

RADIO ESPERANZA – LA VOZ DE LA GENTE

RADIO ESPERANZA 101.5 LPFM

By Marisela Barrera

Our local nonprofit media does not represent me. I've had it up to my greñas with British accents on the radio and the Tricentennial (300) stories in print. How about you?

The future of media justice sustainability is hyper-local, nonprofit and working class. Nonprofit non-commercial media that represents single mothers, elders with limited mobility, southside chingonas, and pre-gentrification eastsiders is the way to go. Enter low-power (LP) radio, FM non-commercial stations with a maximum power of 100 watts.

Radio Esperanza 101.5 KEPJ-LPFM went on-air on May 15, 2018 at approximately 7:24 p.m. It operates with the mission that all people should have media equity. We amplify underrepresented voices at 50 watts in central San Antonio. We are female-driven hyper-local, y puro San Antonio, with plans to reach 100 watts very soon!

Ay, I'll never forget the six hours leading up to our launch.

Paul Gerard Plouf, Esperanza staffer and go-to-guy, was on the phone with Clay Leander from Common Frequency out of Davis, California, connecting our transmitter to our antenna; I was downloading content to a Samsung tablet for our temporary playlist.

One of the first songs to play on Radio Esperanza was "Mi San Antonio Querido" by Las Tesoros de San Antonio, of course.

Clay Leander was instrumental in launching Radio Esperanza from the start.

In 2004, actions across the country called for diverse representation on the airwaves. The Esperanza Peace & Justice Center, along with social justice nonprofits, organized locally.

Graciela Sanchez, Esperanza Executive Director, describes San Antonio's FCC Broadcast Localism Task Force hearings of 2004:

"Joleen García was working with the Esperanza on environmental justice issues. Together, we organized with people across the nation like Hanna Sassaman of Prometheus Radio, who worked out of the Esperanza during the actions. We organized the San Antonio working-class progressive community and filled city council chambers to capacity. We were up at midnight to stand in line so we could be the first ones to speak."

From the FCC website's definition of broadcast localism:

"Broadcast radio and television are distinctly local media. They are licensed to local communities, and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

has long required broadcasters to serve the needs and interests of the communities to which they are licensed. Congress has also required that the FCC assign broadcast stations to communities around the country to assure widespread service, and the Commission has given priority to affording local service as part of this requirement. Broadcast "localism" encompasses these requirements."

Broadcast localism became increasingly important in communities like San Antonio where corporations like Clear Channel took over the airwaves and programmed outside of communities where they broadcast. Corporate stations were not responsive to local audiences and the FCC Localism Task Force was formed. Over 500 San Antonio activists attended.

In response to the 2004 FCC hearings in San Antonio and around the country, the Federal Communications Commission was forced to open low-power radio airwaves in 2013, an open-call that has since remained closed.

The Esperanza, in partnership with the Martinez Street Women's Center, applied for a frequency.

Low-power radio progressives across the nation took notice. Clay Leander remembered us from 2004 and helped the Esperanza and Martinez Street acquire our shared FCC license this year. Clay writes in a recent email message: "You [the Esperanza] were one of the very folks who inspired me back in 2003/2004 with your great organizing for the FCC hearing. Someone put me in touch with you, and we got in touch with several organizations and gave the FCC under Powell an earful. . . I rest in confidence knowing things are poised to go well from here." Graciela explains, "In order for us to get a frequency here in San Antonio, Martinez Street and the Esperanza

were encouraged to apply together. Clay helped us get to where we are today."

We met our FCC on-air deadline on May 15, but it's been a long process.

The FCC received almost 3,000 low-power radio applications during this last open-call in 2013. By last count, Texas has 180 low-power radio stations, including six in San Antonio.

Radio Esperanza transmits from the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center at 922 San Pedro Ave. We are a rasquache-powered radio. Our "recording studio" is inside a storage closet. I clear off the t-shirts and clipboards on a waist-high filing cabinet, maneuver my MacBook Pro between the archives, and then press "record." The buena gente who have been interviewed over the summer is just the beginning.



Marisela Barrera (front), Radio Esperanza announcer, poses with Natalia Treviño of the Macondo Writers Workshop.

If you've caught us on-air, you might have heard:

- Writer, Barbara Renaud Gonzalez, on her new book, "The Boy Made of Lightning" about voting rights advocate and hometown hero, Willie Velásquez;
- Jaime Zapata sharing her life as a trans teen girl;
- Kim Corbin and Daniel Jackson from Jump-Start Performance Co. talking teatro;
- An archival recording of Gloria Anzaldúa at the Esperanza in 1998;
- Rita Vidaurri, La Calandria, talking at La Casa de Cuentos in 2008;
- Natalia Treviño from the Macondo Writers Workshop;
- Love stories from the Westside in the play, "Always and Forever;"
- The intergalactic personality known as "Sophia The Clown," aka Holly Nañez;
- An interview by Valentina Barrera-Ibarra with Parkland High School's Jaclyn Corin;
- Or "V & Z," an 8th grade podcast with Valentina Barrera-Ibarra and Zurina Wason-Carrington with back-to-school tips.

are one of only three Radio Bilingüe affiliates in the state of Texas. Additional Radio Esperanza affiliations include Democracy Now! and Radio Project's "Making Contact." that highlights vital grassroots voices each week. We've aired programs about racism, elder care, and immigration.

Radio Bilingüe is the leading Latino public radio network and content producer for the nation's public broadcasting system and the only Spanish-language national news and information service for public broadcasting. Even though their mission is "to serve as a voice to empower Latinos and other underserved communities,"

their programs were not broadcast in San Antonio, a Latino majority city, until Radio Esperanza's broadcast this summer. Radio Bilingüe founder Hugo Morales, a MacArthur "Genius" Fellow, was in San Antonio during the Guada-



Valentina Barrera-Ibarra interviews Parkland High School's Jaclyn Corin about a nationwide tour campaigning against gun violence.

lupe's Conjunto Festival. These live concerts are now on rotation.

Democracy Now! produces a daily, global, independent news hour hosted by award-winning journalists Amy Goodman and Juan González. On Democracy Now!, you'll hear a diversity of voices speaking for themselves, providing a unique and sometimes provocative perspective on global events. The Esperanza sponsored Amy Goodman's first visit to San Antonio in 2006. Since then, we've been advocating for local radio broadcast. None dared to broadcast, including San Antonio's "community radio." Twelve years later, Radio Esperanza is proud to broadcast a daily Democracy Now! Monday through Friday at 5 p.m.

Through our affiliations, we are able to amplify San Antonio voices on a national level. When Radio Bilingüe called looking for a San Antonio contact to talk about Texas elections, we put them in contact with Sophia Sepulveda with the progressive organization, Our Revolution Texas.

Our programming is not an exact science at this point, but you'll hear a new Democracy Now! at 5 p.m., followed (usually, but not always) by "Linea Abierta" via Radio Bilingüe. New content is added daily, with many local voices on the air via interviews, podcasts, and music.

Stay tuned for exact program times as we transition to regular programming.

If you haven't been listening, tune in to 101.5 LPFM when you're driving inside Loop 410. We are low-power, so geography plays a factor in our broadcast. Our current FCC license allows us to operate at about 50 watts, which gets us playing inside the loop, but with certain variables. Are you downtown and indoors? Probably can't tune in. Are you in the Deco District driving down a low tree-lined street? Maybe you can listen, but maybe not. We're getting ready to expand our reach to 100 watts. I can't tell you for sure if you'll be able to listen indoors at that point, but I'll check.



Valentina and Zurina, V & Z, 8th grade podcasters on back-to-school tips.

I've spent hours driving the streets of San Antonio while listening to Radio Esperanza. I cranked it to full when I first heard it while parked on my driveway. Radio Bilingüe's rock en español show, "Todo a Pulmón," played Serbia's "Globo Espacial." We

GET INVOLVED!

We follow a vision of media equity for those of us ignored by mainstream commercial and nonprofit media organizations. We provide a platform for local news, music, podcasts, and programs produced and presented by *women, people of color, the lesbian, gay, trans and queer community, the working class and the poor.*

SUBMIT! Radio Esperanza accepts original music, literary recordings, and ideas for interviews. Send your press releases to radio@esperanzacenter.org.

LISTEN! See our listening list on the Esperanza's website.

CALL! While you drive inside Loop 410 in San Antonio tune in to 101.5 LPFM and tell us where you are listening from!

DONATE! To keep us afloat and to help us grow!