

# **Join Us in the Struggle to TAKE BACK WBAI**

**For the past year, WBAI Radio, 99.5 FM, one of the five Pacifica Network stations, has been under attack by the Pacifica National Board majority and the WBAI Local Station Board majority.** In May 2009, without any due process, Pacifica summarily fired WBAI's Program Director (and longtime Black community activist) Bernard White, and removed its General Manager, Tony Riddle. Exploiting WBAI's financial crisis, Pacifica began implementing a long-term plan to impose its own brand of programming – removing community self-determination programs, particularly those by and for the Black community. The National Board majority wants to change programming to fashion a “wider” (read “whiter”) appeal to those with more money. Local programming is being replaced by imported programs (some of it with backward, pro-war politics), and the network is eroding its longstanding commitment to airing hard-hitting voices of truth and resistance.

**Since January 2009, Pacifica has terminated or forced out 8 managers and senior staff – all of them Black or Latino – throughout the network.** Meanwhile, although the stated reason for removing WBAI management was the station's large deficit, a year later that deficit is worse, and early claims of big revenue gains have proven false. In fact, earlier this year the station was three months behind in its studio rent and two months behind in its transmitter rent.

**Last year, as courageous programmers began airing and speaking out against these actions, Pacifica imposed a gag rule. Dissenting on-air voices have been censored, suspended, removed, forced out, and in some cases barred from the airwaves and the studio without any due process.** In 2009, producers Ayo Harrington, Kamau Khalfani, Cerene Roberts, and Sheila Hamanaka were banned and Don DeBar was removed. This year, William Heerwagen has been suspended, Bill diFazio has been censored, and the entire Community Bulletin Board collective resigned rather than submit to censorship (after they included a forum on Black media at which Bernard White was a speaker). Now Pacifica's new Executive Director, Arlene Englehardt, has proposed tightening the gag rule. WBAI's new Interim General Manager, Muriel Tillinghast, is continuing the union-busting tactics of her predecessor, refusing to recognize the union contract with the Unpaid Staff Organizing Committee and refusing to respond to the numerous grievances filed.

*The Coalition to Take Back WBAI is a group of listeners, staff, and dissenting board members formed last year to fight back against this coup and ongoing purge.*

## **WE NEED YOUR HELP! \* FIGHT BACK! \* BECOME A WBAI VOTING MEMBER!**

**We must take back the Local Station Board majority in order to reverse these changes.**

- **IT IS URGENT THAT YOU JOIN WBAI BY JUNE 30.** Only contributions of time or money made between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010 will qualify you to vote in the Fall 2010 election. You can become a member in one of 2 ways: 1) Donate \$25 online at [www.wbai.org](http://www.wbai.org) (print out a receipt) or by calling 212-209-2950 during the pledge drive from May 12 - June 12; or 2) Do 3 hours of volunteer work at the station (and keep a record of the date and time worked).
- **Speak out at the next Local Station Board meeting: Wed., June 9, 7 PM,** at a location to be announced.
- **End the gag rule! Send an email expressing your opposition to the Pacifica National Board at [pnb@pacifica.org](mailto:pnb@pacifica.org).** Please send a cc to [info@justiceunity.org](mailto:info@justiceunity.org).

Stay updated with: **Coalition To Take Back WBAI**

**212-561-7231 \* [www.takebackwbai.org](http://www.takebackwbai.org) \* [www.facebook.com/takebackwbai](http://www.facebook.com/takebackwbai)**

**[www.bernardwhite.blogspot.com](http://www.bernardwhite.blogspot.com) \* [www.justiceunity.org](http://www.justiceunity.org)**

Also tune into Don DeBar's audio & video reports on the WBAI repression at [www.wbixradio.org](http://www.wbixradio.org)