



Forward Radio's Strategies for Evaluating Programming

At Forward Radio we believe that broadcast media is a powerful tool for transforming our society. We see the evidence of this in our hypermediated social landscape. Unfortunately, most of the broadcast media that we are confronted with today is created by the powerholding class or contoured to serve the interests of the powerful. This leaves the majority in a powerless position which only allows the consumption, rather than the production of broadcast media.

We feel that broadcast media, as a tool of expression, should reflect and be relevant to those who share in its content. It should also provide a platform for challenging those in power, debating ideas, and engaging in meaningful conversation around complex social issues.

While we believe that broadcast media should be accessible to all, we know that this is rarely the case. As such, we operate through strategies that facilitate open access, while balancing our commitment to ensure that excluded communities and marginalized points of view receive an opportunity to have their voices and issues aired.

This approach relies on the dedication of a well-informed, honest, and critically discerning Programming Committee which is responsible for researching and evaluating potential programming for broadcast on Forward Radio. Ideas for potential programming must be submitted through Forward Radio's "Pitch A Show" form which can be accessed at forwardradio.org. Applications are then evaluated by Forward Radio's Programming Committee which continues to work with new programmers throughout the training, pilot-development, and on-boarding process to refine ideas and produce engaging, quality programming for our listeners that they won't hear anywhere else on the radio dial.

The committee's evaluation procedure is guided by a set of strategies¹ which ensure that all programming accepted onto Forward Radio's broadcast schedule contributes to the realization of our station's mission and vision.

Strategy One: Power Analysis.

In evaluating any idea for potential programming, a power analysis is our first step. Through this strategy, we seek to locate the proposed programming, its creator, and potential audience, and to understand how they relate to the wider social power structure.

¹ Our Strategies for Programming Evaluation are not policies meant to police or censor and are not rigid or immutable. We are not in the business of policing or censoring media creation but rather have an interest in growing and forwarding a more just and equitable media. As such, we use strategies which are meant to facilitate intentional actions and are always open to adaptation and retooling as new situations present themselves.

It begins by identifying the sources of power and domination/suppression in our society – i.e., by what social mechanisms are people excluded, marginalized or alienated from full and autonomous participation in their social setting? We have identified the following mechanisms which work in our society to create asymmetrical social relations:

- Gender
- Race
- Age
- Economic Class
- Sexuality
- Ability
- Cultural identity
- Religious belief
- Political status/belief

A quick power analysis clears up many questions related to whether a program advances Forward Radio's vision and mission of amplifying the voices of those under-represented in mainstream media.

Of any potential programming at Forward Radio, we ask:

- What issues and topics would this media address?
- Who are the creators?
- Who is the show seeking to inform, represent, or serve?
- Do the views, issues, or communities to be presented in the show already have adequate representation in local/national/global media?
- In general, does the potential programming or its creators present a challenge to the various and intersecting social hierarchies listed above?

Strategy Two: Creating a platform for discussion and debate.

If a potential program and/or programmer is identified as being outside of our area of focus, this does not necessarily mean that it is prohibited from finding expression on our station. We realize that if we create and employ mechanisms of exclusion then we are reproducing the very logic of power and domination that we are seeking to combat. As such, we see these as powerful opportunities to fulfill our mission of creating a meaningful, respectful, balanced and honest platform for discussion and debate of complex social issues.

In the event that a proposed program or programmer is identified as being representative of a group or point of view which already holds considerable power and media representation, then we will strive to create programming which puts their point of view in contact and conversation with those that can provide competent and comprehensive challenge to it.²

² This approach will be pursued as far as it is appropriate, safe, and productive to do so. In recognizing asymmetrical social relations, Forward Radio's evaluation team depends heavily on the wishes and interests of those socially marginalized or excluded individuals/groups who are involved in a potentially conflictual programming arrangement.