 for its service to young people. At that time Youth Radio in Berkeley was a unique program. Since then, though, it has grown into a

national organization with offices in Los Angeles, Atlanta and Washington, D.C.

This year's Peabody Award is for a report called "Trafficked." It is a two-part investigation of child prostitution in Oakland. For nearly a year reporters from Youth Radio investigated the abuse of children. The report concentrated on two girls who had been victims of the sex trade. In December people all around the U.S. heard the report on National Public Radio and read it on the Internet.

Now Youth Radio serves 1,300 young people every year. About 300 of their reports and commentaries get onto national and local radio stations, and onto the Internet. The small idea from Berkeley has grown into something big. Young people all around the country have learned communications skills, and they are making their voices heard.

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BIOGRAPHY

DENISE TEJADA

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT, YOUTH RADIO

Denise Tejada was 7 years old when her family left El Salvador for California. As with many immigrants, it took time to feel comfortable. Now, 15 years later, she has found a home at Youth Radio. She is a production assistant there, and her work recently won a 2011 Peabody Award.

In school Denise was in ESL classes. Her parents wanted her to learn English well. They needed her to translate for them. They also knew that she needed it in order to be comfortable and successful. Then in high school she blossomed. She did well in mainstream classes and her confidence grew.

In her sophomore year Denise contacted Youth Radio. She attended the 11-week course after school. There she became really interested in radio work. She also had fun with the other young people there. Having interns teach her things was something new and exciting, and she decided that she wanted to be an intern someday too.

After the six-month course Denise indeed became an intern. She worked in different departments at Youth Radio in order to learn different things. She learned how to produce videos. She also went to schools to recruit new participants. It became clear, though, that she enjoyed working in the News Department most.

In 2006 Ms. Tejada graduated from high school. She enrolled at community college, and

has continued to take classes. Slowly she is fulfilling her general education requirements so that she can transfer to a 4-year college. Most of her time now is taken up with work.



*"For a long time
I felt out of place."*

Ms. Tejada has three jobs and likes all of them. When the Oakland A's are playing at home, she works at their stadium. She also works nights and weekends at a radio station in San Francisco. There she is learning how to handle different programming equipment. Her full-time job is at Youth Radio from Monday through Friday. She finds stories and decides which medium they would work best in.

For 7½ months she worked on "Trafficked." She and others

went to the street in Oakland where most prostitution happens. They interviewed people there day and night. Being there was the best way to make the report powerful. She talked with the two girls whose stories the report tells. She also produced and narrated "Trafficked," which won a 2011 Peabody Award.

In May Denise Tejada hopes to go to New York for the Peabody Awards ceremony. Other than that she will be busy in the Bay Area. She is working on a follow-up report to "Trafficked." She also may study Journalism at UC Berkeley. No matter what she does, having won a national award already means that the future looks bright ahead.

Background Information

The Peabody Awards recognize outstanding achievements in electronic media. That includes radio, television and cable. The 70th annual awards will be presented on May 23 in New York City.

There are 38 recipients of Peabody Awards in 2011. The winners' programs appeared on places such as HBO, CNN, PBS, TNT, the Science Channel, ESPN and National Public Radio.

Youth Radio requires people to fill out an application and attend an interview before it accepts them into its programs.

Youth Radio's music station on the Internet is called AllDayPlay.

Youth Radio's programs and commentaries reach broad audiences on the radio and in print. National Public Radio airs many of its items and has 33 million weekly listeners. The Huffington Post, a news site on the Internet, also carries much of Youth Radio's content, and has 41 million monthly readers. "Trafficked" appeared both places.

Reports and commentaries from Youth Radio also appear on CNN.com, Public Radio International, MTV Interactive, Current TV and CBS.com.

The FBI estimates 100,000 to 300,000 children and youth in the U.S. per year are forced into prostitution.

Oakland police estimate that a third of teenage girls working in prostitution were abducted and forced onto the streets. They also say that youths from Oakland are trafficked out to other cities like Portland, Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Atlanta.

Youth Radio also offers a program in Oakland for local youths who recently have been released from Alameda County's Juvenile Justice Center.

Because Youth Radio has gone far beyond the original task of creating radio broadcasts, it also now calls itself Youth Media International.

"Youth Radio Eats" is a food journal produced by interns. They not only prepare healthy and delicious food in the kitchen downstairs. They also work in the community to create healthy lifestyles.

A book called *Drop That Knowledge* describes how Youth Radio works and examines its contributions to journalism over the years.

Topics for Discussion and Writing

Pre-reading:

- If there were a news program just for teens and young adults, how would it differ from other news programs?

Comprehension:

- How has Youth Radio changed?

Beyond the Text:

- Why do you think Youth Radio uses peer teachers?
- A leader at Youth Radio has said that there must be something in the media "between Sesame Street and stuff for forty-year-olds." What does she mean?
- What kinds of after-school programs are available to young people where you live?

Vocabulary

Article-specific: broadcasting; studio; journalism; programming; intern; viewpoint; investigation; prostitution; victim; commentary

High-use: media; low-income; peer; to reflect; community; unique; abuse; to concentrate; trade

Sources

National Public Radio "All Things Considered"
December 7, 6, 2010

Oakland North www.oaklandnorth.net
September 19, 2010

East Bay Express September 15, 2010

Radio World www.rwonline September 10, 2008

San Francisco Chronicle June 3, 2007

Berkeley Daily Planet October 11, 2005

Youth Radio www.youthradio.org

CA Curricular Standards (4–12)

English - Language Arts

Reading 1.0 Vocabulary Development

2.0 Comprehension (Informational Materials)

Writing 1.0 Writing Strategies

2.0 Writing Applications

ELD—Intermediate and Advanced

Reading Vocabulary Development/Comprehension

Writing Strategies and Applications

Listening and Speaking