



Forward Radio: Strategies for Programming Evaluation

At Forward Radio we believe that media is a powerful tool for transforming our society. We see the evidence of this in our current hyper-mediated social landscape. Unfortunately, today the majority of media content that we are confronted with is created by the power-holding class, or contoured to serve the interests of the powerful. This leaves the majority of people in the position which only allows participation in this mediated world by way of consuming, rather than creating media.

We feel that media, as a tool of expression, should reflect and be relevant to those who share in its content, as well as provide a platform for challenge, debate, and meaningful conversation around complex and tough social issues.

While we believe that media should be accessible to all, we know that this is not the world that we live in. This being said, we intend to operate through strategies that facilitate open access, yet are metered and filtered by our commitment to ensure that excluded communities and marginalized points of view receive an opportunity to have their voices and issues aired.

Cultivating this type of approach will be no easy task, and will require a dedicated, well informed, honest, and critically discerning team which will be responsible for researching and evaluating potential programming for Forward Radio. Ideas for potential programming will be submitted through Forward Radio's "Proposed Programming Application" form which can be accessed on forward-radio.net. Applications will then be evaluated by Forward Radio's Programming Committee. The committee's evaluation procedure will be guided by a set of strategies¹ which will work to ensure that all programming submitted for consideration to Forward Radio contributes to the realization of our project's mission and vision.

Strategy One: Power Analysis.

In evaluating any idea or direction for potential programming a power analysis should be the first step. Performing this check will often be the most simple and clear-cut method for program evaluation. This step seeks to locate the proposed programming, its creator, and potential audience, and to see how they relate to the wider social power structure.

¹ Our Strategies for Programming Evaluation are not policies. Policies are meant "to police", to censor, and are often rigid or immutable. As 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 we prefer the term strategies, which are meant to facilitate intentional actions and are always open to adaptation and re-tooling as new situations present themselves.

To do this, we must first identify the sources of power and domination/suppression in our social landscape, that is 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 will clear up many questions related to whether or not a particular program “fits” with Forward Radio’s vision and mission.

Of any potential programming at Forward Radio, we ask: What issue, topics would this media address? Who is the creator? Who is this media seeking to inform, represent, or serve? Do the views, issues, or community(ies) which are presented in this media already have adequate representation in local/national/global media? In general, does the potential programming or its creator present a challenge to the various and intersecting social hierarchies listed above?

Strategy Two: Creating a platform for discussion and debate.

If an potential program and/or interested programming creator is identified as being outside of our area of focus, this does not necessarily mean that it is prohibited from finding expression within our programming. 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. Rather, a potential topic of conflict presents us with a powerful opportunity to fulfill our mission of creating a meaningful, respectful, balanced and honest platform for discussion and debate of complex social issues.

If a potential program or program creator is identified as being representative of a group or point of view which already holds considerable power(or adequate media representation) in our society, 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 will depend heavily on the wishes and interests of those socially marginalized or excluded individuals/groups who are involved in a potentially conflictual programming arrangement.