

**COMMUNITY POWERED RESISTANCE:
RADIO, MUSIC SCENES AND MUSICAL ACTIVISM
IN WASHINGTON, D.C.**

MAUREEN E. LOUGHRAN

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the Program in Music: Ethnomusicology
at Brown University

MAY 2008

©Copyright 2008 by Maureen E. Loughran

This dissertation by Maureen E. Loughran is accepted in its present form
by the Department of Music as satisfying the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date 4/22/08


Jeff Todd Titon, Advisor

Recommended to the Graduate Council

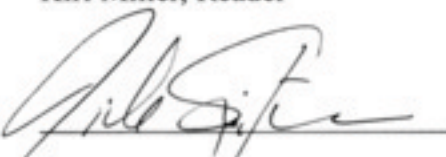
Date 4/22/08


Susan Smulyan, Reader

Date 4/22/08


Kiri Miller, Reader

Date 4/23/08


Nicholas Spitzer, Reader

Approved by the Graduate Council

Date _____

Sheila Bonde, Dean of the Graduate School

CURRICULUM VITAE

BORN: MAY 30, 1973, SANTA CLARA, CA

EDUCATION

A.M. IN ETHNOMUSICOLOGY, BROWN UNIVERSITY, 2002

M.A. IN IRISH STUDIES, CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA, 1999

HIGHER DIPLOMA IN IRISH FOLKLORE, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN, 1996

**B.M. IN MUSIC THEORY AND LITERATURE, CUM LAUDE,
SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE, NOTRE DAME, IN, 1995**

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**TRINITY COLLEGE, WASHINGTON, D.C, ADJUNCT FACULTY
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC, FALL 2004- FALL 2006**

Taught courses in:

Music in World Cultures (Fall 2005, Fall 2006)

Applied Piano (Fall 2004-Spring 2006)

**BELL MULTICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL, COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, WASHINGTON, D.C,
COMMUNITY ETHNOGRAPHY AND RADIO DOCUMENTARY CLASS, SUMMER 2005**

Five week summer school class in ethnographic methods and theory with high school students. Final Project was a five minute radio documentary "An Inside Look at Urban Culture with Nate Nice"-Summer 2005; broadcast in October 2005 on community radio station, Radio CPR.

**STONE RIDGE COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL, ORAL HISTORY AND RADIO PRODUCTION
WORKSHOP, BETHESDA, MD, SPRING 2005**

Conducted oral history project on the Civil Rights Movement with 11th grade students.

**BROWN UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC, RESEARCH ASSISTANT FOR PROF.
MARC PERLMAN, FALL 2003**

Assisted with planning visit by Dr. Paul Berliner of Univ. of Chicago for series of lectures and performances on the mbira music of Zimbabwe.

BROWN UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC, APPLIED ETHNOMUSICOLOGY COURSE, SPRING 2003

Assisted with development & instruction of course, & production of final radio project.

BROWN UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC, INTRODUCTION TO IRISH MUSIC, GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT, FALL 2001

Graded assignments and assisted with class lectures.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“Mt. Pleasant Isn’t: Mapping the Landscape of Punk Memory,” paper presented at Society for Ethnomusicology, Columbus, Ohio, October 2007.

“But What if They Call the Police?: Accepting an Activist Role in Urban American Ethnomusicological Fieldwork,” paper presented at the International Council for Traditional Music Conference, Vienna, Austria, July 2007.

“Gentrifying the Soundscape: Music and Activism on an Urban Street,” paper presented at the 50th Anniversary meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Atlanta, Georgia, November 2005

“Radio Vérité: The Radio Documentary as Applied Ethnomusicology,” paper presented at the International Council for Traditional Music Conference, Sheffield, England, August 2005.

“Building Community Through Sound: LPFM Radio and Musical Activism in an Urban Neighborhood,” paper presented at the Over the Waves: Music in/and Broadcasting Conference, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, March 2005.

“Eloise Linscott and Folksong Collecting in New England, 1932-1942,” paper presented at New England Chapter of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Boston, MA, April 2003.

PUBLICATIONS IN PROCESS

Journal Article, “But What if They Call the Police?: Applied Ethnomusicology and Urban Activism in the United States,” for *Muzikološki zbornik/Musicological Annual 2007*, Ljubljana, Slovenia, in process, Winter 2008.

Radio Documentary Review Essay, “Any Mummers Allowed? (CBC 2005); From Sagebrush to Steppe (NPR 2005); The Radio Ballads: Thirty Years of Conflict (BBC 2006)” for the *Journal of American Folklore*, in process, Spring 2008

Book Review, “Sing My Whole Life Long: Jenny Vincent’s Life in Folk Music and Activism by Craig Smith (Univ. of New Mexico Press: 2007)” for *Western Folklore*, in process, 2008.

APPLIED PROJECT EXPERIENCE

AMERICAN ROUTES, AMERICAN PUBLIC MEDIA, NEW ORLEANS, LA

Audio Archivist, September 2007-to present

Radio Production Intern-Summer 2002

BROWN STUDENT RADIO, BROWN UNIVERSITY, PROVIDENCE, RI

Producer, *Reel to Real*, 30 min. Ethnomusicology documentary radio program,

Fall 2003

ARCHIVE OF FOLK CULTURE, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, WASHINGTON, D.C

Archive Intern-1997-1998

Archive Volunteer-2004: assisted with processing manuscript collection
of the Alan Lomax Collection (AFS 2004/004)

FESTIVAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLIFE, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, D.C

Lead Volunteer, Bermuda Section-Summer 2001

Audio Logger-Summer 1996, 1997, 1998, 2003, 2004

WORLD MUSIC ARCHIVE, ORWIG MUSIC LIBRARY, BROWN UNIVERSITY, PROVIDENCE, RI

Archive Assitant-2000-2002

FOLK ARTS AND HERITAGE PROGRAM, MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL,

BOSTON, MA

Intern with Massachusetts State Folklorist-Fall 1999

IRISH MUSIC ARCHIVE, BURNS LIBRARY, BOSTON COLLEGE, CHESTNUT HILL, MA

Archive Assistant-November 1999-February 2000

IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC ARCHIVE, DUBLIN, IRELAND

Archive Intern-September 1998-December 1998

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND DEVELOPMENT

AUDIO DOCUMENTATION WORKSHOP, CENTER FOR DOCUMENTARY STUDIES, DUKE UNIVERSITY, SUMMER 2003 AND SUMMER 2004

Produced 3 min. radio documentary on Piedmont Blues Musician John D. Holman, August 2003. Broadcast on WNCU, Raleigh, NC, January 2004.

Produced 5 min. radio documentary on Fiddle Contest in Blanford, MA, May 2004.

D.C LISTENING LOUNGE: A RADIO DOCUMENTARY ARTS PRODUCTION COLLECTIVE, CO-FOUNDER, FALL 2004, MEMBER, FALL 2004 TO PRESENT.

Co-produced and curated the "Sound Scene," an evening of radio documentaries, sound art performances and sound installations for the D.C Listening Lounge, Washington, D.C., December 2006.

Co-curated selection of D.C. Listening Lounge archive broadcast by WPS1.org live from the Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, June 2007.

Produced 2 audio art pieces, "Ocean" and "Huelo," featured as part of D.C. Listening Lounge archive collection on WPS1.org live from Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, June 2007.

COMMUNITY SCHOLARS WORKSHOP, SOUTH CAROLINA TRADITIONAL ARTS PROGRAM, CLEMSON UNIVERSITY, JULY 2003.

AMERICAN ROUTES RADIO, NEW ORLEANS, LA

Editorial assistance for radio programs:

"Alan Lomax and Pete Seeger" (Aired Spring 2003)

"Museums of Sound" (Aired Spring 2003)

"New England" (Aired Fall 2002)

TALK OF THE NATION, NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Editorial assistance for radio program:

"Remembering Alan Lomax" (Aired July 2002)

"INVESTED IN COMMUNITY: MUSICAL ADVOCACY AND ETHNOMUSICOLOGY," HELD AT BROWN UNIVERSITY, MARCH 8-9, 2003.

Co-Organizer of 1st National Conference on Applied Ethnomusicology, with Erica Haskell and Jeff Titon.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not exist without the generosity of the residents of Mount Pleasant. Their patience with my questions and their interest in my project encouraged me to keep going. The DJs of Radio CPR taught me how to “do radio” and that resistance is not confined to the protest rally. Mount Pleasant residents Natalie Avery and Amanda Huron both went beyond the call of duty in assisting me with my research. Many of the ideas contained here come from stimulating conversations with both Natalie and Amanda. I consider myself privileged to call them friends. Mara Cherkasky of D.C. Tourism always had time to meet for coffee and her knowledge of Mount Pleasant’s history was invaluable. Olivia Cadaval of the Smithsonian’s Center for Folklife and her husband, Dave Bosserman, long-time residents of Mount Pleasant, were gracious enough give me suggestions and endure my persistent questions.

At Brown, my advisor Jeff Titon kept a close eye on my project, while allowing me space to follow this path in scholarship. Our conversations about applied ethnomusicology, among other topics, have greatly influenced the direction of my research. Susan Smulyan encouraged me and assisted my radio pursuits with terrific resources and suggestions, while Kiri Miller’s close reading and engaging comments made my dissertation that much stronger. Nick Spitzer, in New Orleans, not only gave me a real job but his comments on my scholarship also proved to challenge my ideas about applied ethnomusicology, helping me to think more deeply. I can only hope that my scholarship measures up to their collective expectations. I would also like to mention

Svanibor Pettan, of the University of Ljubljana, for including me in his Applied Ethnomusicology panel at ICTM in 2007 and for the opportunity to publish my thoughts on the field.

Throughout the course of this research, many of my friends both at Brown and elsewhere have been subjected reading sections of this dissertation while it was a work in progress, as well as patiently listening to my doubts and worries. In particular, Erica Haskell, Julie Hunter, Anne Elise Thomas, Alan Williams, Cliff Murphy and James Ruchala at Brown, Lester Feder at UCLA, as well as my colleagues at American Routes, who all deserve tremendous thanks for helping me navigate this process in the most sane manner possible. They are all great friends and great examples to me.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge my family. My mom, Patricia Loughran, always pushed me to keep at it, even when things looked grim. My siblings, Matt, Clare and Katie all conspired to make my life less esoteric and more grounded. This project is dedicated to the memory of my dad, Thomas Loughran, who with my mom, taught me not only to have a sense of humor, but to listen closely and be thoughtful about the lives of others.

Any omissions or mistakes are my own.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	xi
Introduction	12
Chapter One: “Mount Pleasant Isn’t:” Neighborhood, Music Scenes and Washington, D.C. Punk Rock	23
Chapter Two: The Revolution is on the Air: Radio CPR Builds a Community	51
Chapter Three: “...And don’t forget to ROC THE MIC!:)” Creativity and Activism as a Radio CPR DJ	89
Chapter Four: Gentrifying the Soundscape: Live Music, Quality of Life Crimes and Neighborhood Activism	121
Chapter Five: “But what if they call the police?” Applied Ethnomusicology and Urban Activism in the United States	157
Conclusion	192
Bibliography	200
Appendix	210

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: Waiting for the Evens, Lamont Park, Mount Pleasant, July 2007	24
Figure 2: Heller's Bakery and Lamont Park, Mount Pleasant, February 2005	30
Figure 3: A row of houses, 17 th Street, Mount Pleasant, February 2005	40
Figure 4: Ian MacKaye on guitar and Amy Farina on drums, The Evens, Lamont Park, Mount Pleasant, July 2007	42
Figure 5: Yellow Arrow, Capitol of Punk Tour Map	48
Figure 6: The Cabaret Alert (1997), Radio CPR Archive	65
Figure 7: Flyer from the first Radio CPR broadcast, October 1998, Radio CPR Archive	75
Figure 8: The Radio CPR/Stand for Our Neighbors Family Stage, Celebrate Mount Pleasant Day, June 2004	80
Figure 9: Radio CPR Frequency on display at Mount Pleasant Auto Repair, Winter 2005	82
Figure 10: Demystifying radio in the studio of Radio CPR, 2005	90
Figure 11: Radio CPR at the HEAR Mount Pleasant Concert, July 2007	97
Figure 12: Out in the open on Mount Pleasant Street, Winter 2005	100
Figure 13: Radio CPR schedule, Fall 2004	107
Figure 14: Radio CPR CD, cover art by DJ Carlitos Brown, 2003	115
Figure 15: Mount Pleasant Street, Celebrate Mount Pleasant Day, June 2004	128
Figure 16: The Karaoke Mariachi, Mount Pleasant Street, April 2005	135
Figure 17: Radio CPR table at Celebrate Mount Pleasant Day, June 2004	139
Figure 18: Radio CPR flyer about the Voluntary Agreements, 2004	141
Figure 19: The Mount Pleasant Street Mural Project, Winter 2005	185

INTRODUCTION

January 2004: Mount Pleasant, Washington, D.C.

As I walk up Mount Pleasant Street, I can hear the crunch of sleet under my feet. The shops I pass along the way are lit bright and busy, as people hurry past each other, rushing to get out of the pelting ice and snow. The 42 bus sidles up in front of the 7-11 convenience store, taking riders out of the neighborhood, down Columbia Road to Adams Morgan, Dupont Circle and eventually, past the White House. I'm on my way to meet DJ Maude Ontario at Radio CPR, the neighborhood underground radio station.

We arrive at the studio just before her show, "Recordations" is to start. DJ Ontario locks the door behind us and turns on the transmitter. She cues up her theme song, a disco track which mentions Rock Creek Park, D.C.'s leafy artery which borders the neighborhood to the west. This evening's show is a recording of a talk about the Park given at the Mount Pleasant Library earlier that week. As the library talk commences on the speakers, DJ Ontario and I talk about my project: to document this underground radio station. Once the library talk concludes, she turns the microphone on me. We talk about ethnomusicology, my past research adventures and why I would want to study radio. We listen to a documentary about Cape Verdean music in Providence which I helped produce with other students at Brown University. We continue the conversation about documentary work and music, comfortably forgetting about the microphones and sharing stories on the air. Who was listening to this?

For the past three years, I have closely observed the musical life of Mount Pleasant, an urban neighborhood in Washington, D.C. I have come to find particular connections between music, identity and activism that relate specifically to the context of urban life in the Nation's Capital. The locus of this dissertation is Radio CPR, a low-power underground community radio station, which broadcasts within the neighborhood's boundaries. The station serves many functions within the community: as a forum for discussion of neighborhood issues, as an outlet for local musical expression and as a catalyst for community activism. In addition, the founders of the station, as well as the station DJs, all have connections to the local music scene, either as musicians or activists. More specifically, it is through the urban music traditions of punk and hip-hop, that these urban residents situate their activism.¹

Music and Protest

On August 4, 2004, one week after the Democratic National Convention in Boston, MA, a group of well-known, progressively-minded musicians announced a concert tour of the "swing states" in October 2004, just in time for the national election. The tour, titled "Vote for Change," sought to use the musical and cultural connection that these musicians have to the broad American public, both Democrat and Republican, to encourage that same public to not only vote in the upcoming election, but to vote for a new direction for the country (i.e., for John Kerry). Promptly, media outlets, like ABC's Nightline, garnered interviews with the musicians, who ranged from

¹ Punk and hip-hop are both music genres which are characterized by outward style interpretations by its audience and performers, and encompass a variety of material, visual and musical arts. Definitions of these two genres vary depending on what art is being emphasized. Music critic Nelson George writes that hip-hop is "a product of post-civil rights era America, a set of cultural forms originally nurtured by African-American youth in and around New York in the '70s...It's a postmodern art in that it shamelessly raids older forms of pop culture...and reshapes the material to fit the personality of an individual artist and the taste of the times." (George 1998: viii). Ethnomusicologist Steven Taylor has explored the word "punk" and its various definitions over time, concluding that punk "refers to a politics that calls itself anarchist and a style of music, lyric, graphic art, journalism, dress, and activism that is conventionally seen as developing from the U.S. "garage band" movement, "indy" or "underground" rock, New York "art rock" of the late 1960s, and London "pub rock" of the early '70s." (Taylor 2003: 17)

Bruce Springsteen and Dave Matthews to Keb' Mo' and the Dixie Chicks, asking what gives musicians the right to use their stardom for political causes. Nightline's Ted Koppel, in his interview with Bruce Springsteen, asked pointedly, "Who the hell is Bruce Springsteen to tell anybody how to vote?" To which Springsteen replied, "Artists write, and sing, and think, and this is how we get to put our two cents in, and we do it right in front of people, not in secret meetings behind closed doors. We let people know what we think...I don't know if people go to musicians for their politics. I doubt that they do, you know, but you can rally people to think on serious issues together, and that's what we're trying to do." (Nightline 2004)

Often, music in the United States is seen as a product of the "entertainment industry" and assigned all the political significance that such a label entails-which is admittedly, very little. It is this label that informs questions like Koppel's, consigning musicians and artists to the role of "court jester" instead of agitator, activist and cultural commentator.² Yet the tradition of musical protest has a long history in the United States, although this history is only slightly acknowledged. From the union songs of Aunt Molly Jackson and the populist politics of Woody Guthrie in the 1930s, to the music of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s and the stadium rock shows against apartheid and world hunger in the 1980s, music is often employed to protest or call attention to social issues. (Garafalo 1992, Eyerman and Jamison 1998) How do music and social activism operate in tandem on the local level of neighborhood and community?

Music Scenes and Activism

In current research about popular music, emphasis is increasingly placed on the impact of globalization on music cultures. These investigations focus on the nature of rock and hip-hop in

² Note the reply that Bush campaign spokesman Terry Holt had to the announcement of the tour, "All the showbiz in the world isn't going to get John Kerry elected." ("Singing for the Blues: Musicians Tour to Defeat George Bush", by David Segal, Washington Post, Aug.5, 2004). While court jesters are acknowledged, in history, to have provided a role of subversive commentary while entertaining, some artists in punk and hip-hop culture demand a more forthright stance in social commentary.

global cultures, tracing genres which have their origin in the United States and seeking their manifestations in lands around the world.³ As a result, the idea of a musical regional scene in popular music has become de-emphasized. When consumers (the audience and participants in local scenes) can purchase music online and participate in far away music cultures through chat rooms and blogs, the notion of popular music anchored in a specific place seems a little outdated. However, this attitude overlooks the importance place still holds in American popular music scenes. The punk rock scene in Washington, D.C. is one such scene.⁴

Musicians who grew up in the Nation's Capital's punk rock scene have an extremely loyal commitment to the city. The D.C. Flag often graces CD covers of punk bands, the messenger bags and jackets of punk followers and sometimes, even appears on the tattooed arm of ardent D.C. punk scene residents.⁵ One neighborhood in particular has held a primacy of place in the hearts of those in the D.C. punk rock scene: Mount Pleasant. Mount Pleasant is a small pocket of Victorian rowhouses and one main street, nestled between 16th Street and Rock Creek Park, in the Northwest Section of the city. It became home to those in the punk rock scene while also providing shelter to the growing Latino population in D.C.. As fortunes change in the District, Mount Pleasant has registered those changes through changes in population and attitudes. Today, discussions about how to live in an urban neighborhood are played out within arguments about noise and alcohol.

Radio CPR

³ So many scholars have taken this train of thought in regards to popular music that it would be a dissertation in itself to list them all. For a good example of the influence of globalization on pop music cultures, see Garofalo 1992.

⁴ The term "scene" as applied to music relates to first the geographic location of people who come together for a specific music. Ethnomusicologist Sara Cohen writes that "scene is created through people and their activities and the interactions." (Cohen 1999: 240)

⁵ In fact, the 2006 release by the DC band "The Evens" features a found art portrait of the US Capitol Building as a metal charm embedded in asphalt. Included on the CD is a track titled "Everybody Knows," in which the duo describes political groups arriving in DC to reshape government to their partisan liking and declares "The Capitol, it is a playground now.... Washington is our city!" (Evens 2006)

Radio CPR, whose call letters stand for Community Powered Radio, is a product of many influences and movements: the punk scene in the neighborhood, the national low-power FM movement and the wider anti-globalization protest movement in the 1990s. As its founders point out, the station is a platform for voices, music and cultures ignored by corporate America. As it pertains specifically to the neighborhood of Mount Pleasant, it allows activists in favor of diversity and against gentrification to voice their opposition to the totalizing changes occurring in many neighborhoods across the District. As a product of a national movement, Radio CPR resists the consolidation of media, as well as the federal regulation of media. The station features programs by activist DJs, who complement their radical politics with music left out of mainstream media broadcasting. Of course, punk has a home on Radio CPR. However, through the concerted effort of the founders, the station strives to reflect the diversity of cultures found in the neighborhood. In turn, they create an alternative community to the one which is forming in Mount Pleasant in the process of gentrification. While the music featured on the station is sometimes political and often provoking, the station itself is a protest action for both local and national issues.

Applied Ethnomusicology and Urban Life

“You know, we haven’t had our revolution yet, but I’m hopeful.” These words, spoken by DJ Turned Tables of Radio CPR, resonate with how I feel about the field of ethnomusicology. Scholarship for the sake of scholarship is a fine endeavor. But for my own work, I feel compelled to be involved in my community and use my skills as a researcher for the betterment of others. Observing activism of others in the neighborhood naturally led me to contemplate how to be an activist scholar. Applied activist ethnomusicology is an approach to studying music in culture, with social justice and social responsibility as guiding principles. In the context of an urban environment, where many are subjected to the decisions of a few, applied ethnomusicology is a

pertinent mode of music scholarship. To be a witness to social injustice demands that one speak up and lend a hand. To stand on the sidelines is to be irresponsible. However, that does not mean that, as someone studying for a PhD, I should rush in and start organizing for culture. From my experience in Mount Pleasant, I found that people in grassroots organizations were already doing the good work of applied ethnomusicology. In most cases, people working within these organizations, called community activists or community scholars, do not have formal training in ethnomusicology. Instead, they use what they know about the community and its needs to organize and become activists for culture. I see that their actions have much to teach applied ethnomusicologists who want to work in communities. My feelings about the field of applied ethnomusicology are now informed by what I learned from these grassroots groups in Mount Pleasant.

Why Radio and Why D.C.?

This project was an outgrowth of many influences on my scholarship. As someone who grew-up in the Nation's Capital, I had a yearning late in my graduate school tenure at Brown to go back home. Studying one's own backyard is maybe not the most adventurous route to take in ethnomusicology, but there was a story I felt needed to be told about my hometown. In May 1991, I was a senior in high school, across town from Mount Pleasant, at a Catholic school in the Georgetown section of the city. My mind was focused on graduation and moving on to college in Indiana. That first week in May, riots broke out on Mount Pleasant Street. I remember watching the television coverage, thinking that what I saw looked more like images from a third world country, than from across town. This was also the year in which the murder rate in D.C. skyrocketed, so much so it was christened the "murder capital" by the press.

Mount Pleasant was a neighborhood to be avoided. When I moved back to D.C. in January 2004, my family still felt this way. Of course, living there changed things. That is part of the work of neighborhood and community. Once you delve in and get to know your neighbors, you are embarrassed you had held to previous stereotypes for so long. And when I moved away to New Orleans three years later, I was (and still am) extremely homesick for this small section of the Nation's Capital, where I could walk down the Mount Pleasant Street, run into my neighbors on their way home from work, stop into the Raven Lounge on Edgar Allen Poe's birthday and hear a recitation of "The Raven," or buy Salvadoran tortillas and guava juice at the Bestway supermarket.

It proved that in a city as diverse as D.C., you can live completely separate lives by choice, concluding that some neighborhoods are more prone to violence based on what you hear on the news and not by what you observe. From my own experience growing up in D.C., that meant I was confined to the white, middle and upper-class Connecticut and Wisconsin Avenue corridor of Northwest. Taking the Metrobus home from high school everyday meant traveling up Wisconsin Avenue, leaving the very well-to-do streets of Georgetown, past the National Cathedral and the Russian Embassy, only occasionally encountering poverty in the homeless man who was sitting next to you. Six years later, while attending graduate school at Catholic University, in the Northeast section of the city, I would drive by storefront churches, mom and pop liquor stores, and low-rise apartment buildings occasionally marked with the signs of an eviction, as the contents of someone's life was deposited on the sidewalk. Still, I did not think that my hometown would become the focus of my future studies.

It was by complete chance that I even found Radio CPR in the first place. Maybe I should give the internet some credit here. In late 2003, I stumbled upon the website for Radio CPR. It intrigued me that this community station was operating in my hometown. I had never heard of it.

I remembered Mount Pleasant from the riots in 1991, but that was all I knew about that section of the city. Looking over the program schedule online, I realized that something dynamic was happening at this little radio station. Suddenly, I was moving back home to check it out.

My relationship with the members of Radio CPR has most certainly influenced the actions I took and the decisions I made during the course of this project. When I first moved back to D.C., I did not really know any of the CPR members, and only had an introduction through a friend of a friend (working through a network of friendships). As time went on, my relationship with those who founded the station only deepened, as did my commitment to the Radio CPR project. This was not a superficial commitment. I attended monthly meetings, went to and assisted with special events, volunteered as a substitute DJ, eventually having my own show on the station for almost two years (Monday nights from 7:00-9:00 p.m.). I can say that my relationship with the station members is something which grew over time, but their trust in me depended on my involvement as well. In folklore and ethnomusicology, the friendship model is often invoked for how should we interact as researchers with our “informants.” This is an important model for my own interactions with the Radio CPR community. I also feel that this friendship asked for a commitment on my part to the issues for which this community organized, and for which I was already sympathetic. I learned a lot about the difficulties of placing oneself in a community as researcher and the pull toward becoming actively involved in the community’s issues.

Radio was not the most natural topic to investigate in ethnomusicology either. Often, in the midst of my fieldwork, I wondered if what I was doing was in fact ethnomusicology. I struggled with this idea during interviews or while observing community meetings. What I came to discover was that, of course, I was doing ethnomusicology after all. This project concerns how people interact and live with music as a part of their lives, whether they are musicians, DJs or

audience members. Music is an important aspect of life in Mount Pleasant, and it has become the conduit and mirror for many other issues about urban life in the neighborhood. From arguments about noise to protests featuring local popular musics, people in Mount Pleasant live their lives in an urban city often in relation to music. As I talked to more and more neighbors, I discovered that music and activism both held important places in the lives of people here.

The Chapters

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter One explores the manner in which membership in the punk music community is closely connected to activism in the Washington, D.C. area. I investigate how the punk music scene manifests and takes residence in the neighborhood of Mount Pleasant. By contrasting the different musical histories of Mount Pleasant, demonstrated by two cultural heritage walking tours, I seek to understand the nature of place memory in the Washington, D.C. punk scene, as well as question the difference between scene, neighborhood and place.

Chapter Two concerns the history of the neighborhood underground community radio station, Radio CPR. Building on chapter one, this chapter addresses how the conditions of the neighborhood and the ties of the punk community to the neighborhood resulted in the foundation of the station. As the founders of the station will acknowledge, the station itself serves as a protest mechanism on several fronts. It is a product of the alternative media and low-power FM movement of the late 1990s as well as a radical politics and punk DIY sensibilities. Operating as collective, this group seeks to represent unheard voices in the neighborhood while also giving unheard music a home on the airwaves.

Chapter Three follows three DJs at Radio CPR. In this chapter, I investigate how Radio CPR DJs are able to be activists for community while building their own alternative community within

the station. A short sketch of the DJ as a character on radio is explored in relation to their creative agency on air, which is one of the hallmarks of being a Radio CPR DJ. I also chronicle my own experience as a Radio CPR DJ, an experience which led to many of the insights developed in this chapter.

Chapter Four traces the manner in which government regulations and neighborhood politics can combine to change the soundscape of an urban environment. As Mount Pleasant's population has changed over the course of the late 1990s and early part of the 21st century, the way people live their lives and their expectations of urban life have changed as well. One such point is the sale of alcohol in neighborhood establishments, which has been combined with a ban on the performance of live music. A casualty of this policy was an important aspect of Latino cultural life in the neighborhood: strolling mariachi bands. This chapter investigates the ban on live music and how activist in the neighborhood are working to overturn the policy.

Chapter Five is a reflection on my fieldwork experiences and the field of applied ethnomusicology. During the course of my research in Mount Pleasant, I encountered several situations in which my objectivity as a researcher was questioned. As a scholar who seeks to bridge her academic work with a search for social justice, I felt that these moments were key to understanding what it means to be an applied ethnomusicologist. I also strive to theorize about the field and suggest new paths to work in applied ethnomusicology.

The dissertation is an exploration of the various modes of musical activism within the neighborhood of Mount Pleasant and how people use music and become activists for music. This activism is found in group settings, such as Radio CPR meetings, protest rallies against the neighborhood music ban or punk fueled benefit concerts. It is found in the individual actions of Radio CPR DJs during their radio shows. The activism in this neighborhood connects to larger

national movements, such as the anti-globalization and anti-media consolidation protest movements. Understanding this place and how the people in this place organize for music and culture, I aim to show that the complexities of place, class, gender, and race all inform how music is celebrated, discussed and advocated for in urban neighborhoods in the United States. The fact that these discussions are happening without, often, the insight or concern of scholars is another point I address here. My argument is that as responsible scholars, we cannot look narrowly at places and communities, singling out musical traditions for study without also examining the ways in which lives are lived in these same places. The people involved in these musical traditions do not make such divisions and neither should we. In the end, that makes for complicated situations and complex ethics, but it also makes for dynamic conversations about the place of music in communities.

CHAPTER ONE

“Mount Pleasant Isn’t”: Neighborhood, Music Scenes and Washington, D.C. Punk Rock

It was nearly 4 o’clock on a hot July Sunday afternoon and The Evens were about to start their set. A large crowd of neighbors gathered for the outdoor concert in Lamont Park, in the middle of the Mount Pleasant neighborhood of Washington, D.C. Guitarist, singer and Mount Pleasant resident Ian MacKaye (of Fugazi and Minor Threat fame) took the stage with drummer Amy Farina as the audience buzzed with excitement. Even Henry Rollins, another D.C. icon of punk rock, was present and in a good mood. The event was part of a music series sponsored by a local organization seeking to bring music performance back to the neighborhood.⁶ Other neighborhood organizations, such as Radio CPR, the underground community radio station, lined the park with their information tables, answering questions and sharing neighborhood news.

Earlier in the afternoon, just before the arrival of the Evens, the audience was treated to performances by a local mariachi group, signaling the recent past when mariachis roamed up and down Mount Pleasant Street. Though these mariachis were a little out of tune and maybe out of practice, the crowd knew that this performance sent an important statement and the musicians were cheered just the same. As MacKaye got settled on stage, he pointed out to the crowd the irony of Mount Pleasant’s place in the history of D.C. music. Citing a recent Mount Pleasant neighborhood heritage trail

⁶ For a more in-depth investigation of the ban on live music in Mount Pleasant, see Chapter Four: Gentrifying the Soundscape: Live Music, Quality of Life Crimes and Neighborhood Activism.

erected by the D.C. city government, he wondered why there was no mention of the presence of the punk community. For D.C. punk rockers, Mount Pleasant was a punk neighborhood. For the rest of the residents who live there, Mount Pleasant's connections to musical greatness included R&B star Bo Diddley, country music star Jimmy Dean and local bluegrass hero Charlie Waller but certainly not members of the internationally known D.C. punk band, Fugazi.



Figure 1: Waiting for The Evens, Lamont Park, Mount Pleasant, July 2007

This chapter addresses the nature of place memory in music scenes. For the punk community in D.C., Mount Pleasant has always held a special place in their remembrances of times past. While the neighborhood itself is changing, the ethos of punk sensibility continues in community activism within the neighborhood. These notions of activism are not inherently “punk,” but they are maintained by a community of people who not only have a commitment to this place, but also had a past role in the foundations of the Washington, D.C. punk scene.

Washington, D.C.: Not Just the Nation's Capital

Washington, D.C. is characterized by many of its long-time residents as a “sleepy, southern town.” This view is supported by the fact that politics and life in D.C. is discussed with the assumption that most of the population is either white or black, giving no account for the growing ethnic minority populations.⁷ In the first half of the twentieth century, the Nation's Capital had all the outward appearances of a southern town, with segregated restaurants, theaters and offices. Henry James once described D.C. as inhabiting a space where “the North ceases to insist [and] the South may begin to presume.”⁸ The heritage of race relations in twentieth-century Washington still manifests itself in neighborhood segregation and severe poverty.⁹ Outsiders to the District see its population as always in flux, a collection of political workers who come and go with the various elections. This transient, “inside the beltway” view of the District not only ignores the diversity of D.C.'s native population but also its cultural heritage.

⁷ The 2000 Census reported that of the 572,059 people that lived in the District, nearly 7.9% (44,953) identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino, while in the 1990 Census, of a population numbering 606,900, only 32,710 people identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino. As for the traditional White/Black division of the city, the 2000 Census indicated that 30% (176,101) of the population claimed White as their race, while 60% (343,312) claimed Black/African American. While Census numbers can give a good indication as to the variety of ethnic groups and races that live in one particular place, people can and do subscribe to multiple ethnicities and races, which makes resulting numbers more nuanced but less clear. All numbers quoted above are from the DP-1. Profile of General Characteristics: 2000, District of Columbia and DP-1. General Population and Housing Characteristics: 1990, District of Columbia. For more on the Census numbers, see the US Census webpage at : http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en

⁸ Henry James quoted from *The American Scene* (London:1907) p.303 in Carl Abbott's article “Dimensions of Regional Change in Washington, DC” in *The American Historical Review*, vol. 95, no.5, (Dec.1990), p.1383. Abbott investigates the changing nature of DC's regional identity, describing the area's balancing act between Northern economic influences and Southern cultural influences. He contends that DC is now forging a new identity based on Mid-Atlantic culture, which is neither entirely Northern nor Southern.

⁹ Examples of recent articles in the *Washington Post* reinforce this view, “Poverty Rate Up 3rd Year in a Row” by Ceci Connolly and Griff Witte, (Aug.27, 2004-*Washington Post*, A01)-in which the DC poverty rate is deemed well above the national average, and “D.C Slow to Reduce Its Ranks of Jobless: Boom Eludes Many Poor Neighborhoods” by Neil Irwin (August 16, 2004-*Washington Post*, A01). Irwin writes that while the jobless rates for African Americans nationwide is currently higher than other races, “...many overwhelmingly African American neighborhoods in the District have unemployment rates many times that for blacks nationwide.”

The tension between being perceived as a city of “politics” and a typical American city is exemplified in the feeling that there may be two cities. Sociolinguist Gabriella Gahlia Modan comments on this idea in her study of Mount Pleasant. Modan distinguishes between Washington and D.C. Washington is the city of the politicians, lobbyists and media culture. D.C., on the other hand, is a city of neighborhoods and neighbors, who fight for representation in subtle and not so subtle ways.¹⁰ As neither a state nor a territory, the city has always sat in a political limbo, where representatives from distant states hold more power over local decisions than native-born residents. And it is this fight for rights and representation that defines much of D.C. culture. As Modan points out:

Because there is no possibility to affect the change at a state level, what people in D.C. have is the local...And in a neighborhood with residents who have sought refuge from wars across the world, in a city with a huge gap between rich and poor, the connection between the local and the global becomes crystal clear when you're 16 blocks away from the White House where social welfare cuts are proposed and immigration policy is hashed out. (Modan 2006: 38)

The local then, is where residents of D.C. express themselves. It is the space in which they have the most to gain and the most to lose. It is also why arguments in a small place like Mount Pleasant can become so contentious. Discussions in the monthly neighborhood commission meetings can get heated at the quickest instant and lines are instantly drawn. With overlapping senses of what is local, the residents of the District and Mount Pleasant negotiate the identity of their place on a daily basis.

¹⁰ In one of DC's less subtle protest movements, the phrase “Taxation without Representation” was added to the DC License plate in November 2000. The phrase was intended to highlight the lack of voting representation for the city in the US Congress. President Clinton, in a show of support for DC voting rights, placed the new license plates on the presidential motorcade, only to have President Bush remove the new plates when he arrived in office two months later in January 2001. (“Transition in Washington, Political License Plate is Out Says Bush”, *New York Times*, January 19, 2001)

While Washington, D.C. is the home of the nation's political culture, it has also fostered aspects of the nation's expressive culture. In the 1930s and 1940s, Downtown D.C.'s U Street was on par with Harlem as a magnet for jazz music. The city is proud to claim both Duke Ellington and Marvin Gaye as native sons. The vibrancy of African American music culture thrives today through the indigenous musical form go-go, which blends funk sounds with a percussive drive that can only be heard in local clubs.¹¹ Go-Go has local club support, as well as small community radio support in the Southeast and Northeast sections of the city (historically, home to a majority African-American population). Punk and hip-hop have followings in the D.C. area that have left distinctive marks on both music genres. As with go-go, the presence (or lack) of media support has contributed to how these nationally recognized genres survive and thrive in the Nation's Capital. With the more well-known genres of punk and hip-hop, the story is very different. While hip-hop is heard on various stations in the area, radio consolidation of the 1990s created an unwelcome environment for local artists and has only amplified the careers of already well-known stars.¹² Punk does not have a home on any commercial radio outlet in the area, and in Mount Pleasant it can only be heard on the underground community station Radio CPR.

Mount Pleasant: From Suburb to Inner City

¹¹ Chuck Brown, known as the "godfather of go-go" and considered the genre's founder, was honored by the National Endowment for the Arts as a National Heritage Fellow in 2005. The award seeks to honor masters of traditional arts and Brown was listed as an "African American Musical Innovator."

¹² In an article addressing the state of hip-hop in the DC area, local hip-hop radio DJ Eddie Smith sees the situation in DC as particularly distressing, stating, "A small number of corporations own the stations, and they dictate what is played from city to city...And in Washington especially, they're watching the programming carefully, because it's the center of politics and government." ("Rhyme and Punishment" by Sarah Godfrey, *Washington City Paper*-Jan.23, 2004, p.6)

Mount Pleasant was one of the first “suburbs” in Washington, D.C.. While it is now part of the city proper, it was originally established in the 1860s as bedroom community at the end point of the trolley line. The neighborhood was home to the many European immigrant populations typical of 20th century America. In the 1950s, the population changed to include a large influx of African-American families whose roots originated in rural Eastern North Carolina culture. The 1970s and 1980s brought a tide of Latino immigrants and refugees from civil unrest in El Salvador. Today, Mount Pleasant is considered to be one of the most diverse communities in the Nation’s Capital. Home to Latino, Vietnamese, African, African-American and Anglo-American families, it is a community that has struggled over the years with riots, gangs and poverty.

It is also a site of rapid economic change, as new affluent arrivals move into the area and housing costs skyrocket. In a 2005 article in the *Washington Post*, tax assessments of housing in the neighborhood of Mount Pleasant and the adjoining neighborhood Columbia Heights reportedly jumped more than 25% from the previous year, which translates into higher taxes for the mostly low-income residents, and high prices for housing in general. (Weiss 2005: B01) In the past 10 years, the economic landscape of Washington, D.C. has changed to such an extent that residents of historically poor and working-class neighborhoods have been forced to move to outer suburbs while their former residences are bought by increasingly affluent newcomers. These new residents have a disproportionately larger voice in the changing nature of the city, as the leaders of the city government stick to the mantra that “change is good”—inviting developers to take over derelict housing and create condos that attract upper-income residents without making provisions for the long-time residents of the

neighborhood. With the new affluent residents comes the perceived need to shape the neighborhood to their needs —cafes, Starbucks, gourmet restaurants and a police presence to keep out unwanted riff-raff.

Several anthropologists have chronicled the population changes in the neighborhood and the strains those changes have made on neighborhood relations. Brett Williams, an anthropologist who has investigated Washington, D.C. neighborhoods, maintains that uneven economic development within the city has created supposed havens for multicultural living. However, integration is not really achieved since all groups bring conflicting ideas on how to live in an urban environment. The word gentrification is a code for white incomers, who seek to “rehabilitate” the neighborhood to their standards, while ignoring the culture that surrounds them. She writes:

Ultimately, many white middle-class people who want to reclaim a piece of the vibrant central city for themselves are going to have to change...If we are to preserve the variety in our cities, I believe that those of us who want to live in such areas have to take on that job, which is first of all the work of culture, and then we must try to link that cultural stand to broader, but also deeper, denser, more textured, repetitive, and rooted political action. (Williams 1987: 143)

Williams points to the importance of culture as a link between neighbors and as a building block for future communities in the neighborhood. When the culture of the neighborhood is recognized, however, its story can cause divisions when the intention is to create harmony. And sometimes those overlooked cultures are the ones that are the most creative and vibrant, refusing to be contained inside a static historical treatment.



Figure 2: Heller's Bakery and Lamont Park, Mount Pleasant, February 2005

“A Village in the City”: The Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Historical Trail

It was a typical Sunday afternoon at Heller’s Bakery on Mount Pleasant Street. Young couples traded sections of their massive Sunday editions of the *Washington Post*. Groups of friends recapped their Saturday night misadventures at the few tables looking out the plate glass window onto the street and across to Lamont Park. Meanwhile, patrons of all varieties lined up at the counter for their morning coffee and donuts. Heller’s, founded in 1922, is a Mount Pleasant institution, one that has employed residents of the neighborhood and supplied many a birthday cake for family celebrations. A mural on the side of the building looms large over Mount Pleasant Street, reminding neighbors of its specialties (Pies, Rolls, Cakes, Homemade Ice Cream). It seemed like the perfect place to meet Mara Cherkasky, a neighborhood historian, folklorist, accordion player and the project manager of the Mount Pleasant Historical Trail. As we staked our claim to a wobbly table near the door, we talked about why the residents of Mount

Pleasant felt they needed an Historical Trail. The answer, like everything in this small community, was complicated.

The Mount Pleasant Historical Trail began life as a research project into the neighborhood's history, in an effort to document the story of this diverse corner of D.C.. Mount Pleasant had been all-white until the 1950s, when African Americans began to move into the neighborhood and whites began to move out. The condition of the neighborhood was chronicled in the Mount Pleasant Library's annual report in 1958, revealing a bias against those moving in and a longing for those moving out:

The Mount Pleasant area continues on its downward trend. Not only is the neighborhood blight unchecked, the blight has accelerated. The Southwest Slum Clearance¹³ (with its displacement of population) has contributed greatly to this unfortunate condition. As noted before, there is a continuing conversion of single family homes into apartments and rooming houses, many of the small single family houses now accommodate several families together; low income families are replacing those of middle class income and many of the new families are transient. (Landis 1992: 27-28)

In the end, the only way to document the diversity of Mount Pleasant was to tell the story of the neighborhood since the 1970s. Then came the question of the 1991 riots on Mount Pleasant Street, a time that many in the historical research group wanted to leave out. As at any meeting in Mount Pleasant, agendas abounded: everyone involved knew that their agenda pointed to a particular history of Mount Pleasant. As Mara remembers, "There was a lot of push to talk about diversity and this as a multi-cultural neighborhood, but the more research I did I realized this wasn't a multicultural neighborhood" (Cherkasky 08/07).

¹³ The Southeast Slum Clearances refer to a 1950 and 1960s urban renewal project in the Southwest section of the city (between the US Capitol building and the Potomac Waterfront) which brought newly enlarged streets and high rise apartment buildings to an area long considered a slum. (Mencimer 1999)

One interesting aspect of the Historical Trail is the continual mention in the historical markers of Mount Pleasant's brushes with musical greatness. Former Advisory Neighborhood Councilman and record producer Wayne Kahn had heard rumors that Jimmy Dean, Charlie Waller and Bo Diddley all lived in the neighborhood at various points during the mid-twentieth century. All three of these names are well-known outside of Mount Pleasant and D.C. Therefore, to be able to claim their residency would give the neighborhood a certain status among visitors and locals. To walk by the house in which Bo Diddley had resided became equivalent to the tourist plaque "George Washington Slept Here." However, the history of D.C. punk never made it into the final story of Mount Pleasant. While the Wilson Center, a important venue for the early punk scene, was a proposed topic, its location just outside the boundaries of the neighborhood's historic district caused it to be left off the map¹⁴. As a result, the history of punk residency in the neighborhood continues to be told by word of mouth and not immortalized in a historical marker.

In a neighborhood as supposedly diverse as Mount Pleasant, one can never contain all the layers of community. Some layers slip by because one either does not have access to them or one chooses not to access them. While the punk community is certainly a large part of the neighborhood's identity, it does not resonate with all members of the neighborhood.

Place, Scene or Neighborhood?

The terms neighborhood, place and scene are used interchangeably in discussions about Mount Pleasant's past. Neighborhood connotes family and a people-centered sense

¹⁴ The Wilson Center, now a charter school, was a site of many historic punk concerts in the 1980s and into early 1990s. Sitting on 15th and Irving St., its location puts it on the dividing line between the adjacent neighborhoods of Mount Pleasant and Columbia Heights.

of location. Place might connote a location with a history while scene alludes to something transient and not fixed. Each term contributes to a different sense of belonging and residency, and each can be used strategically by groups to further their agendas for their particular cause. Understanding the nuances of these terms tells much about their use in relation to the concept of community in Mount Pleasant and who belongs there.

One idea that flows through conversations about Mount Pleasant's punk past is that of a community tied to place. This is the most common understanding of community: a specific place, with specified boundaries which can be located on a map. The term place, however, has not always had such a fixed meaning. For the Ancient Greeks, place was imbued with character, and it was this character that gave place its meaning, not merely its location. It was through the character of a place that memory was activated. Descartes turned this understanding of place on its head, emptying place of its character and leaving instead merely a site or location to be filled with relative meanings. As a site, place could hold multiple meanings without one meaning being dominant over time. The philosopher Edward Casey traced this change in terminology and meaning from the Greeks to Descartes, finding that place locates memory, while site is transient in relation to memory. He writes, "...place tends to hold its contents steadily within its own embrace, while site and time characteristically replace their respective contents" (Casey 1999: 186). Casey's explanation sheds light on how people's memories of a place can be fixed in time, while the place itself can gather multiple layers of memory over time. Who remembers what or which histories are told depends on who is telling the story. Of course, those various histories are given differing degrees of

validity. Those with the most power have greater influence on which histories are told. And while Mount Pleasant as a place holds many characters and histories, only some memories are called upon to tell the story of this place.

One way in which terminology can de-legitimize a narrator's claim to place is by consigning that memory to a recollection of a scene. In music, it is natural to talk about scenes: generalized locations where musicians of common musical cause gather to share one another's creativity. Scene tells us less about a place and more about the actors in the place: the musicians, the artists, whoever is creating the scene. Its location (in a gritty part of a city or in a bucolic small town) gives the scene flavor, but it is the people that activate it. Scholar Andy Bennett puzzled about music scenes, finding:

....[the] local scene to be a focused social activity that takes place in a delimited span of time in which clusters of producers, musicians, and fans realize their common musical taste, collectively distinguishing themselves from others by using music and cultural signs often appropriated from other place, but recombined and developed in ways that come to represent the local scene. (Bennett and Peterson 2004: 8)

What is not always expressed about the term scene is the perception of it being transitory. This creates an alignment with the Cartesian idea of site, a location which empties it meaning over time. Scenes do change over time and are instigated by specific actors at specific times.

The Washington, D.C. Punk Rock Scene

One untold history of Mount Pleasant is its connection to the Washington, D.C. punk rock scene. In the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, the neighborhood was home to many group houses in which punks held shows and parties. These houses allowed the punk community to gather for not only music events but also political

organizing, which was an important aspect of the D.C. punk scene. Punk has been described as a “style,” an outward expression of alienation from and resistance to “dominant culture” through fashion and music.¹⁵ While the surface appearance of many punk musicians will instantly identify them as “punk” to outsiders, many subscribe to this identity through radical political philosophy and resistance actions in everyday life. In Washington, D.C., resistance is directly tied to the conditions of life in the Nation’s Capital.

Punk musicians channel their energy into organizing and acting for the underserved and overlooked in D.C.. Ethnomusicologist and punk musician Steven Taylor explains that D.C. punk was an outgrowth of the Hardcore punk scene of the early 1980s, which he characterizes as:

...an attempt to reclaim and sustain the raw power of punk and to carry on the work of simple, do-it-yourself rock with lyric content of relevance to its audience, vended through independent labels in defiance of —and in competition with— corporate-controlled, sentimentalist, mainstream pop music. (Taylor 2003: 74)

In D.C., Hardcore is spelt “HarDCore.”¹⁶ In D.C., as Taylor describes, punk was not merely a fashion statement, but an expression of the culture in which the founders of D.C. punk grew up. Punk expressed how they felt about being natives and residents of the District in the 1980s and 1990s. The music also gave them an outlet to express radical political ideas in a town seen by the rest of the nation as only a home to “inside the Beltway” political elites.

One such radical idea to come out of the punk scene in D.C. was the Straight Edge Movement. Straight Edge started as a reaction against the dominant perception of

¹⁵ See Hebdige 1979.

¹⁶ For a broader discussion of the Hardcore scene in the United States during the early 1980s, see Rachman 2006.

punk musicians being involved in drugs and alcohol. In the late 1970s, the founders of this movement were still in high school, but already committed to being involved in the punk scene. It was the club system of Washington, D.C. which contributed to this movement's naissance in the Nation's Capital. As these high school kids clamored to be admitted to clubs for punk shows, club owners refused to allow them entry because they were underage (the legal age for alcohol consumption being 18 years old in the early 1980s). However, D.C. law prohibited club owners from barring the youth access to the clubs, and so club owners would mark underage patrons with a large X on their hands, to indicate to the bartenders their age.¹⁷ The X was to become an iconic symbol of the Straight Edge movement, even appearing on the cover of the first album put out by Straight Edge founder Ian MacKaye's band, Minor Threat.

Sociologist Ross Haenfler, in his study of the movement, found that Straight Edge represented a particular kind of resistance to accepted ideas about punk, writing, "For many [Straight Edge] kids, being clean and sober was the ultimate expression of the punk ethos, an act of resistance that defied both mainstream adult and youth cultures" (Haenfler 2006: 9). For members of Straight Edge punk scenes, it was about being in control of oneself. Drugs and alcohol only got in the way of having a clear mind and thoughts.¹⁸ Although the idea of Straight Edge was to become a nationwide movement, for the progenitors of this movement, it was still considered a way of being and a song, not an all encompassing philosophy (Andersen and Jenkins 2003: 91).

¹⁷ See Anderson and Jenkins 2003: 70-71.

¹⁸ Music scholar and writer Steven Hamelman argues that Straight Edge failed as a protest rock music genre because it was in rebellion against rock which itself is in rebellion against modern everyday life. He writes, "...if to protest against straight society is, by definition, one on the main things that rock 'n' roll does, then straight edge, by condemning (even if they should be condemned!) the sex-and-drug values that permeate rock music, deprives itself of credibility. It negates the essence of rock 'n' roll itself." (Hamelman 2006: 191)

Straight Edge was not the only expression of punk music in the D.C. scene. As the leaders of this aesthetic grew out of Straight Edge's philosophy, they continued to develop their music and the scene in many different ways. Bands turned to more melodic renderings of their ideas, as opposed to the intensely fast and loud sound of HarDCore. Scholar Alan O'Connor, arguing that regional music scenes are still pertinent site of analysis of modern music cultures, outlines four ideologies which frame the D.C. punk scene. The first two elements he highlights are derived from the musical creations of the scene: the Straight Edge hardcore music of the band Minor Threat and the emotive, melodic music of bands like Rites of Spring, which he characterizes as emphasizing "individual honesty."¹⁹ Of the final two elements, he writes, "The third is a solid commitment to benefit shows for community institutions in the poorer part of the city...A fourth element is the rejection of the corporate rock industry." (O'Connor 2002: 227) By rejecting corporate industry and focusing on the problems within their own community, punk aesthetics and philosophy in D.C. were shaped by these ideals.²⁰

Beyond the concert scene, musicians organize protests, rallies, and action days which put their ideas of resistance into practical action. This sense of community action in the punk scene was galvanized in late 1980s, a time marked by a rising murder rate connected to the violent drug culture of D.C. Organizations such as Positive Force D.C. were founded to serve as forums for action for those engaged in D.C.'s punk

¹⁹ In the musical time-line of the development of punk, Minor Threat existed as a band between 1980-1983, while Rites of Spring performed from 1984-1986. Rites of Spring represented a type of punk described by band member Guy Picciotto as this, "I mean everything I sing and we mean everything we play...You've got to try to stir people and try to get into them and have them get into you, which is what I hope our shows are about. I would say that the way we play is a protest." (Andersen and Jenkins 2003: 167)

²⁰ This scenario set up by O'Connor sets up the atmosphere in which Fugazi was founded in 1987, a band mixing personnel from both Minor Threat (Ian Mackaye) and Rites of Spring (Brendan Canty and Guy Picciotto) and adding bassist Joe Lally. All four members of the band were natives of the Washington DC area. Fugazi went on to become the leading, internationally known punk band from the DC scene.

culture. This group, started in June 1985, grew out of a national political punk protest movement that originated in San Francisco. Through protests and benefit concerts, the group organizes and educates its members on social justice issues both local and national. Organization which benefited from the efforts of Positive Force varied from the Community for Creative Non-Violence (a D.C. “anarchist-Christian” homeless organization) to Greenpeace.²¹ Often these concerts would be held at churches in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood: St. Stephens Episcopal Church and Sacred Heart Catholic Church on 16th Street, or All Souls Unitarian Church on 15th and Harvard Street, within walking distance of Mount Pleasant Street. Again, like the Straight Edge movement, protest was not the end result. Being a punk activist meant living a life that supported ideals of social justice 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

Our lives can be the most powerful protest imaginable. if we refuse to be trapped by the lies, poisons and escapes of our society, if we refuse to become stagnant, complacent and uncaring, we have a chance to make a real difference, a chance, even, to radically change our world as we change ourselves. If we throw away that chance, if we just take the easy way out, how will anything ever change? Revolution can start now, it can start with each of us... if we want it to. (Positive Force Website, n.d.)

Radical change and revolution is a constant theme in the punk politics of the D.C. scene. Sociologist William Tsitsos explains that the D.C. punk scene created a particular type of political punk, based on communal action and response. Everyone was together in their quest for social justice, as opposed to apolitical punks, who followed an anarchist philosophy of no rules at all. As Tsitsos comments, “With punk music as the soundtrack for their revolt, political punks aim to break down the existing social, economic, and political order....Political punks desire a society in which order is self-imposed, not

²¹ To see a collection of posters from various Positive Force benefit concerts, see: www.positiveforcedc.org/flyers.html

externally imposed” (Tsitsos 1999: 400). In order to create that society, those who listened to the music also had to participate in the act of revolution.

For D.C. punks, Positive Force enabled them to become part of an alternative community while working to change the society in which they lived. Action events sponsored by the group responded to social justice issues which affected people in the District specifically, with homelessness being a major focus. As Positive Force founder and local punk historian Mark Andersen explains:

As the city’s crack/murder crisis reminded punks who were mostly offspring of the white middle-to-upper class, there was still a major issue that hadn’t been faced: bridging the gap between Washington’s privileged and disenfranchised. Positive Force sought to hold its shows in churches and community centers within low-income areas, so that rent money would benefit that community and mostly white suburban audiences would gain experience with—and, perhaps empathy for—the inner city. (Andersen 2003: 282)

By going to shows in neighborhoods considered off-limits to many “white middle-to-upper class” families, punks were constantly exposed to the hardships of their fellow D.C. citizens. And for those involved in Positive Force and other social justice organizations, the need to do something, to give back and address the injustices they observed, colored their involvement in the punk community. For many musicians, living in Mount Pleasant developed their sense of being part of this new punk sensibility of community responsibility: looking out for your neighbor and being a part of a specific place.



Figure 3: A row of houses, 17th Street, Mount Pleasant, February 2005

Bohemian Before Punk: Churches and Group Houses

In the 1970s, many young progressive families were drawn to Mount Pleasant for political reasons. April 1968 brought fiery riots in the aftermath of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination. The subsequent destruction on nearby 14th Street precipitated a steady increase in crime in the area. One of the cornerstones in the activist community that emerged in the riots' wake was St. Stephen's Episcopal Church on 16th Street. St. Stephen's would later become an important venue for punk and rock acts around the city. In the '60s and '70s, it was an incubator of progressive thought and movements. Ian MacKaye, who was baptized at St. Stephen's, remembers the church as an important part of Mount Pleasant's activist identity:

A lot of the people who went to St. Stephens lived in Mount Pleasant. St. Stephens was a very radical, left church in the late 60s and early 70s. For instance, they had Black Panthers speak there...They had rock bands playing there, they had liberation theology stuff, there was a shelter for protesters and shelter for people coming to protest. And it was central to civil rights work in this town...During the riots in 1968, I was 6 years old and on Palm Sunday the church had mass on 14th Street amidst the burning buildings. So, I felt that this neighborhood has always had, at least since the '60s, it's been a little cradle of activism. (MacKaye: 08/07)

Longtime Neighborhood Councilman Jack McKay was one of those families to move into the neighborhood in the early 70s, and he insists the move was for political reasons.²² For a white middle-class family to live in a majority African-American neighborhood, with a rising Latino population, was to be political and to support diversity at that time in the District. But it was also the ways in which people were living in the neighborhood that created many levels of community.

Group houses were a distinct feature of Mount Pleasant living even before the rise of the punk group house in the '80s and '90s. The architecture of the neighborhood lent itself well to group living: large turn-of-the-century houses with multiple bedrooms and apartment-like basements. Some of these houses were created as intentional living communities and others as halfway houses for employees of changing administrations and the special interest groups lobbying them. All featured a revolving collection of usually young tenants. The group house became a key feature of punk living in Mount Pleasant. In the late 1980s, on Irving Street alone, there were at least four group houses, with names like "the Embassy" (home to members of the band Nation of Ulysses) and "Pirate House." Amanda Huron, of the underground band The Caution Curves, fondly remembers growing up in the neighborhood in the 70s and 80s and being around group houses:

...I definitely remember once, when I was a kid, maybe ten, this big group house down the street was having a party and my mom was so angry because they woke us up or something. And she walked down the block and into the house and turned off the stereo and left, (laughing) and I can totally imagine her doing that, my god! It's just funny, because I remember thinking about that night when I was at a party at Irving Street, literally 15 years later and it was like a Monday night and there were bands playing and people were setting fireworks off the top of the roof, it was just...it was really bad. And the people next door were like, "Grrr..."

²² Interview with Jack McKay about the neighborhood-April 2007.

totally angry. This family next door was totally angry and I thought, “God, this is just like when I was kid. The same thing is happening. (Huron: 01/05)

For most D.C. native punks, group houses were about finding the first place to live after moving out of your parents’ house. And because everyone was broke and in bands, there were three factors most important to finding a group house: it had to be cheap, detached (to allow for noisy practice sessions) and safe. In the late 1980s, Mount Pleasant had those qualities and a punk neighborhood began to grow.



Figure 4: Ian MacKaye on guitar and Amy Farina on drums, the Evens, Lamont Park, July 2007

The Punk Aesthetic in Mount Pleasant: Benefit Concerts, All-Ages Shows and DIY

As we have seen, political involvement was not always a feature of the punk scene in D.C.. The cumulative effect of conservative administrations during the 80s and early 90s with the rising violence and poverty in the city pushed leading musicians in the scene to sign on to political ideas. One such famous movement was the Percussion Protest against Apartheid outside the South African Embassy.

In the summer of 1985, the punk scene in D.C. was in transition. HarDCore was no longer the main expression of punk musical identity. Bands in the area scene searched for a deeper connection to the politics of the time, and created music to reflect that connection. One way to connect to political events was to participate in the ongoing protests at the South African Embassy on Massachusetts Avenue. Banging on anything that would cause noise, members of bands like Beefeater, Gray Matter, Rites of Spring and others gathered to raise their voices against Apartheid throughout the summer. As Rites of Spring (and later Fugazi) band member Guy Picciotto declared, “When the guy introduced us as “Punk Percussion,” I said, “Damn right it’s punk! because it’s creative outrage and not just a bunch of people hanging out in Georgetown, begging for fucking change!” (Andersen 2003: 180).²³ D.C. punk was transitioning into a socially conscious music, where musicians took to a cause and expected their audience to be on board. In fact, that summer was given the name “Revolution Summer” by those in the scene,

²³ The reference to Georgetown in this quote signals two aspects of DC culture: Georgetown has, since the 1980s, been considered a fashionable, upscale part of the city, and it also claimed a segment of the DC punk population, known as the “Georgetown punks,” who according to many were extremely militant and violent. (Andersen and Jenkins 2003: 127-128)

signaling the shift from previous ideas of punk identity to this newly politically engaged way of being.²⁴

While this protest focused attention on an international problem, domestic topics—specifically concerning life in D.C.—formed most of the agenda. For local issues and benefit shows, churches proved to be welcoming venues. St. Stephen's hosted many of these shows, benefiting a range of organizations from homeless shelters to free clinics. Holding shows in churches allowed groups to play in relatively cheap locations. And because churches did not permit alcohol consumption, all ages could attend a punk show. The "all-ages" aspect of punk scene in D.C. was essential to its continual growth. Teenagers from the suburbs could come into the city and see their favorite punk bands, while also being exposed to political ideas espoused at the concerts.

It also gave kids a place to be in a city that was increasingly dangerous and unwelcoming place in the 1980s and early 1990s. During this time Washington, D.C. was known as the "Murder Capital" of the United States. Many of the killings were connected to the drug-dealing culture that flourished in poorer sections of the city. Youth were seen as the perpetrators of the violence and often the police department instituted curfews to keep youth off the streets. In the midst of this hostility toward youth, "all-ages" shows sponsored by the punk community gave youth a safe place to congregate away from police monitoring. Although punk shows did not feature the sale of alcohol, clubs in the District could not prevent minors from enjoying entertainment in establishments which sold alcohol. And as such, youth still had access to entertainment

²⁴ Previous ideas about being punk in DC consisted of very male centric performance sensibilities. The DC scene was known in the wider world for its Hardcore music and slamdancing, so much so that John Belushi called Ian MacKaye to invite DC punks into the audience for a punk band performance at the Halloween taping of *Saturday Night Live* in the early 1980s. (Anderson and Jenkins 2003: 83)

although they were prohibited from purchasing alcohol. Often, clubs in the district will advertise whether or not a show is “all-ages” or “18 and over.”

“All-ages” is still a policy that affects the everyday lives of youth interested in music in D.C.. In the Spring of 2007, the D.C. City Council held hearings to review the “all-ages” policy at District clubs, after a teen-ager, Taleshia Ford, had been accidentally shot and killed inside a go-go club.²⁵ Councilmember Jim Graham (in whose district Mount Pleasant resides) introduced legislation to prevent the admittance of underage patrons to clubs that sold alcohol while providing entertainment. In his opening statement, Graham registered shock that underage patrons were actually allowed by law to patronize these clubs, commenting:

The Taleshia Ford tragedy was a result of various causes. Surely the fact that this city is suffering from an epidemic of substance abuse, and is awash in illegal handguns are major contributing factors. But so too is the fact that the District of Columbia law permitted this establishment to operate pretty much as it pleased because there were no restrictions in place on what nightclub had to do in order to admit persons under 21...That absence contributed directly, in my opinion, to her death. (Graham 2007)

Many members of the D.C. punk scene testified at the hearing, spelling out the importance of “all-ages access” to music for the youth of the city. Discord Records put out a position statement on this challenge to “all-ages,” even posting a letter written to Councilmember Graham and D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty by Alec Bourgeois, which stated, “I think banning young people from activities that connect them to the District’s rich and diverse musical community is both short sighted and ill-considered.”²⁶ Dante Ferrando, the owner of the Black Cat club on 14th Street and member of the 1980s D.C. punk scene, stressed the importance of the all-ages policy to a *Washington Post* reporter, commenting,

²⁵ see *Washington Post* article “DC Teen is Killed at DC Area Nightclub: Victim, a Bystander, Is Shot in Scuffle” by Keith L. Alexander and Jacqueline L. Salmon (January 21, 2007, A01)

²⁶ see Appendix for the full text of the 2007 letter from Alec Bourgeois of Discord Records.

“...because where else are kids going to learn music? It’s already been taken out of the schools. Don’t take music out of the lives of young people and put them on street corners.” (Fisher 2007: C01)

The nature of the punk culture in D.C., based on a Do It Yourself (DIY) philosophy, as seen in the organization of protests and benefit concerts, influenced other ways of organizing within the community. One of the main aesthetic points of punk is that anyone can start a punk band, and in fact, everyone is encouraged to participate in that way. As Craig O’Hara outlines in his ruminations on punk sensibilities, DIY is “an extension of the anarchistic principles requiring responsibility and cooperation in order to build a more productive, creative, and enjoyable future.” (O’Hara 1999: 166) These principles also reflect the nature of how lives are lived by the punk community in Mount Pleasant. By living in group houses, organizing benefit concerts, participating in Positive Force meetings, working for the independent label Dischord, or printing ‘zines about the scene, members of the D.C. punk scene actively supported each other and maintained a community centered on music within the neighborhood of Mount Pleasant.

It was as members of punk bands and participants in this music scene that the founders of Radio CPR used their organizing abilities to advocate for their neighbors. The radio station presented the activists with an opportunity to give voice to the issues of economic injustice that they saw as inherent in the gentrifying process, which not only affected their immigrant and low-income neighbors, but also affected the cultural character of this diverse neighborhood. As advocates for culture, the activists could combine their music (which itself did not have a place on the airwaves in D.C.) with

issues that did not have a platform in the larger discussion of the future of Mount Pleasant.²⁷

While the group house placed punks as residents within the neighborhood, it also gave them a place to develop their political and aesthetic ideas amongst their peers. In May 1991, three days of rioting broke out on Mount Pleasant Street, ignited by the shooting of a Salvadoran man by the police. For many in the punk community, the riot was interpreted as a jump-start to the revolution, a word which reverberated throughout the D.C. punk scene with the arrival of the Riot Grrrl movement.²⁸ Some even took part in clashes with police. However, other punks who lived in the neighborhood saw it differently. This was about their neighborhood, not revolution. The Evens' 2005 song "Mount Pleasant Isn't", written by Ian MacKaye, addresses this problem. While the central chorus of the song sounds merely like a typical resistance punk stance of criticizing the police, in fact the song comments on the nature of the neighborhood and why rioting happened in the first place. When reflecting back on that time in 1991, MacKaye comments:

People were angry but then they take it out on their own neighborhood and destroy their own neighborhood. But then the real question is "who cleans it up?" and the people who were up there and so filled with community anger and passion, throwing bottles, should have been up there with a broom, if you ask me. (MacKaye: 08/07).

For MacKaye, those who participated in the riots were not people who cared about community. He calls them tourists.

²⁷ For more discussion on Radio CPR, see Chapter Two: The Revolution is on the Air: Radio CPR and Building Community Through Radio

²⁸ See Anderson and Jenkins 2003: 313-314.

The Capitol of Punk Cell-Phone Tour

In the summer of 2006, a new tourist map arrived in the Nation's Capitol. This map was electronically transported to one's cell phone and featured sites such as the South African Embassy, a movie-theater-turned-drug-store on Columbia Road and a Civil War era fort behind a high school.²⁹ To a typical D.C. tourist, this might seem like an unlikely assemblage of locations. But to certain D.C. locals (and music lovers), these locations take on mythic proportions. All are locales of key events in the history of the punk community in Washington, D.C.. And as MacKaye indicated in his comments to the crowd at the Lamont Park concert, it is a history that still exists underground.

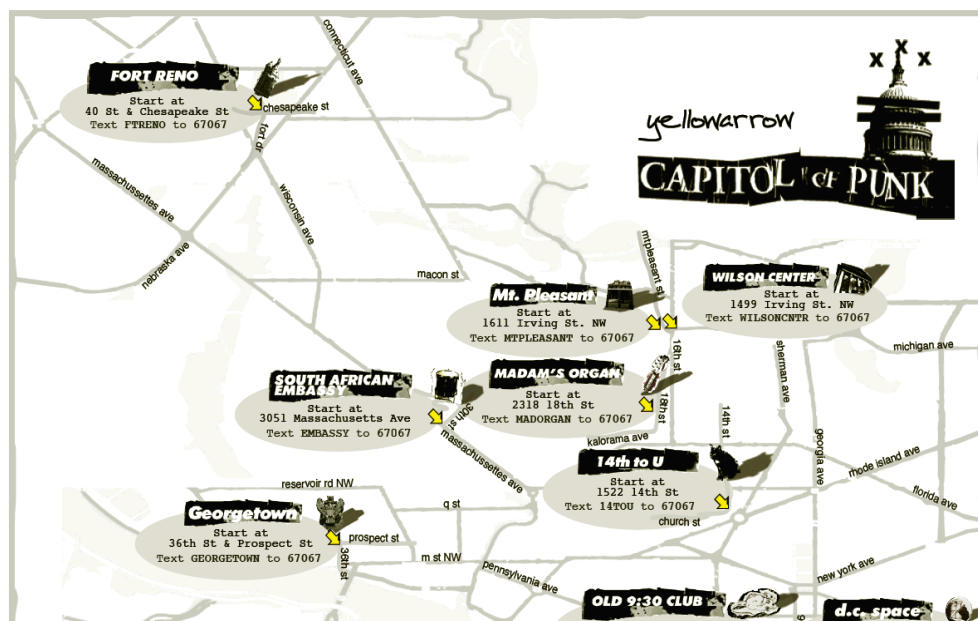


Figure 5: Yellow Arrow, Capitol of Punk Tour Map

The tour features a GoogleEarth map of D.C., onto which are pasted black and white image cut-outs, each indicating a different tour. For the tour of Mount Pleasant,

²⁹ To follow the tour online, see <http://yellowarrow.net/capitolofpunk/>

one clicks on an image of a house—referencing the importance of the group house and the place of the scene in the neighborhood. As Brendan Canty of Fugazi states in the tour, “That was probably my favorite time of all in D.C. music...when we all lived in the same neighborhood and were neighbors” (YellowArrow Tour 2006).

Conclusion

This longing for the neighborly past is echoed in a story that Amanda Huron tells about doing publicity for a gig she and Natalie Avery organized,

A friend of ours band was playing ...And our band had gone on tour with her band and we were really into her band and we liked her a lot. And they were coming to play D.C. and we were worried because no one had really heard of them so much. So if people were going to come to this show, we’ve really got to like, put a lot of effort into getting the word out so people will come.

So...what we did was make these paper roses out of crepe paper, like about this big on a long green stem. We made only 20 of them because they were very labor intensive. And then we made little strip of paper that we glued to the stem that said, “Avec les papillions” Some French name with papillions, butterflies, in it. And I forget where they played. There was this place that used to put on shows on U street, maybe, the something café, I don’t know. So we made these things and ended up delivering them to people’s houses, and we could literally walk to everybody’s house that we wanted to come to the show and hand deliver these flower flyer things.

And...we were thinking that if we made something this nice, people are going to want to come to the show. “I got this hand delivered paper flyer thing!” And it was cool to be able to walk around and do that. And I mean, now I still feel lucky that I can walk to most of my friends houses, you know, but it’s definitely not as geographically concentrated as it once was. (Huron: 1/05)

Being able to walk to your friends’ houses, tell them about a band that is playing that week, talk about things happening in the neighborhood, these were all aspects of being part of a punk community in Mount Pleasant. By attending punk shows at the Wilson Center or Positive Force meetings at St. Stephen’s Church, through supporting Radio CPR, or by choosing to live in a group house on Irving Street, punks connected to each other through communal support structures within the confines of Mount Pleasant. The

fact that this is in the past and lives only in memory does not, however, prevent those who still live in the neighborhood from being involved in neighborhood issues. As we will see, being a part of the punk community is just one layer of community identity in this small place.

As Brendan Canty's comments in the Yellow Arrow Tour reveal, what is most important about punk memories in Mount Pleasant is their feeling of being neighbors and part of a neighborhood, for which they still feel a sense of commitment. Living close to not only punks, but a diversity of neighbors has led this community of musicians to be committed to a place which fostered them as musicians and helped them to become activists. The people who live in Mount Pleasant feel this way about their neighborhood. When recounting her work on the Mount Pleasant Historical Trail, Mount Pleasant historian and former neighborhood resident Mara Cherkasky commented:

Mount Pleasant is such a defined little place. It is the only place that has this main street. It comes down to this being the best neighborhood for knowing your neighbors, knowing the shopkeepers and feeling like you are part of a little community. (Cherkasky: 8/07)

CHAPTER TWO

The Revolution in on the Air: Radio CPR Builds a Community

On a cold, rainy evening in early February 2004, the Radio CPR programming committee gathered at the home of DJ Natasha Nighttrain to discuss the programming format of their underground radio station. On the table were several applications for new shows, but something was just not right. As a station started by neighborhood activists, Radio CPR was created as a platform for voices that were being overlooked or ignored in many processes of gentrification taking place in the neighborhood. For some reason, these new applicants did not fall in line with the original mission of the station. One application made by a pair of undergraduates from Georgetown University offered a show on the “style and fashion of Mount Pleasant residents as well as club scene updates.” This was summarily rejected as not a concern of the community and too “yuppie.” Another proposed show offered to showcase Brazilian music. While all present agreed that they enjoyed this kind of music, they couldn’t name anyone in the community who was Brazilian and the applicant himself did not live in the neighborhood nor was he Brazilian. A discussion ensued as to whether the DJ needed to be from the community whose music he played—a consensus began to emerge that it might help. As a decision did not seem to be in sight, the whole process was tabled for the next meeting.

This meeting expressed a few of the tensions and responsibilities experienced by the members of this station with respect to their audience and their fellow collective members. If in fact this underground station aims to represent its community, how do

they achieve this goal? And can there be multiple communities served? Radio CPR, while aiming to serve a multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-class community, has created its own alternative community to combat the dominant views of the neighborhood “gentrifiers.” It is a natural outgrowth of the resistance culture that many Radio CPR DJs participate in as musicians and patrons of the punk rock and hip-hop music scenes in D.C..

The word community itself has multiple definitions for multiple purposes. It can be used to describe a geographic location, as the FCC uses it when allocating commercial FM licenses.³⁰ In anthropological research, community can refer to a group that bases its membership on a shared identity—either culturally or symbolically.³¹ In 21st–century America, community in common usage sometimes refers to a positive value missing or lost in our everyday lives. People lay the blame of many social ills on a perceived lack of community spirit. In urban neighborhoods like Mount Pleasant, this sentiment is sounded when a crime occurs. Some residents bemoan the lack of community, where neighbors sat on front porches and knew everyone in the neighborhood. Others call for more police on the streets. These two views do not have to be competing views of community; however, the former view is held more by those who see community as suffering from lack of interaction. It is also a result of the changes happening in the neighborhood, where long-time neighbors are moving out and new, wealthier residents are moving in.

³⁰ The FCC determines a community as “a geographically identifiable population grouping, usually determined based upon whether the area is incorporated or is listed in the U.S. Census.” See *Amendment of Section 73.202(b)*, MM Docket No. 90-385, 6 FCC Rcd. 5835 (1991). In the Low Power FM allocations, the FCC realizes that the term is used in a different sense which has more to do with the users of the service than the location of the service. In the document concerning the creation of LPFM, the FCC redefines community as “the very small area and population group that will make up the potential service area and audience of an LPFM station.” *Creation of Low-Power Service, Eligibility and Ownership-25*, MM Docket No.99-25, FCC 00-19 (2000)

³¹ For an in-depth exploration of the term community and its definition and use in different disciplines, see Delanty 2003.

Commenting on the search for community, folklorist Burt Feintuch writes, “perhaps community is what we think of as the moral tie that binds us to others beyond our most personal relationships” (Feintuch 2002: 157) Another folklorist, Henry Glassie defines community as “ the product not of tradition but of personal responsibility, yours to build or destroy.” (Glassie 1982: 583) This second definition details how community is thought about and created by the members of Radio CPR. By using networks established through the underground/punk community, as well as networks in the radical politics and social service community in Washington, D.C., this group of community activists “liberated” a space of the airwaves, thereby creating the community that they felt was lacking. In direct response to the changes and points of view being distributed through instruments such as listservs³², the Radio CPR group created a space based on creative diversity and radical politics to counteract the emerging definition of Mount Pleasant as a sanitized urban oasis. To work for others, they had to first organize themselves.

The sociologist Ruth Finnegan, in her study of the “hidden musicians” of Milton Keynes in the UK, noted that when academics write about life and music in urban areas they usually come to two opposing conclusions. Life in the big city is either alienating and disconnected or highly connected in the sense of community. When applying the two theories to music, she found neither conclusion to be appropriate and instead opted for seeing the connections between people and music as a series of “pathways,” “culturally established ways through which people structure their activities on habitual patterns that—however unnoticed by outsiders—are known to and shared with others.” (Finnegan 1989: 323) Other sociologists, like Howard Becker, have seen that groups

³² Ted Coopman has demonstrated how list-servs helped to maintain the fledging free radio movement in the late 1990s. See Coopman 2000.

who organize around art or for artistic creation can be seen as individuals working within a collective system and whose success is helped and supported by that collective. As Becker explains, “The artist thus works in the center of a network of cooperating people, all of whose work is essential to the final outcome.” (Becker 1982: 25) Both of these observances, that artistic communities depend on open pathways and a collective sense of responsibility for production, are at the heart of the workings of the Radio CPR community. The members not only create networks outside of their own creative communities in order to keep the station within its mission, but they also support each other within the creative community of the radio station.

This chapter explores the story of the station’s founding, highlighting the importance of pathways and processes already available to the founders through their involvement in the punk/underground music community. While the station aims to give voice to those overlooked in the process of change in the neighborhood, they also create an alternative community within the station. This alternative community speaks out but also supports itself. Working within the social movement of media reform, the members of Radio CPR not only carve out a space on the radio dial for their points of view, but also shelter and support musics that are no longer or never had airplay on local and national stations. Serving two purposes, the station creates and supports many creative communities.

The history of radio in the United States has been marked by shifting levels of localism and nationalism. As large corporations determine the programming of national radio outlets, fewer local, community voices can be heard over commercial airwaves. In writing the history of commercial radio, historians have investigated the relationship

between radio and the development of a national consumer identity in the United States. (Smuylan 1994, Douglas 1999, Valliant 2003). Advertising, marketing and consumerism all combine to inform how commercial radio is programmed today and who has access to the airwaves. Historian Susan Douglas sees radio and other newer technologies, such as television and the internet, as contributing to the sonic segregation of society and the limiting of the cultural imagination, creating a society dominated by niche markets, short attention spans and a lack of diversity in individual music tastes. Commenting on the disappearance of cultural imagination, Douglas writes "...the point is that by compelling [listeners] to use their imaginations as part of the cultural work of being Americans, radio required people to engage in a cognitively active mode in the construction of mass culture's varied, multiple meanings." (Douglas 1999: 355.) Here the role of the producer (the commercial radio programmer) as active creator of culture has overtaken the role of the consumer (the audience) as passive receiver of culture.

Community radio, as the name implies, emphasizes local identity over national identity. Many community stations can be found within the family of public broadcasting stations, a network of stations that rely on news and cultural productions of National Public Radio or the Pacifica Network to supplement their own local shows and productions. In highly populated areas, such as Washington, D.C., community radio has taken on the features of its commercial neighbors on the radio dial, catering to supposed markets to the detriment of diverse programming.³³ In the late 1990s, the Low-Power

³³ In Washington, DC, one such community radio station, WAMU, was once known as the home of bluegrass music in the nation's capital, for which it had, some would say, a historic responsibility to maintain. In the late 1990's, in the face of market pressures, the station replaced its daily bluegrass programming with NPR talk shows, thereby relegating the bluegrass community to the station's high-tech venture of internet broadcasting. The local Pacifica station, which by coincidence broadcasts not far from Radio CPR, narrows its music programming to jazz and African American issues and culture.

Radio movement developed as a resistance to the increasing consolidation of commercial radio. The lack of diversity within the radio spectrum heightened the call by local grassroots and media activists for more local involvement in radio. In Washington, D.C., Radio CPR is an example of this radio revolution. As the station's mission states, "Radio CPR was founded...to provide an outlet for the voices, stories, music and opinions that so often get excluded from mainstream forums of communication" (CPR Mission Statement, 2003). Run entirely by a staff of volunteers, the station aims to reinforce shared, positive ideas about community within the Mount Pleasant neighborhood, and to give community members a place to discuss neighborhood issues. It also provides a space for the broadcasting of music that reflects the population of this urban neighborhood but is not heard in mainstream culture.

From Documentaries to Cabarets

In the late 1990s, some residents of Mount Pleasant felt like the tide was finally turning. After almost 20 years of neglect by the city, and rising from the ashes of a riot in the early part of the decade, the neighborhood was finally attracting residents who could afford to make some changes. A neighborhood listserv developed to keep the community of renovators and improvers connected and to foster a discussion about the future of this pocket of Victorian rowhouses near the National Zoo. Meanwhile, other longtime residents felt excluded from the dialogue about Mount Pleasant's future. These residents saw the impending changes as purely cosmetic and not solutions to the toughest problems the neighborhood faced. They certainly did not have a voice in the new affluent changes. It was in response to these movements for change and exclusion from the discussion that the radio station was created.

Radio CPR founder DJ Maude Ontario originally saw the station as a chance to have some “resistance fun.” Another founder, DJ Natasha Nighttrain sees the station as a “humanizing project” in the face of gentrification. Both of these women, articulate and highly-educated native D.C. residents, felt that establishing the radio station was an important step in the process of reframing the discussion of the future of Mount Pleasant. It was also a bold move to reclaim the place of Mount Pleasant as a community with various voices within that community. By broadcasting out into the community, Radio CPR alerted its neighbors to a dissenting and oppositional view toward the gentrification of Mount Pleasant, overwhelming regarded by outsiders as “cleaning up the neighborhood.” In the beginning, however, the station depended more on the network of friendships that the founders had as activists and musicians. It was originally through a friendship within a band that the idea for the station blossomed.

In the mid-1990s, Natasha Nighttrain had moved back to the neighborhood and began playing in a band with Maude Ontario. As the two started to hang out and talk more about the neighborhood they lived in, they realized that they both held a great respect for the city. Ontario had grown up in the neighborhood, which (according to Nighttrain) was an unusual circumstance in the punk/underground music community in which they were both involved. They became more concerned with the nature of the changes happening in the neighborhood, and wanted to do something about it. Ontario had a background in radio from her college days in Minnesota. The two decided to confront the issues of gentrification in Mount Pleasant by creating a radio documentary. Their strategy began by asking a few questions of people they encountered on the street. As they walked down Mount Pleasant Street, they would stop people and ask them their

dream for the neighborhood. Increasingly, Nighttrain realized that she really did not know the neighborhood as well as she thought. Reflecting on that evening she commented:

I was like, “God how could I have lived in this neighborhood for so long and never felt this ambience and this tension.”... And I remember talking to this guy. He was going home from work. He was from Guatemala. He was a dishwasher and he said that he was here because his mother was a political activist and he had to leave because of the death squads. He moved here and he thought that the biggest problem in the neighborhood was trash and it was too dirty. He wished that the street was cleaner.

And then we talked to these teenagers. It was really interesting how quickly people wanted to talk to us. They were like...one of them was from Colombia and a couple of them were from El Salvador. And we were like, “What is the biggest problem in the neighborhood?” and immediately the police were the biggest problem. And they just started telling us the stories. “You know we weren’t doing anything. I was just standing on Irving Street and the police came and they made me pull down my pants because they were searching me...” And we had this whole conversation about graffiti because one of them was from New York and we talked about the differences between graffiti in New York and D.C.

And we talked to this other guy who had lived here all his life, and he told us about his parents had to sell their house because of historic preservation laws. Because when the neighborhood became a historic district, it became too expensive for them to keep up the house. But he said, “I still live here and I live on the streets sometimes, I stay with people, but I still live here.” And it was interesting because we were just sitting in Lamont Park with the tape recorder and he just came over and started talking to us. And the stories... (Nighttrain: 03/05)

From that evening of interviews, the two were inspired to find more stories about life in Mount Pleasant, venturing the next day into a “clean up the park” event held in the neighborhood. In the midst of a busy intersection sits a small triangular island of concrete which is home to a few trees and plants, as well as a bus stop. Some neighbors had organized to clean up the island as part of their efforts to make the neighborhood more hospitable. Nighttrain and Ontario saw this event as a great opportunity to engage more members of the neighborhood in their radio documentary project. However, the

results were not what they expected. As they began talking with these neighbors, the two women recognized the attitudes of urban pioneers. The group was cleaning up the park because the city had refused. One person mentioned that they asked the city not to install benches because it would only encourage loitering by drunks. When asked what changes they envisioned for the neighborhood, these neighbors overwhelmingly responded that the neighborhood at the time did not serve their needs. These neighbors wanted stores on Mount Pleasant Street that they could patronize and side streets they could feel comfortable walking at anytime of day or night. In sum, a neighborhood that looked a lot more like themselves. For Nighthtrain and Ontario, it was a revelation. As Nighthtrain explains:

...I remember listening back to the tapes...the night before people had been so open, an open authenticity. And then the next day listening to these sort of tightly wound voices and the implications between the lines...it was kind of a life changing moment...even if it was just dipping my foot into the water of this neighborhood. It just blew me away...it was subtle, it was real. It made me totally interested in finding out and getting involved in the neighborhood. (Nighthtrain: 03/05)

From this experience of doing a radio documentary, the seed of Radio CPR was planted.

In next few weeks, the local community action group, Stand for Our Neighbors, organized an event on immigration reform which was held in the basement of the Mount Pleasant Library. Stand for Our Neighbors, founded in April 1997 to oppose new legislation enacted by the Clinton administration³⁴, described itself as “a group of Mount Pleasant residents” who “organizes events that showcase local culture, raise awareness about the impact of new laws and explore creative ways to oppose them” (SFON flyer).

³⁴ In 1996, the Immigration and Welfare Reform Act (H.R. 3734: Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996) mandated that legal aliens awaiting naturalization were not eligible for social security benefits, stating in section 400.(6) “It is a compelling government interest to remove the incentive for illegal immigration provided by the availability of public benefits.” Within this act, the eligibility of American citizens for public welfare benefits was drastically reduced in reaction to the Republican congress call for “personal responsibility,” as highlighted in the bill’s title.

Nighttrain and Ontario had seen the flyer on the street and thought that might be a good event to record. Upon entering the event, they were convinced that it was an International Socialists or Socialist Workers Party meeting. As the evening progressed, they realized that in fact it was a town hall event, where attendees were telling stories of how immigration reform was impacting their lives personally. This meeting was part of the effort by Stand for Our Neighbors to counter and illuminate the effects of immigration and welfare reform on the local D.C. level.

As another Radio CPR founder, DJ Poinsettia relates, it was the combination of immigration/welfare reform and the changes in the neighborhood that brought people together as activists for an alternative voice. Poinsettia herself became involved in Radio CPR through her work with the Council for Latino Agencies, which worked with Stand for Our Neighbors to present the Mount Pleasant Library meeting. She comments:

The thing about Stand For Our Neighbors and bringing a lot of different people together through music and basically creating spaces where different people could do poetry, music...that in and of itself became this radical thing in the neighborhood, just because not only was there all this anti-immigrant sentiment at the national level, but locally there was like a new wave of gentrification happening. There was a lot of what people would call hegemony in the sense that neighborhoods were changing such that there was mainstream happening. And in this neighborhood, which had been diverse for a long time and diverse classes, there was like this huge sense of entitlement by new homeowners and this new sense of we're going to re-do the neighborhood because there was a lot more money, it was around Clinton time, you know there's more money for development locally for doing Main Street projects. Then there was this new Metro coming in a block away so there was this sense of urgency almost in the neighborhood to take advantage of money that was available to re-do the neighborhood but also to clean up the neighborhood. And to make the neighborhood more attractive to new homeowners who would be able to afford a lot of expensive property. Anyway, so that was happening too, in addition to the immigrant rights stuff that was happening.

And the radio, it was really this very cool piece of all of that because it really reflected creating a space to create community in a sort of intentional way and having an alternative way of people getting together outside of these civic groups

that were really mostly, the participants were really homeowners people who were for all these new changes, that other people were definitely for but not at the expense of affordable housing and live music and everything else that was at stake in the neighborhood. (Poinsettia: 06/05)

It was at this meeting that Nighttrain and Ontario met DJ Aphrodite, a social worker and future founder of Radio CPR. A few weeks later, all three attended another meeting about immigration sponsored by Stand for Our Neighbors, where Nighttrain and Ontario decided to get more involved in the issue and the organization. The group started meeting almost every week, working on ways to raise consciousness through the arts.

Since the radio founders, most of whom were women, were members of or familiar with the D.C. underground/punk music community, they figured that a great way to rally around their ideas was to sponsor performances. They took their inspiration from the work of Jen Smith, who was instrumental in the “riot-grrrl” music movement of the early 1990s. Riot-grrrl was first a term used to describe the emerging feminist punk sensibility arising in both the D.C. and Olympia, Washington scene at the beginning of the 1990s. In fact, the idea of riot and revolution was sparked in D.C.’s punk scene by the 1991 riots in Mount Pleasant.³⁵ It was through this event that the word “riot” took on even more meaning within the community. In response to the punk community’s embrace of the riot idea, Smith wrote a letter to future CPR DJ Babydonut (and member of the D.C. punk band Bratmobile) declaring “This summer is going to be a girl riot.” (Andersen and Jenkins 2003: 314). Smith has since reflected on the riot-grrls scene, a scene which, in her eyes, allowed girls to feel safe expressing their ideas about society and also gave these girls a place to find like voices. As the movement grew into the mid-

³⁵ As stated in Chapter One, the Mount Pleasant riots of May 1991 were an important moment in the swift change of the neighborhood from poverty-stricken to upwardly mobile. Gentrification was already taking place at this point, but after this event, the course of change quickened.

90s, Smith noticed how girls used the moniker of riot-grrl to not only fight male patriarchy but to empower and envision their own future possibilities. She writes,

Employing a do-it-yourself ethic, we use alternative production and distribution methods. We make our ideas a reality and then give public life to our endeavors by participating in independent networking systems....The ways we exercise our ideas, our art, and our livelihoods are the ways in which we engage in activism...By connecting with one another in these different spaces, we both create and participate in the making of our identities and our community. (Smith 1998: 238).

In 1997, Smith traveled around the West Coast with a performance event she called the “Cha-Cha Cabaret.” The cabarets featured riot-grrrl musicians, spoken-word artists, and other kinds of acts, mostly gathered together as a punk-inspired variety show. Smith would host the evening as “Lady Miss Hand Grenade.” Both Nightrain and Ontario’s band played at the Cabaret’s D.C. stop, which in turn inspired them to use this theatrical format for their own cause in Mount Pleasant. Calling their event the “Cabaret del Barrio,” the four women invited artists who lived in the neighborhood to perform in September 1997. The evening was billed as an opportunity to speak out against the gentrifying forces within the neighborhood.

As Nightrain relates the story of the evening, she reinforced the idea that the Cabaret was a platform for the overlooked voices, which would echo the mission of the future radio station:

...we were trying to shift that conversation: what is our responsibility, people of privilege living in this neighborhood and how can we act in solidarity with people who are being oppressed by the very kind of policies and trends and ideologies that are benefiting us at the expense of other people. And it seems so grand then, “So then we threw a Cabaret!” Like that’s really going to make this huge difference! But we did...and we used our contacts. It seems, it’s just so funny, that all these people that we know so well now, people that got involved with the radio station, people that we were just cold-calling, saying can you come and perform at this event. (Nightrain: 03/05)

They held the event at Don Juan's, a Salvadoran restaurant on Mount Pleasant Street popular with Latino immigrant men for its scantily clad waitresses and its menu reminiscent of home cooking. Having the Cabaret del Barrio in a space that most upwardly-mobile homeowners of Mount Pleasant would feel uncomfortable entering was important. Part of the mission of the event was to reach out to those affected by the changes in the neighborhood but without a voice to express their feelings about this change. Part of creating a space for that voice was also creating the community that could support that voice. Something as simple as sharing a table at a performance was one way the women saw this starting. Nighttrain emphasizes that it is in these experiences of sharing that community begins to build:

...the incredible thing about it was that it wasn't just a talent show, but people sitting in the room together, in some cases having to share tables to get a sit. So the audience for one act had to share a table with the audience for another act, so it was like it wasn't just the content, but it was creating a context for people experiencing their neighborhood in a completely different way. And to not just sort of go from outpost to outpost of places designed exactly for them, but maybe they were going to like some of the stuff and maybe some of it made them uncomfortable. (Nighttrain: 03/05)

The Cabaret performances that evening ranged from Vietnamese student from the neighborhood high school reading her poetry to a soul singer who had sung with popular bands in the 60s singing acapella. Ontario cites the Cabaret as one of the origin points of the station:

....when I think about why we started the radio station, it's in part because there was no space for that kind of cultural expression and coming together with your neighbors to listen to music. So we started doing these live performances, organizing these cabarets, trying to create these spaces, and then the radio station kind of came out of that. (Ontario: 01/05)

With the success of the first Cabaret, the women were inspired to keep going.

They first approached Haydee's, a cantina on Mount Pleasant Street popular with

residents from all over the neighborhood, to host a small acoustic set featuring Nighttrain and Ontario. However, they were not prepared for what they were to encounter while organizing it. Haydee, the owner of the cantina, wanted to fully support the women's efforts, but told them she feared her involvement would impact her business negatively. As the women talked, they realized that the forces of gentrification had already made silent inroads. Several of the neighborhood establishments, Haydee's included, had been forced to sign agreements which prohibited the performance of live music in their restaurants. The prohibition was tied to their liquor licenses. If the establishments did not abide by the agreements, the neighbors would contest the license. Haydee did not want to cause trouble with these neighbors by hosting the event. Ontario and Nighttrain were surprised. When Ontario reflects on the event, she is quick to point out that most people had no idea that this was even happening within the neighborhood:

[we]...had gone to talk to Haydee, the woman who owns Haydee's about playing a show there. Because we had this idea that it would be cool to play a show in the neighborhood in which we lived, Mount Pleasant. And she told us that we couldn't...that she would love for us to play there but that we couldn't because this neighborhood association had basically required her to sign this agreement saying that she would never have live music at her establishment. So we thought that was really screwed up. So we found out more about that and found out that it was this group, the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Alliance that had done that and it had in fact told all the restaurants and bars on the street that if you don't sign this agreement, this quote unquote "voluntary agreement" to never have any live performances of any kind in your bar or restaurant then we contest your liquor license when it comes up for renewal. And that...was one of many things I guess that led to us thinking that we need to create a space where we can have music and culture in this neighborhood. (Ontario: 01/05)

The second cabaret was slated for the Sunday evening before Thanksgiving, 1997. Don Juan's restaurant was to play host again for the variety show, although things did not go as planned. In fact, Nighttrain says that it was a call from a member of the neighborhood association that warned the group to quickly move the event to another location:

...we knew that this kind of thing was happening but we really didn't know the mechanics of it. So, the night, literally the day of the show, Athena got a call from a member of this group, the MPNA, saying, "I don't agree with this, but other members of the group are going to call the police tonight on your event and try to use it to oppose the Don Juan's license." It's funny because it was actually kind of a nice thing to do...maybe it wasn't because we weren't actually doing something illegal. So it was kind of a subtle way of stopping us from doing something that was perfectly legally entitled to do and it was part of our confusion...And now looking back on it, and that I understand the mechanics of it, but we were like, "we're not going to threaten Alberto's license, it's just not going to happen. He's been so good to us..." So, we just went into this plan to move the event. So we moved the event to La Casa. (Nighttrain: 01/05)

Ontario and Nighttrain moved the cabaret down the street to La Casa, a building owned by the Community of Christ, a local neighborhood church.

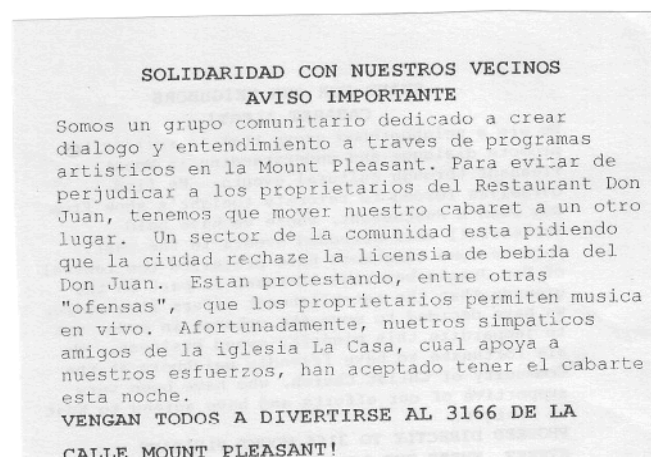


Figure 6: The Cabaret Alert, (1997), Radio CPR Archive

[English text on reverse: We are a group working to promote dialogue and understanding in Mount Pleasant through cultural events. We find ourselves forced to relocate tonight's show from Don Juan's restaurant, where we have held successful and well-attended events in the past. Because some neighbors have protested the renewal of Don Juan's beverage license on the grounds that the establishment offers live music, we have decided to move the cabaret in order not to jeopardize this minority owned business. We are fortunate to have friendly neighbors at the Community of Christ, who have been very supportive of our efforts and have agreed to host us tonight. Proceed Directly to 3166 Mount Pleasant Street, Where the Action Is!]

The second Cabaret reinforced the importance of their work for the women. Its success encouraged them to seek out sources of support for their ideas and to create a more

formalized network centered around artistic expression and neighborhood social justice issues.

Meanwhile, Ontario was working with students at the Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) to create radio pieces about their lives in Mount Pleasant. The students would create cassette tapes featuring stories about issues that impacted their lives, such as police intimidation, and then play the tapes at Stand for Our Neighbors meetings at the Mount Pleasant Library. As the audience listened to the tapes, they could hear the voices of their friends and neighbors voicing concerns that they might have been afraid to admit or felt they were alone in confronting. Those meetings created a platform for the discussion of these topics. As Ontario worked with the kids, she felt more compelled to establish a radio presence in the neighborhood so that others could hear these ideas, especially those who were enforcing such measures as the voluntary agreements. She commented:

...that experience for me, having those kids create that tape and play it for people...and I thought there is maybe 40 or 50 people at the library listening and that's good, but it would be so cool if they could broadcast this to the whole neighborhood and people could listen to it. (Ontario: 01/06)

Working with her contacts through the Community of Christ Church, Ontario wanted to write a grant to establish a hobby radio station in the neighborhood, where the LAYC student documentaries could be aired. Reinforcing the female initiative behind this effort and playing on the words of “hobby radio”, they had originally conceived the station as “Holly Hobby Radio.”(DJ Poinsettia interview) Putting the plan into action, a member of the church bought the hobby radio transmitter and helped to put the studio together. The transmitter would relay the signal to another transmitter a block away. While the signal

would not reach very far, it was a start in the right direction. However, the grant proposal was not as promising.

MESA to Microradio

As it became apparent that the grant process for the radio station was not going to succeed, the women decided to channel their organizing energies into a process that was succeeding, the cabarets. To counter the voices of gentrification, the group wanted to present to the neighborhood voices of dissent through artistic representation. They came up with the name, MESA, which stood for Movement, Empowerment and Solidarity through the Arts. Both Nighthtrain and DJ Poinsettia quickly worked together to apply for a grant to support their efforts. As Poinsettia remarked, "...of course the best project to do, to get money for, are the ones that you are already doing and not getting paid for or anything." (Poinsettia: 06.05) Once the grant was approved, Nighthtrain and Poinsettia began producing more events under the MESA banner. The grant allowed them to rent church halls and sometimes even pay the bands that participated. Most importantly, the MESA organizers saw the arts as the basis for community building, as they stated in a concert flyer:

Through art and music, we are trying to build bridges in our communities and standing in solidarity against the war on the poor. The evidence of this war is all around us—its weapons include stepped-up INS raids, growing demand on food banks, welfare repeal, harsh immigration laws and a crumbling school system. With unresponsive politicians at the higher echelons of our political system—we need to build resistance from the bottom up—We hope MESA events can be a step in this process. (MESA concert flyer, Radio CPR Archive, n.d.)

These events kept the idea of the radio station alive through networking. It was through the many events that MESA sponsored, as well as through punk and underground shows

that the group began to establish its network of potential DJs and Radio CPR

sympathizers. Nighttrain saw the whole experience as both promising and stressful:

...I thought that had to be so intentional about relationship building, about creating networks with people that were different and had different perspectives and sometimes it was difficult bringing people into the same room together and sometimes the events themselves, sometimes there were awful acts and sometimes there were great acts, I mean it was hard work to get people to come, it was the hardest work I'd ever done. (Nighttrain: 03/05)

It was natural that these women should see the arts as a platform for facilitating change.

Music was already a huge part of their lives. As musicians in the punk/underground scene, they were already familiar with ideas of social justice and social revolution.

Musicians who are interested in creating their own music scene could easily take it a step further to create their own media as an outlet for creative expression. Ontario reflected on this saying:

One of the things I love about the radio station, there is a political aspect...but then there also are a lot people who are really into doing their shows and playing their music. But sometimes when you listen, people are doing their interviews, or talking about political or social issues, but a lot of the time people are playing their music and it is music that you can't normally hear on the radio. And it's more in the context of this music being on this radio station that makes it political. I mean, you know that the people playing the music are, at least I feel like the people who are DJ-ing have a certain kind of mentality about the need to put this music out there in the world. (Ontario: 01/05)

Ontario and Nighttrain decided that a radio station would be a good platform for spreading an alternative message about the affects of gentrification on the Mount Pleasant neighborhood.

In March 1998, Nighttrain and Ontario made a trip to Philadelphia to perform with their band. While at the gig, Ontario noticed a flyer for a Micro-Broadcasting Conference to be held the following weekend. Both she and Nighttrain decided to return

to Philadelphia, so that Ontario could meet the Micro-Broadcasters and Nighttrain could attend a conference held by the Kensington Welfare Rights Union.³⁶ Being a representative from D.C. was fortunate for Ontario, as it gave her the chance to meet and begin work with members of the Radio Mutiny, pirate station in Philadelphia. Several of its members would go on to start the Prometheus Radio Project that same year. One Radio Mutiny DJ in particular was anxious to establish a D.C. connection since the collective was planning a large-scale demonstration against the FCC in the fall of 1998. He convinced Ontario to get more involved in microbroadcasting and to work for the collective.

The work of the Prometheus Radio Project was instrumental in establishing the station in Mount Pleasant. Founded in 1998, the Project's aim is to encourage the establishment of low-power radio stations across the country and the world. Today, while the Project vows that "our pirate days are through," it does not ignore the importance of pirate radio in building the low-power FM movement. As the group comments, "Besides, it was the pirates and their civil disobedience broadcasts that brought the low power movement to the forefront. The barriers to setting up a radio station have always been legal and political, not technical" (Prometheus Radio Project Website, "Our Pirate Past"). The microbroadcasting movement was in its apex at this moment in the late 1990s. Throughout the last decade of the twentieth century, microradio stations popped up all over the country, some in response to national issues,

³⁶ The Kensington Welfare Rights Union was started in 1991 to address the budget cuts to welfare programs instituted by Pennsylvania Governor Robert Casey, Sr. The organization, while started as a response to local issues in the Kensington neighborhood of North Philadelphia, is now part of national poverty campaigns and organizations, such as The National Welfare Rights Union, the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign and the Labor Party. Most recently, KWRU has organized marches to retrace the last steps of Martin Luther King's Poor People Campaign, notably with the support of singer Bruce Springsteen. (see: <http://www.kwru.org/march/features/springsteen.html>)

such as the Gulf War and others to confront local issues, such as communication within a neighborhood. As Peter Brinson has indicated in his study of microradio as a social movement, the idea of the movement grew out of two needs: to provide an alternative to standard media coverage of social movement organization activities (like anti-war protests) and to make a space on the airwaves for more voices and viewpoints (Brinson 2006). One of the most vocal activists for media reform, Stephen Dunifer of the pirate station Free Radio Berkeley, makes plain that the intentions of microbroadcasting are for the community not the individual. In his “free radio handbook,” in which he details step-by-step instructions for setting up a microradio station, he emphatically writes:

As a survival strategy it is best to involve as much of the community as possible in the radio station. The more diverse and a greater number of voices the better. It is easier for the FCC to shut down a “one man band” operation than something serving an entire community. Our focus is on empowering communities with their own collective voice, not creating vanity stations. Why imitate commercial radio? (Dunifer 1998: 205)

Out of the actions of radio activists like Dunifer and others, many “free radio” stations were based within neighborhoods, seeking to give a voice to overlooked points of view and populations.

The first microradio station was founded in Springfield, Illinois in the late 1980s by residents in a housing project. That station, at first called Black Liberation Radio and later known as Human Rights Radio, grew out of a tenants’ rights movement within the projects of Springfield (Sakolsky 1998). Other stations, such as Dunifer’s Free Radio Berkeley, began as roving broadcasts of anti-war protests, transmitting from a Volvo traveling around San Francisco. (Coopman 1997: 3). In Philadelphia, Radio Mutiny followed the pattern of these other free radio stations, devoting their programming to

local community organizations and social movements such as Books Through Bars, Food not Bombs, and Critical Mass alongside shows featuring local Philadelphia poets and news from Africa. The music on Radio Mutiny was as diverse as its public programs, with hip-hop, bluegrass, and big band all finding a comfortable home on the frequency.³⁷ This model was to prove inspiring to the members of Radio CPR, which still holds programming diversity as a key tenet of its mission. These stations find their origin in events already taking place: as reactions to social issues that demand immediate coverage or demand attention from within their movements to enhance communication. However, the idea of a free voice on the airwaves, which was impeded by the pirate actions and illegal status of free radio, could only be made real if these groups found legitimacy in their resistance actions.³⁸ It was out of this desire for reform that the LPFM movement was born. Prometheus Radio Project sought to address these needs by confronting and pushing the FCC to support this new format.

In April 1998, DJ Maude Ontario and DJ Natasha Nighttrain made the trip to Philadelphia to participate in two events close to the mission of their group Stand for Our Neighbors. While Nighttrain attended the Kensington Welfare Rights conference, Ontario spent her time at the First Microbroadcasting Conference. The radio conference was billed as the first of its kind on the East Coast and was modeled after a similar conference held in Oakland, California in 1996. Workshops showcased the technical aspects of starting a radio station, maintaining the transmitter, and downloading audio from the internet. At roundtable discussions, attendees shared ideas about organizing, from getting the community involved to the pros and cons of being underground.

³⁷ To learn more about Radio Mutiny's history, see <http://prometheusradio.org/content/view/23/154/>

³⁸ For more on Dunifer's court case see Opel 2004 and Walker 2001.

Throughout the conference, Radio Mutiny broadcast the proceedings and asked those attending to sign up for a “show” time, where they could talk about their own projects and ideas from the conference. DJ Maude Ontario came back from this event even more determined that Mount Pleasant needed a radio station and that it was actually possible. She remembers that it was at the conference that she was alerted to Radio Mutiny’s plans to protest in D.C. that fall:

[The Radio Mutiny DJ] totally cornered me and was like, “Ah, you’re from D.C.! Alright!” because they were planning these big actions in the fall, protesting the FCC and the National Association of Broadcasters and he totally roped me into it. He was like, “So, you can be our D.C. contact, right?” And I was like, “What?” But I learned a whole lot about radio. (Ontario: 01/05)

When the Radio Mutiny group finally came down to D.C. in the Fall of 1998, they eagerly helped the fledgling Mount Pleasant station get its technical set-up in order, forgoing the station’s former hobby transmitter for a more powerful wattage. This action facilitated a low-power broadcast within listening range of two national foes, the National Association of Broadcasters and the Federal Communications Commission. The next day, the group, alongside radio activists from around the country and with members of Radio CPR, marched past the FCC building with transmitters blaring and went on to the NAB building, where they brought down the NAB’s flag, replacing it with a Jolly Roger.³⁹

³⁹ This story is often told as a key remembrance of the march. In March 2004, when a few former members of Radio Mutiny held a technical workshop and antenna building event at Radio CPR, they told this story with great relish. The story of the march was retold in the company of all the CPR members, after the storytellers noticed that CPR still used equipment Radio Mutiny helped build in 1998. The story had the effect of reminding current members of the original mission of the station and of past struggles. Tom Roe, from the radio collective, free103point9, also remembered the Jolly Roger event as a key moment in the protest march in his 11/28/06 lecture to the Department of Media Studies at Brown University. To listen to his recollection of pirate radio in Tampa, Florida, see: <http://www.free103point9.org/audioarchives/song/000/song000159.php>.

When members of Radio CPR look back on that weekend of protesting and radio station creation, they talk about how the moment was the result of efforts by many people. It was through a community effort, through a network of friends, community and radio activists, that they were able to construct a platform for voices overlooked in the processes of change in the neighborhood. DJ Natasha Nighttrain recalls the first test broadcast as a moment of revolution:

I remember the first time, it was so incredible. One of the relationships that we had made was with this band called Machetres, which this guy Lilo, who is Salvadoran, this guy Chris who is from Chile, and then they had a different succession of bass players, but they were really the core and we had met them when Fugazi had played their 10 year anniversary show at the Wilson Center. And we'd met them and they were great, they were such a great band. And I said, "I want to help you guys put out a record." So I helped them, they recorded their record with Guy from Fugazi and I helped them. And then Dischord helped put the record out. And it is a great little record, I love it so much. But then it also precipitated this relationship that is still part of my life today. So I'm driving down Columbia Road and I think, I turned the radio on because someone called me on my cell phone, "Ok...Does it work? Where are you?" And I turn it on and I was driving down Columbia Road listening to Machetres, and it just blew my mind. Because it was like...I don't know, there was just something so powerful about... Well, you know when I was talking about that feeling when I was walking down the street and experiencing it and being mindful about all the complexity and beauty and ugliness and everything, just experiencing it as a kind of living, breathing thing, but then thinking there's so little space for local culture to be heard, to be out there, to be...and then all of a sudden ...it just felt like, hearing Machetres in my car on Columbia Road, I was just like, "There's going to be a revolution." It seemed so incredible to me. (Nighttrain: 03/05)

For the first official broadcast, the group of neighborhood activists reached into their familiar repertoire to introduce their new medium to the community: they produced a cabaret for the radio. On a Sunday night, October 4, 1998, a group calling itself "Radio Libre Mt. Pleasant" presented a "broadcast cabaret." Similar to cabaret events in the past, it featured musicians and performers from diverse backgrounds and styles: Quique Aviles, a poet and an actor; a bluegrass/punk band, The Youngstown Smokers; and

Margaret Hoven, a folk singer who lived in the neighborhood and was a member of the Community of Christ Church. The line-up for the cabaret, emceed by DJ Aphrodite, also featured public service statements from Stand for Our Neighbors, a notice for a Community Street Fair and a demonstration against the Immigration and Naturalization Service, as well as an announcement for the FCC/NAB demonstration to take place the following day.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ see also Walker (243-244) for a detailed account of the protest march and lobby actions that weekend.

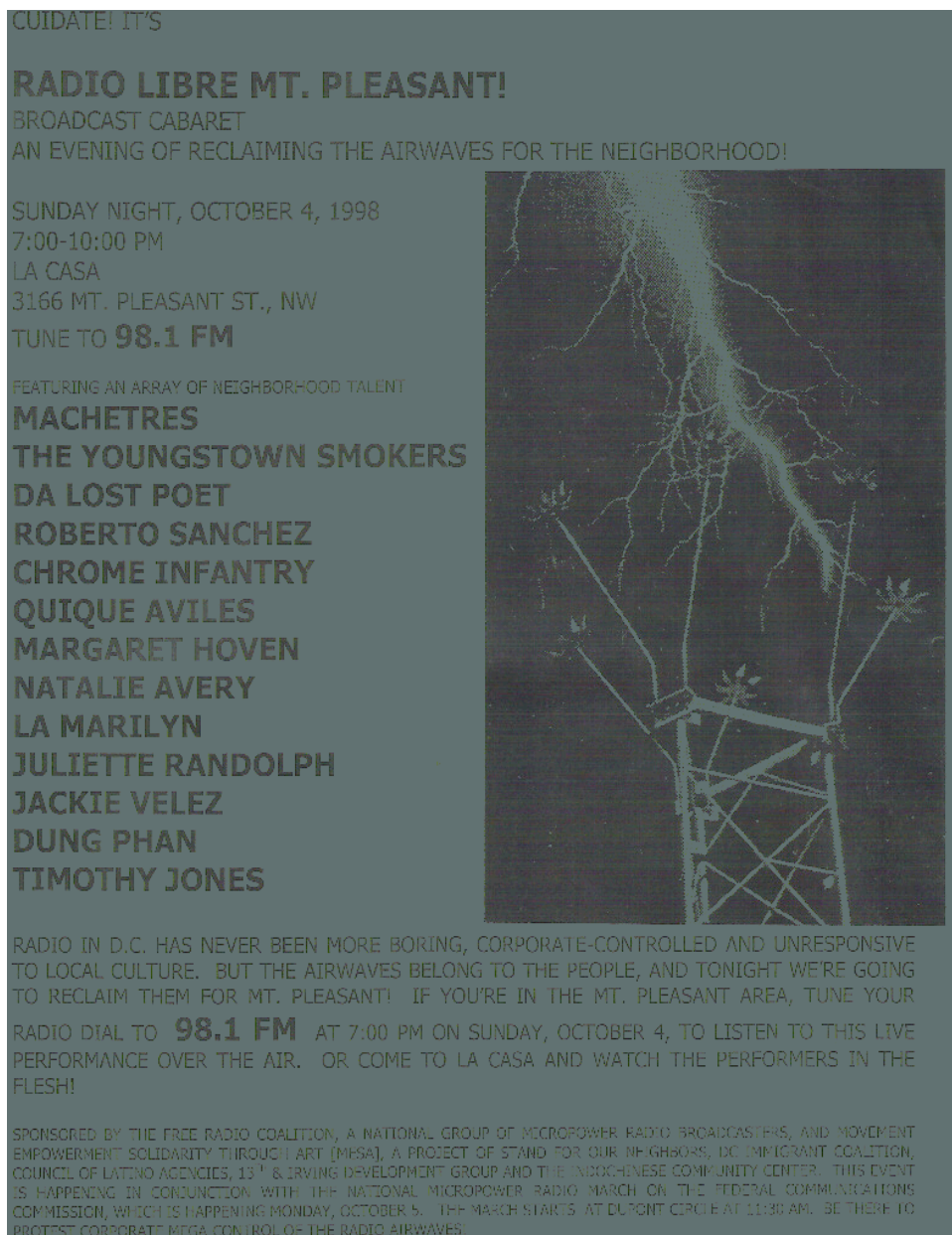


Figure 7: Flyer from the first Radio CPR broadcast, October 1998 , Radio CPR Archive

Legal or Underground

The spirit of the events led the group to organize their efforts around becoming a legal station. The next year, 1999, was spent broadcasting intermittently from the new transmitter and educating themselves about low-power FM. DJ Maude Ontario started the Mount Pleasant Broadcasting Club as a way to bring people into the discussion about

radio for the neighborhood. The Club trained people in radio production skills and also maintained an internet radio station. It also served the purpose of giving their underground movement legitimacy in the outside world acting as a banner under which they could organize in the open. Simultaneously, movement was made within the FCC by new Chairman William Kennard to establish the low-power service. Kennard and other commissioners saw the changes made by the reform bill, the 1996 Telecommunications Act, as stifling of diversity and encouraging an industry move toward consolidation. (Riisman del 2002: 414). By January 2000, the FCC approved LPFM service and solicited applications during the week of May 30, 2000.

As the group advertised within the community, more people began to show an interest in community radio. The Club held open meetings at La Casa (host of previous Cabarets) to discuss applying for the new LPFM license. One meeting was held entirely in Spanish, once it had been determined that all in attendance spoke Spanish. As CPR DJ Mike Alright remembers, another meeting brought forth a community member with a very specific request. He recalled:

There was a guy there that wanted to do a pirate classic rock station. I thought that was funny. There were lots of agendas. I remember thinking that a lot of the ideas that people were bringing to the table were a bit odd and people were very, very passionate about strange ideas. So there was kind of a moment when there was no governing body. There was kind of a moment when it seemed like no one was in control. Then I guess what happened was that Ontario, Nighttrain and Aphrodite just, at some point, just said “Well, someone has to be the governing body. And that’s us. (Mike Alright: 04/05)

By June 2000, Mount Pleasant Broadcasting Club submits its LPFM application to the FCC.⁴¹ That fall, the pirate station went off the air. LPFM rules prohibited giving

⁴¹ Also applying for a license that summer was the Center for the Preservation of Blues and Jazz, known as H.R. 57, a jazz club on 14th Street in Washington, DC named after the 1987 U.S. House Resolution,

licenses to pirates, and the station was seen as an impediment to gaining the legal status that they were seeking.

In the meantime, a battle was brewing on Capitol Hill for to the future of low-power radio. The bill H.R. 3439 titled “Radio Preservation Act of 1999” and passed by the House in April 2000, required the FCC to strictly enforce the technical requirements to prevent interference with high power commercial stations. While it languished in Senator John McCain’s Committee on Science, Commerce and Transportation for months, its language was ominous for the members of the Mount Pleasant Broadcasting Club. With such rule enforcement, it became less likely that the Club would have a chance of obtaining a low-power license. In urban areas, such as Washington, D.C., the general thought was that the radio spectrum was already filled with stations, leaving not much room for low-power organizations. In fact, this became the downfall of the groups application. The Senate worked on approving its own version of H.R. 3439, eventually tagging more restrictions for LPFM onto a budget bill signed by President Clinton on New Year’s Eve, 2000.⁴² While all this legislative wrangling was occurring on the Hill, a few miles away, the neighborhood radio activists in Mount Pleasant were becoming impatient.

The group held together during this time by organizing shows to benefit the Mount Pleasant Broadcasting Club. The shows featured local bands from the punk or underground rock scene, or other times hosted a movie documentary and discussion night. During these shows and at other music events, members were able to reconnect with past pirate radio DJs and update them on the progress of the Club and the station.

introduced by Rep. John Conyers that declared jazz “a rare and valuable national American treasure.” See <http://www.hr57.org/hconres57.html>

⁴² For a very clear historical account of the bill’s process, see Riisman del 2002: 423- 450.

For one CPR DJ, it was through these events that he was able to participate in the group more formally. DJ Mike Alright had just returned to Mount Pleasant from Philadelphia, in the aftermath the break-up of his band, Kid Dynamite. After running into Natasha Nighttrain at the Black Cat⁴³, a local music venue that supports underground and punk acts, he learned that the group was thinking of turning the transmitter back on to broadcast. As part of that process, the group met regularly at the Raven, a bar and neighborhood landmark on Mount Pleasant Street. At these meetings, a small group of members gathered to discuss the next step for the station, emphasizing the sense of futility they felt with the LPFM process. DJ Mike Alright explains:

We could tell that it wasn't going to happen. So we talked about all these different options: Should we become an internet station? Should we wait a little longer or should we go back to covert broadcasting? I think one idea...I even suggested that we become an AM station because AM is less restricted, at least it was at the time. And I read that you could have a low-power AM station, but nobody wanted to do that. I guess what we decided was that it was important to broadcast and it was important to be an FM station. Someone, I think it was John McCain, some Republican senator said that "All these people that want low-power radio stations should just start internet radio stations, because that is the future anyway." And that might very well be the future of radio. But for now, there's lots of people....I guess the appeal of radio is that it is accessible and lots of people don't have internet access. I mean I don't even own a computer, I just mooch off of work for those things. I figure as long as my job has great computers, I can save \$1,000. And I'm sure that lots of people here in Mount Pleasant, Shaw, Columbia Heights, don't have a computer or internet access, but the thing about radio is, it seems, everyone has a radio. You could almost get one for free. Sometime the bank will give them away as a little promotion, you know? Like a little transistor radio doesn't cost more than a few dollars and it seems like something that, actually, literally, everyone could have if they wanted one. So that is the appeal of it. It's immediate and it's a people's medium. The way that it is governed, it's not. It's really like a corporate medium. I guess the point of what we were doing was to take a little bit of that back, at least take back a little piece of it for ourselves. We decided to go back to pirate broadcasting. We're not ever supposed to use the "p-word," we say "community or low-

⁴³ The Black Cat plays important role in sustaining the punk and underground music scene in Washington, DC today. Its owner, Dante Ferrando, was part of the DC punk scene since the early 1980s and started the Black Cat in 1993 to provide an alternative to bigger music venues in town. Drummer Dave Grohl, a native of the DC area and member of the band Nirvana, was one his primary investors.

powered.” But you know...we all know what it is. We decided to go back to broadcasting. (Mike Alright: 04/.05)

In the end, this was the only way that members of the Mount Pleasant Broadcasting Club, soon to be known as Radio CPR, could have “a little piece” of the airwaves. The group refashioned itself into the model that it follows today, supporting a diversity of voices and musical cultures and claiming a place for the discussion neighborhood issues, radical politics and various points of view. The station members still meet every month to update each other on technical problems, fundraising opportunities and community issues facing the station. It has also brought forth a more public presence by sponsoring, in cooperation with Stand for Our Neighbors, the Family and Children’s Stage at the annual Celebrate Mount Pleasant Day Festival. Every year, the group operates a table close to the stage, where it passes out program schedules and flyers on neighborhood issues (such as gang violence, zero-tolerance policing and live music bans).

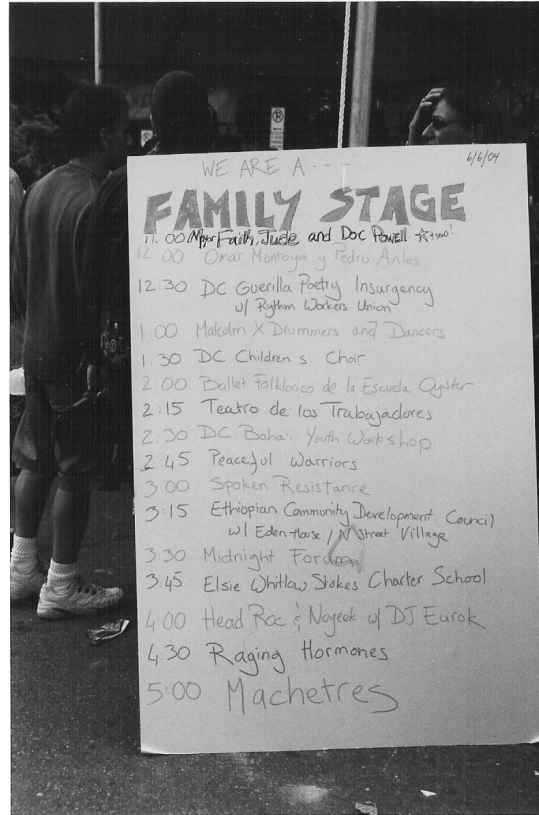


Figure 8: The Radio CPR/Stand for Our Neighbors Family Stage, Celebrate Mount Pleasant Day, June 2004

The station actively accepts its position in the neighborhood as an alternative voice while also realizing that the more public it becomes, the more likely it will be “busted” by the FCC.⁴⁴ DJ Natasha Nighttrain was specific in her concern that the station, if busted, should not be seen as a vanity station for “white punks” (Nighttrain: 05/05). As a result, the members felt it increasingly necessary to diversify the station’s programming, deliberately creating a schedule that would reflect the diversity of the neighborhood.

This demanded that the group work with community members in a more public fashion,

⁴⁴ For a moment in 2004, there were several occasions when the station felt particularly threatened. There were stories of white vans being seen in the neighborhood, which were thought to be FCC monitors. Plans were made to create a “black box” which would be used in the event of a bust and would hold an emergency broadcast CD, press releases and other material relating to the shut-down of the station by the FCC. Another plan, partly made in jest, was to place fake antennas all over the neighborhood, to throw off the authorities. For protest sake, plans were suggested to congregate at neighborhood statue of Marconi and hold a rally, fashioned after a similar protest by Radio Mutiny at the Ben Franklin statue in Philadelphia. In all, these actions reflect an ever present unease about being busted. (Fieldnotes: 2004-2005)

recruiting DJs from all sorts of places, not just within their own scene. It is within this delicate balance that the station members bind themselves together, working for the community both in plain sight and out of sight.

But this strategy also coincides with the general aesthetic of underground and punk music. By working underground, the group maintains a sense of a scene or subculture, which is carried over from the music scene that many of the station members participate in. As the music scene supports an idea of revolution and civil disobedience, the station fulfills that need for fighting the system, broadcasting in full view of the FCC but still out of sight and underground. DJ Maude Ontario sees this as a natural development:

...the type of people who would be interested in creating their own music and creating their own scene in terms of playing music and having their own space for creative expression, its sort of a similar mentality to wanting to create your own media...they're both a form of expression and not wanting to just rely on the music or the media provided by the big corporations. I do think definitely think that there is a connection there. And it's cool. (Ontario: 01/05)

It is this same aesthetic that has kept the radio station continuously on-air for the past six years. New members and DJs are brought in through networks within the activist and punk/underground scene. By entering the community in this way, new members are given legitimacy or seen as trustworthy participants. There is always someone else who could vouch for them if needed.

However, the founders of the station do not rely on these music/activist networks to draw in new members. They are also intentional about recruiting new DJs, in their effort to keep the station's programming diverse. The station had similar followings in other establishments along Mount Pleasant Street, such as the café Dos Gringos where

the staff often tuned in while cleaning up for the night and the local auto-body shop which displayed the call letters on its building for a brief moment in 2005.⁴⁵



Figure 9: Radio CPR Frequency on display at Mount Pleasant Auto Repair, Winter 2005

CPR as it is Today (Balance between national and local)

The station has not changed much since its early days. While the programming is constantly evolving, the general ethos behind the station remains the same. As the station's statement of civil disobedience reads:

We broadcast because governmental machinations have made it clear that the voices and interests of residents will be ignored. We broadcast because we find intolerable the relentless corroding of public discourse and social activation by the homogenization of transmissions in our public space. We broadcast because we believe that our system of Government rules best when the voice of the people is heard. We broadcast because by announcing what kind of Government our community will respect we take one step toward obtaining a respectable Government. We commit this act of civil disobedience ever more enthusiastically

⁴⁵ In the winter of 2005, some establishments were given signs with the station's frequency by one of the Radio CPR DJ's. A few months later, the signs mysteriously disappeared. At a later station meeting, it was revealed that a former member had seen the signs and felt it was too much exposure for the station. His solution was to dispose of the signs without asking the group. The incident caused great discussion amongst the members about how they should "advertise" the station to the outside. In the end, the group kept its low-profile and refrains from overt public displays. (Fieldnotes, 2005)

because in doing so we also conduct the same crucial civic action that has, inconceivably, been forbidden. We commit this act because we understand that we have the support of residents and organizations in Mount Pleasant, Adams-Morgan, Shaw, and Columbia Heights to commit this act in their interest, as well as the support of social activists everywhere who will resist the silencing of many voices to protect the interests and profits of a powerful few. We commit this act of civil disobedience to remind us all, through this very act, that tyrannies such as these cannot go unprotested. (CPR Statement of Civil Disobedience)

The statement stresses the importance of the “Government” and that CPR is providing a voice for the government to hear, which it cannot do under the current system of conglomeration and consolidation. By defining the station’s broadcasting as an action of civil disobedience, the members align themselves with previous social protest movements where civil disobedience was a featured part of protest tactics. Anthropologists Richard Fox and Orin Starn have characterized social protest as a process where individual dissent grows into broader, collective action and cultural meanings are constantly evolving. Social protest is also conditioned by the particular historical moment from which it arises. As Fox and Starn write:

Culture gets made into (usually temporary and short-lived) structure as people become conscious and learn to cope with historical events. Individual dissent and mass action grow from dangerous thinking and painstaking labor...At every step, too, historical events create new social conditions within which these meanings deploy. (Fox and Starn 1997: 8)

As this chapter has demonstrated, Radio CPR’s civil disobedience does not arise from a vacuum. While looking to the past, Radio CPR’s members align themselves with larger social movements against globalization. Media consolidation is just one manifestation of globalization. Thus, the statement of civil disobedience is also a response to national issues of representation, even though the station mainly seeks to represent and speak for local residents within the Mount Pleasant, Columbia Heights and Shaw neighborhoods.

There have been movements to create a cultural center in Mount Pleasant, fostered by the radio station members, but the organization needed to create such a venue usually impedes progress. The members see the station as a self-sustaining entity, a place where individuals can participate on an intimate level with larger social issues, while also enjoying the moment of being a DJ and being creative. That feeling of participation and creativity is easier to sustain on an individual basis. DJ Natasha Nighttrain sees these discussions as part of the growing pains of the station, where there is a constant effort on the part of the founders to keep the station and its members grounded in the original values upon which it was founded. This struggle can be seen in the discussion about the plans for La Casa.

In 2005, an idea was floated to support a community arts center in La Casa, based on previous work done by members of Radio CPR. The center was to be called the “Hot Water Club,” after similar cultural resistance centers (named “aguascalientes”) established by the Zapatista rebels in Chiapas, Mexico.⁴⁶ It was advertised as “a place where people can share ideas, music, culture and art that challenges the hatred, fear and exclusion that pervade our nation’s, our city’s and our neighborhood’s political life.” (from Hot Water Club Flyer, June 2005) The group worried that it was not enough to just provide a space for arts and culture: the programming in the space also needed to underscore the group’s own values. As DJ Natasha Nighttrain explained:

...we’re not just defining ourselves by what we aren’t and then to be a big “Fuck You” to those people, we want it to be a celebration because we are liberated from that, those kind of motivations....[such as] having a political project that’s

⁴⁶ This connection with the Zapatista movement is not unusual, since many elements of the larger anti-globalization movement take its inspiration from actions by the Zapatistas in the mid and late 1990s. Many of the artistic responses to globalization, such as street carnivals at protest sites, come from the Zapatista movement. See Leclair 2003.

motivated purely by just wanting to harm your enemies and show people that you're more powerful than they are... (Nightrain: 05/05)

Again, the group placed their fight for culture within a positive stream instead of working within the power structures around them. Those in the community who might be seen as the “enemies” of the members of Radio CPR have insider access to the power structures within the D.C. government, to such an extent that they are able to subvert the more open, public structures created for neighborhood discussion.⁴⁷ Throughout 2006, the station struggled to bring this plan to absolute fruition, instead keeping the idea alive through panels on public safety and movie nights for kids.

These events, sponsored by the station, are usually the result of an individual DJ within the group formulating the idea and following through to produce the event. From concerts featuring local punk bands, to bootleg videos of classic D.C. punk performances, to movie night for kids—all these events are proposed by a member of the station at the monthly meeting, and then organized and managed by that member of the group. The events are usually created as fundraisers for the station and typically take place at La Casa on Mount Pleasant Street. Since the group works best when one member proposes an event, the work is shared collectively from event to event, meaning that those involved change over time. It is in these collective moments that DJs connect with each other beyond their individual shows. As a result, the sponsored events not only help the station through raising funds, but also reinforce the collective responsibility the members have toward the station. The DJs contribute both by being individual actors and also being

⁴⁷ In Chapter 4, I discuss a specific case where the disproportionate power wielded by a neighborhood organization has created dissension between musicians, restaurant owners and neighbors. These small organizations see most public neighborhood political venues, such as the Advisory Neighborhood Council, an elected board of neighborhood residents that makes policy suggestions to the DC City Council, as corrupt and a waste of time.

members of a collective. In this way, the station creates its own community based on a shared sense of activism and dedication to creative culture, both on an individual and group level.

In January 2007, the station was re-invigorated by a new leadership committee. The committee, made up of current CPR DJs, set about an agenda that returned the station to its roots of social activism and commitment. A schedule of events for the spring includes several film screenings featuring socially conscious topics, such as Spike Lee's 2006 documentary of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, "When the Levees Broke," and a documentary about day laborers followed by a discussion with a local day laborers organizing group. Both events are billed as community events and also fundraisers for the station, where admission fees will go toward updating studio equipment. These events as well as others reinforce the importance that CPR members see in connecting their work with the station to larger social issues, and educating other about those issues through art.

Conclusion

Activism in this neighborhood is a cultural activism that takes place within a media reform movement. The founders of the station are participating in the media reform movement through their organizational efforts, but the station does not exist solely as a part of that movement. Those involved see it as part of a larger cultural project, one in which music and arts can serve to address social inequity issues within a specific place. As a result, they see music and performance as a way to connect people to the issues they care about as well as viewing culture as an important part of the overall

life of a community. Anthropologist Faye Ginsburg sees this type of cultural activism as a particular product of post-1960s social protest observing that:

...cultural activism call(s) attention to the way people engage in self-conscious mobilization of their own culture practices in order to defend, extend, complicate and sometimes transform both their immediate world and the larger sociopolitical structures that shape them. (Ginsburg 2004: xiv)

No longer are individuals part of a larger protest movement, such as the Civil Rights Movement or the Women's Rights Movement. Instead, they are part of localized pockets of resistance to dominant cultural movements. As our nation's culture (not to mention media) is increasingly dominated by corporate forces which seek not only to define what culture is but then sell it to us, local groups seek to carve out a space that resists this domination, and defining culture for themselves and celebrating that self-defined and self-supported cultural expression.

While aided by larger protest movements like the media reform movement and anti-globalization movements, the members of Radio CPR place their particular project within the bounds of the neighborhood of Mount Pleasant, seeking to address many issues of inequity and representation within a small-but-diverse community. As a result, their work becomes very personal and interconnected. They are advocating for room on the airwaves for overlooked musics like punk and *rock en español*, while at the same time, they are discussing the impact of community policing on the lives of everyday Mount Pleasant residents. For the members of Radio CPR, both of these issues, as well as others, are vital to the cultural life of the neighborhood. And it is from this understanding of culture that the station takes its place in the neighborhood and takes its place as an element of resistance.

In a 2005 Federal Communications Commission forum on Low Power FM, former FCC Chairman Michael Powell congratulated the LPFM broadcasters in attendance and impressed on all in the room his commitment to the broadcast medium stating, “Low Power FM truly represents a unique opportunity to give new voice to old communities, and to new communities as well. It really holds a special place in our heart here at the Federal communications Commission and I think a special place in America.”⁴⁸ No one might expect a conservative FCC commissioner such as former Chairman Powell to get “warm and fuzzy” when speaking of a new radio format, but the Low Power FM movement has engendered the fiercest of emotions, tapping into emerging definitions of community as well as issues of alienation and abandonment felt by the public toward commercial radio in the United States. While the establishment of the LPFM service in 2000 set forth an opportunity for community and educational activists, it is still a service that is limited to rural, small population areas, thereby excluding urban spaces such as the neighborhood of Mount Pleasant. As a result, groups like Radio CPR must organize underground in order to address their neighborhood and its issues of inequality. In the process, the collective creates its own sense of community bound up in social justice actions and urban music.

⁴⁸ Powell, “Opening Remarks of Chairman Powell FCC Low Power FM Forum, Washington, DC, Feb. 8, 2005.” http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-256625A1.doc

CHAPTER THREE

“...And Don’t Forget to ROC THE MIC!”: Creativity and Activism as a Radio CPR DJ

“I could hire out to the other side, the big money side, and get several dollars every week just to quit singing my own kind of songs and to sing the kind that knock you down still farther and the ones that poke fun at you even more and the ones that make you think you've not got any sense at all.

But I decided a long time ago that I'd starve to death before I'd sing any such songs as that. The radio waves and your movies and your jukeboxes and your song books are already loaded down and running over with such no good songs as that anyhow.” (Woody Guthrie Poster in the CPR studio)

The clock says 11:20 p.m. and at this point it looks like the next DJ is not coming for his shift, which started at eleven. I put on one more CD to bide the time, deciding to give him 10 minutes before I turn off the transmitter for the night. The studio is cozy and warm, a fine contrast to the nasty weather outside on this late winter evening. Band posters and action announcements line the daffodil-yellow walls, displaying both the musical aesthetics and political sentiments of those who gather in this space. An old T.S.O.L. poster claims one wall, while a lithograph of a Woody Guthrie quote on the opposite wall decries, “I hate a song that makes you think that you are not any good.”⁴⁹ The microphone, shielded by an embroidery hoop of nylons attached by coat hanger, hangs down over a small sound board with channels marked by purple electrical tape, labeled “CD 1, CD 2, Cassette, Host, Guest...” On one side of the mic live the CD players and monitors, housed in a hand-built shelf adorned with woodcut flames painted

⁴⁹ T.S.O.L stands for True Sounds of Liberty, a punk band from the Orange County, California punk scene of the early 1980s. The quote from Woody Guthrie at the start of this chapter is from the same poster. The poster was created by the artist Ricardo Levins Morales in 1976. For more on the history of the poster, see <http://northlandposter.com/blog/2006/12/19/i-hate-a-song-woody-guthrie/>

bright orange, red and yellow and crowned with a Mexican Bingo card of “El Diablo.”

On the other side of the mic sit two turntables and the guest microphone. A constant whir comes from the closet, as a table fan breezes back and forth, cooling down the transmitter. Taped to the wall above the rusty radiator, a series of cartoon-like drawings on 4 x 5 cards illustrate how the sound makes its way from the soundboard onto the airwaves, the last card reminding DJs “...and Don’t Forget to ROC the MIC!”

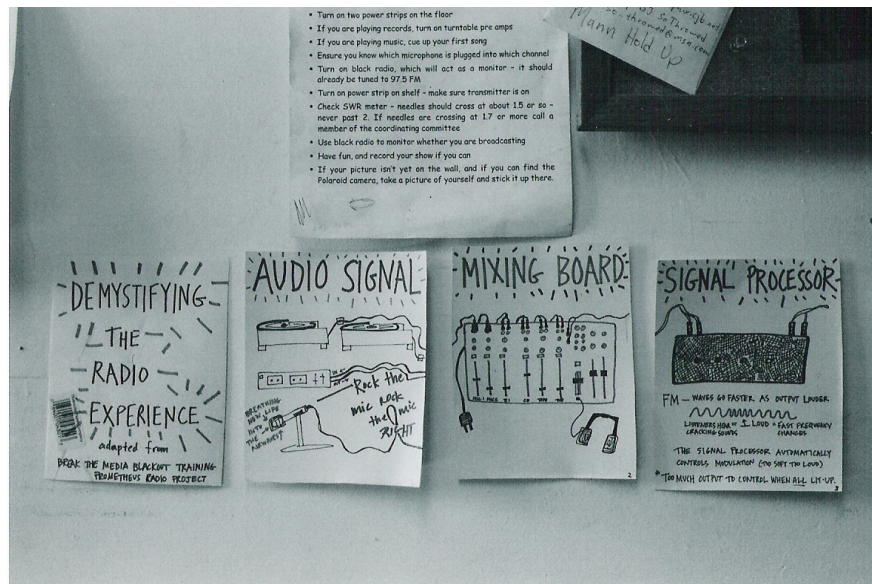


Figure 10: Demystifying radio in the studio of Radio CPR, 2005

Finally, I hear footsteps bounding up the creaky wooden stairs. Months ago, that sound would have given me a rush of panic to turn down the studio speakers and prepare myself for the worst.⁵⁰ But now, I know that sound means I can go home and the station will stay on the air for a few more hours. As the next DJ opens the door and apologizes for being late, we start the transfer of power. My music selections strayed from Mexican

⁵⁰ When I was just starting to DJ at Radio CPR, any sound outside the studio would make me nervous. Of course, these fears were propagated by stories told of other stations being busted. My natural inclination leaned toward this happening, with my luck, in the middle of my shift. At the monthly Radio CPR meetings, procedures for such events were often discussed and DJs were instructed on their roles. In fact, on the back of the studio door was posted a list of phone numbers to call in case of such an emergency.

rancheras into Bob Wills territory this evening, and this DJ is a confirmed metal-head. He looks through his stack of CDs and LPs while telling me about his later-than-usual shift in the kitchen of the famous D.C. restaurant where he works. But instead of blowing off his commitment to the station, he came over as soon as he could, proclaiming, “I look forward to this all week!” And so, as I fade down Tommy Duncan crooning “Time Changes Everything,” heavy metal blasts up and out from the speakers. The listeners can surely tell that a new show has started, no voice-overs needed here.

This is a typical exchange at Radio CPR. Each DJ approaches his or her show with an almost fanatical enthusiasm, wanting to share his or her music with a wider community, while also understanding the commitment he or she has made to this alternative space on the airwaves. As a group of people united for a common goal, the members of Radio CPR have created not only a platform for the discussion of matters of social justice, but also an outlet for the cultural expression of activist work. The station started on a basis of friendships and branched out as its mission developed, bringing in more members of the wider Mount Pleasant community. By breaking out from their punk rock connections, the Radio CPR community formalized their ties to the neighborhood of Mount Pleasant, while retaining a do-it-yourself philosophy and commitment to social justice. Within this structure, DJs expressed their creativity through their involvement in their own music scenes as well as Radio CPR’s mission. As the DJ known as Turned Tables stated,

“I mean, two hours every week, particularly here like no other place, I get to play what I want to play. I get to say what I want to say and the freedom to do that does not come along that often. And it feels good, so I’m glad to be a part of it.”
(DJ Turned Tables: 06/05)

Still, it is a freedom based on a shared political understanding. This radio community takes its inspiration from radical politics and it is those who share that philosophy that find themselves most at home on Radio CPR. From anarchist to socialist to merely left-leaning sympathizers, politics animates many of the interactions amongst its members and their understanding of the station's purpose. As DJ Maude Ontario stated when thinking about the founding of the station, the primary idea was to have some "resistance fun." Radio CPR members could resist the dominant forces in the media and the neighborhood by playing music they loved and talking about issues in ways that were not given representation on the airwaves in the Nation's Capital.

The History of DJs in Radio Culture

When music was first broadcast on the radio, DJs or disc jockeys did not play as important a role as they do on Mount Pleasant's Radio CPR. Most early radio programming of music featured live classical music. In fact, "the first radio broadcast" conducted in the United States on Christmas Eve 1906 featured classical music, Handel's "Largo" played on a phonograph and Gounod's "O Holy Night" performed live on violin by the broadcaster, Reginald Fessenden.⁵¹ For early national broadcasters, live music was preferable to recorded music. Because of ASCAP's (American Society of Composers and Performers) insistence that broadcasters pay royalties to its members for broadcasting their recorded musical performances, stations decided to create alternatives to playing phonograph records. They produced live programs, ranging from concerts to drama and variety shows. That creativity was soon subject to regulation by the federal

⁵¹ For more on this event, see Hilmes 1997:36. Hilmes makes the point that the format of this first broadcast was prescient of future radio program formats.

government, as the airwaves were taken over by national corporations, which produced programming for a national audience.

During the twentieth century, the control of radio shifted back and forth between local and national interests. Radio's first operators were amateurs, whose programming choices were subject to their own personal interests. One such radio pioneer, Frank Conrad, broadcasted from his garage in outside Pittsburgh, in the early 1920s. His program featured phonograph recordings and became so popular that he decided to have regular hours.⁵² Most programming at the time consisted of amateur operators calling out locations and call letters, which listeners dutifully and anxiously recorded (Smulyan 1994). For listeners, Conrad's approach to radio programming was a departure. This limitless creativity was to end soon, as government regulations set forth in 1922 determined that the airwaves should be in safer hands—that is, under corporate control. The Department of Commerce, which regulated broadcasting in the first part of the twentieth century, prohibited amateurs from playing recorded music (which, according to those at the government agency, just annoyed listeners). As historian Michele Hilmes notes, this was quite ironic since the public was actually consuming records at high rates. The threat to culture was a particular type of music: jazz. Hilmes writes,

“Clearly the dangerous cultural form of radio as it emerged in the early 1920s could not be left in the hands of unsupervised amateurs who might play whatever records they chose over the public airwaves into respectable middle class homes.” (Hilmes 1997: 49)

This fear of amateurs echoes the sentiments expressed by many politicians, regulators and corporations about Low-Power FM in the twenty-first century.⁵³ It also is

⁵² In fact, when Frank Conrad's employer, Westinghouse, realized that they sold more radio sets when Conrad was on air, they brought his studio into their building and it became KDKA. (Smulyan 1994: 14)

⁵³ See Chapter 2 for a discussion on the fear of urban interference and Low Power FM.

reminiscent of stereotypical opinions of the music played on Radio CPR. Ultimately, programming on radio is a power issue: corporations want control of a medium which can marshal consumers. Amateur broadcasters cannot be trusted to deliver those consumers reliably. To control the airwaves means to control the message through programming.

But it was not just corporations that wanted a regularized format on air. The audience for radio clamored for programming of substance and familiarity. While early radio listeners had used radio as a curiosity, seeking out distant stations on the dial and logging the coordinates, later listeners' preferences were in part aided by technological problems of static interference. (Smulyan 1994: 20) With so many stations on the air, engineers could not manage the interference, and so, listeners became less focused on chasing down far-flung stations and instead focused on programs they could actually hear. Historian Susan Smulyan argues that waves of rural-to-urban migrations also had an important effect on the move toward national programming. She writes:

Listeners might have still found local radio stations satisfactory had migration been unusual, but the large movement of Americans from farms and small towns and cities on the early part of the twentieth century meant that radio had a different role to play. (Smulyan 1994: 30)

What they did hear on local stations was not up to par, especially when those listening wanted to be reminded of home.⁵⁴ As a result, the desire for national programming grew.

By the time national networks held the programming reigns for radio—in the 1930s and 1940s—a set format of programming developed, based on live musical and

⁵⁴ Historian Derek Vaillant points out that many local stations in urban centers championed localism, as they catered to diverse audiences of ethnic immigrants and African Americans. He demonstrates this case in 1920s Chicago, where though the aim of programming was diversity, the sound produced was still white. He writes of early ethnic broadcasters, “They used a combination of folk music, concert music, and popular jazz that fostered interethnic connections and a mediated Americanism for ethnic, immigrant, and working-class listeners, while bracketing African Americans as racialized outsiders.” (Vaillant 2003: 240)

dramatic performance. National radio networks hired orchestras to play classical concerts, such as NBC's world-renowned orchestra led by the conductor Arturo Toscanini. These broadcasts, aimed at a national audience, featured "high culture" which could uplift the masses. Of course, much of the programming on radio was dominated by the interests of the advertisers whose financial support was imperative to survival. Local stations WSM in Nashville and WLS in Chicago supported a growing audience for country music with live musical evenings such as the Grand Old Opry and the Barn Dance.⁵⁵ It was this influence which caused radio programmers to balance between "elite" or high culture and "popular" or low culture (Hilmes 1997). This in turn was aided by a standard format to which listeners became accustomed: a trustworthy host who guided listeners on how to not only listen to the program but become consumers of the program's sponsor's products.

It was the independent stations, not the national networks, which created the DJ or disc jockey. As federal regulations changed overtime and more stations could obtain broadcast licenses as legitimate commercial enterprises, advertising dollars dispersed. Television also drew audiences (and advertising revenue) away from radio, using much the same format of drama and news with which radio listeners were already familiar. Independent stations, which never were subject to the regulations on phonograph-record broadcasting, began to rely heavily on recorded music, introducing "blocks" of music with a host called a "disc jockey" (Rothenbuhler and McCourt 2002: 370-371). In post-war America, with advertising dollars at national networks going to television, these radio stations retained listeners by returning to local interests: local advertising anchored

⁵⁵ Both WSM and WLS were owned by companies which used the outlets as glorified advertisements, as even their call letters pronounce: The National Life and Accident Insurance Company's WSM (We Shield Millions) and Sears Roebuck's WLS (World's Largest Store). (Wolfe 1999: 5)

stations to their locales. And the DJ was instrumental in leading the listeners to local music, local business and local events. Scholars Eric Rothenbuhler and Tom McCourt explain the importance of this new local outlook, writing,

It allowed stations to serve as a locus for commerce, a place where such diverse characters as radio station owners, promoters, and record company personnel could meet and make deals. In addition, it increased the frequency of on-air references to local places, names, and events, and it provided an outlet for local music. (Rothenbuhler and McCourt 2002: 378)

Radio stations became powerful shapers of the success of recorded music, especially with the creation of the Top 40 system by Todd Storz. This system of playing music relied on creating a playlist of 40 songs, which the DJs would play repeatedly. It was thought that listeners preferred to hear songs with which they were familiar rather than song after song by unknown artists. The Top 40 system proved so successful that it is still used today by commercial stations, whose playlist decisions are often made by computer programs.

In the 1960s, an underground radio movement grew which foreshadowed elements of the present-day Radio CPR. A product of the counterculture movement, underground radio proclaimed to have the listener's interest at heart, more so than Top 40 stations. Its DJs favored music that fell outside of the Top 40 lists, although it is debatable as to whether their politics were as radical as those of the DJs found on Radio CPR.⁵⁶ As album rock became more popular among listeners, the underground radio format allowed space for the playing of longer music cuts on air, with conversational guidance by the DJ. But the programming did not consist solely of music. Often, news was presented in a way which bordered on commentary rather than of objective

⁵⁶ Black Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver is described as being incredulous that these "underground" stations "... that could readily be tuned on any receiver from the White House to Shaker Heights could be a part of a legitimate underground movement." (Keith 2002: 401)

journalism. Historian Michael Keith explains this blend of music and news as a sign of the format's tentative commitment to radical politics. Of the DJs, he writes, "...they wished to be construed as members of the socially conscious community and not simply as record machine operators" (Keith 2002: 400). This sentiment echoes many of the ways in which Radio CPR DJs operate as creative purveyors of music and ideas. Their shows are their own creations, not bound by FCC regulations or Arbitron ratings. Thus they are able to envision how they would like radio to sound for a politically-engaged, radically-oriented, underground community.



Figure 11: Radio CPR at the HEAR Mount Pleasant Concert, July 2007

Building the Network: Friends and Outsiders

In order to build this alternative community, they relied at first on the network of friends and fellow musicians. As the station grew and stabilized, the station's founders felt a need to widen the base of participants to include more members of the neighborhood community. The result was the creation of new radio shows such as "La Selva" (the Forest) featuring Latino Rock music, which cannot be heard on the

commercial Spanish language stations in the D.C. area. Conducted in Spanish, La Selva features interviews with visiting Latino rock bands and news for the Latino community. A similar show, Mandalla Washington, showcased music and news for Ethiopian and Somali communities in Washington, D.C. By 2004, the program schedule included shows featuring music ranging from reggae, Latino punk, blues, hip-hop and go-go—D.C.s own indigenous genre—as well as public affairs shows addressing community issues, gender issues, immigrant and labor rights, and general neighborhood news.

Throughout all of this, the founders increased their DJ list through friendships and by reaching out to communities that did not have access to media production. DJ Natasha Nighttrain reflected on this process when thinking about the beginning of the station. She commented,

A lot of what Radio CPR was about was trying to create a space where people could talk themselves, where people could find and use their own voices. But it was hard...it was hard to reach people that you wanted to reach in that way. And it forced us to look outside the box we were in....it forced us to look outside our circle of friends. (Nighttrain: 02/05)

This sentiment is typical of Radio CPR members. However, seeking out members of the community who understand their mission and agree with their politics is no easy task. In fact, there have been times when DJs' politics and personalities have clashed.⁵⁷ For many members, these clashes sometimes make them reminisce about the “old days” when it was a community of friends from the underground scene. But with any type of movement action (which is how many DJs think about their involvement with Radio

⁵⁷ At a programming meeting in early 2004 (described in Chapter Two), the founders of the station had a very tense conversation with another DJ, trying to convince him that his programming fell outside of the mission of the station. They pointed to a show he had just done in which his invited guest expounded political views they could not support. Arguing that his point of view was already dominant in media culture, they reiterated that the station was for those views not represented in the media. The DJ was adamant about right to express his politics and would not budge. In the end, the DJ left Radio CPR and his time-slot was given to another DJ. (Fieldnotes-01/2004)

CPR), hard work is rewarded through the moments when they are able to achieve their ideals of community radio. Through their move to include more members of the community in the radio station, the station's founders began to see the results of their work.

Mandalla Washington, the Ethiopian music and news show, is a typical example of the process of widening the circle of participants. To find the host of this show, the founders only had to look down the street. Mount Pleasant Street is lined with a variety of restaurants, Latino groceries, dry cleaners and barbershops. It is also home to the sole corporate establishment on street, a 7-11 convenience store. Inside the 7-11, most of the employees are recent immigrants from Somalia or Ethiopia. On one afternoon, DJ Maude Ontario walked into the 7-11 with her recording equipment (a minidisc and microphone) after doing on-the-street interviews for her show "Recordations." The man working at the counter asked if she was in television, and after a few minutes of conversation, it was revealed that the employees in the store listened to "Chaos or Community," a Radio CPR hip-hop show, every Friday evening. DJ Maude and DJ Poinsettia invited the man and his friends to host a show on CPR. That show became Mandalla Washington, airing for one hour in the early afternoon once a week. While the show was on the air, that the hosts would often call the 7-11 to make sure that the employees had the dial set correctly and that they were playing the show on the store's sound system. It is through these types of encounters that the circle of relationships widens for the station, but it also the manner in which the station members meet their audience. In the end, getting to know their audience proves to be the most challenging aspect for this underground station.



Figure 12: Out in the open on Mount Pleasant Street, Winter 2005

Searching the Dial for Community: Radio CPR's Alternative Communities

Striking a balance between letting the public know who you are and keeping underground is the subject of many conversations within the CPR community. While reception studies are given primacy of place in analyzing media, Radio CPR is a perfect example of the immediate importance of radio creations for the producers rather than for the audience. The relationships built through person-to-person conversations and friendship networks create the community which constitutes Radio CPR. For many DJs, the station then serves two overt purposes: as a resistance to commercial media and as a connection to both the underground and the neighborhood. DJ Dialex, a Sunday night DJ on Radio CPR, summarizes it this way:

...that is a really great feeling to know that every single move the station makes is not only putting its middle finger up at every station that is consolidated and

corporate, but also putting its hands out trying to reach out to people who are in the neighborhood and a part of the interested audience that listens.
(DJ Dialex: 03/05)

While reaching out to the neighborhood, the DJs who belong to this radio collective have created their own alternative community, one based on community and media activism, music connoisseurship and creativity, and most importantly, friendship.

The search for community has been defined by British sociologist Gerard Delanty as “a search for belonging.”⁵⁸ For community that is based on boundaries found in a place, those who live within those geographic boundaries belong to that community. Whether they draw their identity from that community is another issue. It is the need to identify oneself, “to belong” that drives the idea of community in today’s postmodern sense of the word. And it is within these self-defined communities that individuals can redefine or display different aspects of self-identity. For the DJs at Radio CPR, part of that performance of self is broadcast through their shows. It is the creative outlet provided by their two-hour time slot on-air which allows the DJs to participate within a wider sense of community, as activists for Radio CPR.

It is this commitment to the cause of the station and what the station gives in return that creates a sense of community amongst the DJs at Radio CPR. Sociologists have commented that in social movements, this development of the individual can be defined as “Personalism,” a moment when “...the self is shaped in participation in community and is sustained by belief in collective goods.” (Delanty 2003: 129). It is surely true that while the members of Radio CPR see their work as benefiting the community and creating a platform for a diversity of voices, they also reap the benefits of community through allowing each other space on air in which they can be creative and

⁵⁸ Delanty 2003 -for more discussion on the term community see Chapters One and Two.

share their musical sensibilities with a wider listening public. Social theorist Alberto Melucci sees the construction of such communities as a result of collective action, writing, “collective action of many recent social movements constitutes a communicative act which is performed through a form of action itself, making visible new powers and the possibility of challenging them.”(Melucci 1996: 79) As a result, knowing who your listening public actually is becomes a moot point. The act of dissent through collective action and through creative means becomes more important. And it is the act of broadcasting that is more important than the act of reception. Even if there were no audience at all, the people engaged in running Radio CPR have created their own community.

How does this act of dissent relate to the music played on Radio CPR? The most obvious answer to this question is that Radio CPR is a place where musics not normally heard on commercial radio have a primacy of place. While the station has its roots in the punk/underground scene in D.C., the playlists are not limited to music from that scene. As described above, the diversity of shows on Radio CPR represent the diversity of music cultures not only in D.C., but amongst those involved in the activist community. To reach out to others, it helps to embrace their cultures. This chapter explores the experiences of three DJs at Radio CPR, and seeks to show how their involvement with Radio CPR is characteristic of the larger DJ community at the station.

“You Just Throw it Out There”: Mash-Ups on a Sunday Night

...I know to bring stuff that is 8 minutes long and I use a lot of the CD players that have this function that you can loop...So I do a lot of that on the show. I'll have something loop on the CD players and I have some crazy talking presidents on the other turntable. Normally after the first three records, it's mayhem. You should see the studio after I'm done. It's like picking up after a break-up. “Get

your records out of here! I don't want them! And these CDs too! (DJ Dialex: 03/05)

DJ Dialex is host of the show "Sockets" which broadcasts every Sunday night from nine-eleven. His story of joining Radio CPR is typical of most DJs at the station. One of his friends was already a CPR DJ. Through this friend and by attending CPR benefit concerts in the neighborhood, he learned more about the station. So, he decided to apply for his own show. The station fostered a community of people with whom he was already familiar through the underground music scene in D.C.. However, he also wanted to support the station's commitment to being a voice for the neighborhood where he lived.

DJ Dialex sees the collective aspect of CPR one of the most important features of the station. In his opinion, it is through the monthly meetings that the strategies for the station are laid out and the mission of the station is constantly negotiated. He makes a point of attending every meeting and assisting with the production of events to raise money for the station. One of his efforts was a Punk Rock History Night, where he screened bootleg videos of classic punk rock concerts and a conducted an interview with local punk rock musicians. He has also been instrumental in establishing the Radio CPR Oral History/Archive Project, with fellow DJ Natasha Nightrain, which will document the history of the station through the interviews and stories of those who were early participants. It is through these commitments to the station that DJ Dialex feels he is helping the community of media activists and cultural activists continue their important work.

But it is not only through the creation of fundraisers and meetings that DJs and station members channel their creativity. For DJ Dialex, the station has provided a place

where he can experiment and be creative with his own music, which he then takes to performances with his band, Hand Fed Babies. The show “Sockets” began life as a typical show on CPR, a DJ with a crate of records and a bag of CDs, using his or her two hours to educate the listening audience on a personal listening style. For DJ Dialex, it has evolved into a program where he can play two roles, musician and DJ.

The first hour of his show is dedicated to his own musical creations: mash-ups of various musical sources which he has edited in such a way as to create his own musical compositions. The mash-up, as a music genre, is a child of technology. It is created when two (or more) distinct recorded selections are played simultaneously. These recorded selections are found on CDs, LPs, or cassettes as already fully produced tracks and elements of pop culture in their own right. As scholar Em McAvan observes, the audience works to unravel the mixing they hear:

...mash-ups take a common popular culture (music in this case) and appropriate it for their own desires and creative impulses. Rather than a purely passive audience, mash-ups show there exists at least a segment of an engaged audience, able to deconstruct and rework popular culture. (McAvan 2006)

For a mash-up creator like DJ Dialex, the radio studio proves to be a laboratory of sorts, with CD players and turntables running at the same time. However, instead of the mash-up becoming a recorded artifact, it goes directly onto the airwaves, heard only during the show.

One Sunday evening, DJ Dialex invited a guest DJ to create mash-ups with him on air. The creations were entirely unpredictable since neither DJ knew the other’s music collection nor could they anticipate what each would bring to the studio. But the results, according to DJ Dialex, were magical:

We were playing a lot spoken-word records. He [the guest DJ] had this sermon from a satanic, I don't know if you would even call it a pastor, and then we had this sermon from an actual pastor. And it was like Satan versus God in an actual battle royale. It was pretty amazing. I would never do that at home, by myself. I would never listen to a satanic sermon, I can't say I would.

So you use these things...he put it such a great way, you use these things as tools, to make up this entirely...I think that was what I was hinting at before when I said I'm not doing anything new and neither is he, but it is so interesting what can come out of that sort of spontaneity or that new record of poems over a break hard-core jungle record, you know? It's completely up to you and your tools.

But I wouldn't listen to a lot of hard-core jungle at home. And I probably wouldn't listen to the sermon at home. But at the radio show they come together. I hope people like it. I mean, I like it when I'm doing it. You just throw it out there. I thought it was really cool how he described it as tools, music you wouldn't listen to at home. I totally agree. (DJ Dialex: 03/05)

For mash-up creators, the studio becomes a workshop, where ideas are worked out on the turntable and the results are unpredictable. The studio could be perceived as an isolated place, similar to playing records at home for oneself. However, the fact that there is a transmitter and an imagined audience opens up the creativity of the DJ. They are still playing records for themselves. It is material that they appreciate for its utility in their creations, but their musical selections are heard by an audience they cannot see. While DJ Dialex hopes "people like it," the studio creates a unique atmosphere where the DJ can build musical creations with music that "you wouldn't listen to at home."

The inspiration for DJ Dialex's work comes from a similar radio program found on WFMU radio in New Jersey (his home state). WFMU is a free-form radio station, where the programming can vary from country to punk to spoken word to gospel.⁵⁹ While WFMU is a legitimate independent community station, its programming is a rarity on the airwaves. The free-form format, which began in the 1950s on many Pacifica stations, allowed DJs to play whatever music or audio they chose, as long as they avoided

⁵⁹ For more on the history of WFMU, see Spazz 2007.

certain words prohibited by the FCC.⁶⁰ This description could describe the programming of Radio CPR in many ways, although, Radio CPR is not bound by FCC regulations.

The second hour of DJ Dialex's show is a more typical radio format, which he describes as "playing song after song after song." With these two hours, he is able to use his time both as a musically creative outlet and a chance to share his musical tastes with a listening public.

The fact that the station gives him room to do this he feels has helped his creativity in his musical thinking. But in addition, because the station supports the cause of social justice in the neighborhood, his commitment to the station is stronger. When asked about how he views the station, he commented:

It is something that fulfills me. It brings me complete and utter joy every time I'm up there. And also it gives me access to a community that I really never met but sort of felt a kinship with anyway...I love going to the meetings, I love everything about the station so it makes me want to get more involved and more involved.
(DJ Dialex: 03/05)

⁶⁰ The founder of Pacifica, Lewis Hill, felt that the free-form format allowed for freedom of cultural expression and the expression of radical politics. For more on free form radio, see Lasar 2000.

		Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Radio CPR 97.5 FM	3-5	1 st Sundays: open community hour 2 nd and 4 th Sundays: Radio Drama 3 rd Sundays: Esther and Earnest bring you the People's Music Hour.						
						Madaddallada Washington "Entertainment Washington" with DJ A and DJ Star	La Selva (the Jungle) with DJ Animal	
	5-7	The All-Night Night of Punk Rock That Ends at 7:00 with DJ King				Teen City w/ youth from the Latin American Youth Center		One Lung Children's stories and songs from 5-6 and then Rock hits from dad's record collection from 6-7
				radio hybrid presents: gender fatigue with dj bent and dj motherhelster	Get Off the Internet! with Natasha Nighttrain	The Local Low-Down and Labor Line with DJs Linus and Liza	Zócalo with DJ Sokrates	
	7-9	Neighborhood Power Hour - DJ Aphrodite, DJ Pointsetta, & DJ Carlitos Moreno: Neighborhood Power Hour: Featuring the neighborhood. Interviews, with neighborhood celebrities, activists and more.	Roots Revolution with Sensimella, the Soul Rebel Adventure into roots reggae, dub, afro-diaspora beats, afro-pop, and a little "talk"....	Rhythm Method With DJ Annaheed and DJ Pocho Villa Music from around the world and news from around the block.	Paleface Rare and Extraordinary Jamaican sounds plus much more.	The After-Market Spazz with SK and Car Radio Jerome We're spazzing: live instruments, tape loops, beats, electrical surges, and found sounds. Alternating with: Riff & Transfiguration w/vena Cava Left-of-center gems all neatly woven together in the classic freeform radio style.	Chaos or Community Your weekly foray into funk and news with the Turned Tables, aka the funkiness journalist	RinconRock! La Kueva del Rock Alternativo en Español -- the Kave of Alternative Spanish Rock
	9-11	dj mlke alright. all the punk that fits.	DJ Linguo with punk, indie, more Alternating with: DJ Babydonut, bringing you country, punk, a a little bit more	Punk Sin Fronteras/Punk without borders DJ Oel and DJ Bottom Bracket Punk/Hardcore from around the world and the US.	DJ Main Man and DJ Zombie Bring you old school and new school go go.	Dimension Control with resident host and grand selectress Tuesday An exploration of lush horn sections and a foray into funky basslines. Probe into the hard hitting beats of funk, jazz, 70's soul, underground hip-hop, and rock.	Thought Crime with DJ Fancy Lad Rad underground pop and indie extravaganzas	Drum and Bass with DJKC
	11-1	Turbulent Flow with DJ Dialect A smattering of electronics, noise, choice cuts from your mom and dad's record collection and anything that shakes the pelvis...		aforumula with DJ Peter Experimental electronic, independent hip hop and other beat-heavy music.	DJ Circle A "This Duct Tape Life" A non-stop-thrill-a-minute-rock-fest fueled with metal, mayhem, country and soul.	First Ladies DJ Collective	Las Dos Marias Music Hour with DJs Little Mary Sunshine and Marigold	Ontology through noise, jazz, experimental and poetry with MC Lams Crosby

Figure 13: Radio CPR Schedule, Fall 2004

Chaos or Community: Friday Night Hip-Hop Revolution

Yes, indeed...yes, it is 7 o'clock, Friday night, so you know what that means. It's got to be time for Chaos or Community, your weekly foray into funk, hip-hop, politics and news. With yours truly, Turned Tables, the Funkiness Journalist... (from Chaos or Community radio show, Radio CPR)⁶¹

If you happened to tune into 97.5FM on Friday evenings just around 7p.m., you would hear this introduction played over expert cuts of hip-hop sounds from the song "Robbin Hood Theory" by Gang Starr, signaling the start of the Chaos or Community radio program. The song declares "We're taking over radio and wacked media." Turned Tables, the DJ for the hour, settles into a mix of old school hip-hop and funk masterpieces while expounding on the events in politics from the past week. Everything

⁶¹ The title of DJ Turned Tables' show is taken from Martin Luther King Jr.'s posthumous book *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community*, in which King stated "when machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered." (quoted in Fouche 2006: 651)

is up for grabs: local D.C. politics, presidential machinations, the war in Iraq, media policy. Turned Tables has a view on it all and is not shy in sharing his opinions. A typical show might include a reading from Martin Luther King Jr. or Malcolm X, a news report about the impact of a military draft on African Americans, and a movie review of the latest Michael Moore effort. Interlaced throughout is a mix of politically aware hip-hop, challenging the mainstream view of hip-hop as purely apolitical entertainment.

The way Turned Tables explains it, he got a show on Radio CPR by complaining. He was philosophizing on the lack of diversity on local airwaves when a friend hearing this mentioned Radio CPR. He cannot remember if he was in fact talking about having his own show or if he was just stating his opinion about things. His friend, whom he knew through D.C. activist circles, suggested that he contact the founders of CPR and revive their hip-hop show, which had recently gone off air.⁶² Turned Tables had never heard of CPR and was curious enough to follow up the suggestion. Soon he found himself in a meeting with a couple of the station's founders, learning the rules of the studio and how to turn on the transmitter. His first show was, as with most new DJs, a harrowing event, for both himself and listeners.

My first show was...oh, wow...it was probably filled with errors and talking into the wrong mic...what's this thing called, the mic level probably wasn't high enough or low enough. You know those kind of things: wasn't making the transitions, trying to outline my entire philosophy in the first show. So, I had brought in all these books and articles and music and trying to pack almost 30 years of life into two hours because it took me time to get comfortable with the idea that I'm going to be here every week. I don't have to do everything in the first show. So, yeah, it was not smooth, it was not...I'm sure my nerves were obvious to listeners and my excitement...that's probably the best way I can

⁶² In the early years of Radio CPR, there was a hip-hop show which came out of the B-Girl Movement: a group of women musicians in DC who supported each other as MC's and members of the DC hip-hop community. At the time (and still to a point today), women were rarely seen holding the mic at hip-hop gigs. This organization's mission was to change that and encourage more women to get involved. (Fieldnotes 2005)

describe it, trying to pack a lot of thought and ideas into one show so to whoever was listening it would be very clear who I was and what I was trying to do. But it was a lot of fun. (DJ Turned Tables: 06/05)

The irony of all this, wanting to fit “30 years of life into two hours,” is that while the DJ is hurriedly putting forth this effort, the audience is not guaranteed. There is an element of faith and fatalism in doing a radio show on Radio CPR.⁶³ You know that you are producing something for an audience, although you never really know who that audience is in real terms. In commercial radio, audiences are quantified by statistics and analysis: you can pin-point which age group is listening at a specific hour, and what their likes and dislikes might be. For marketers, this is golden information. Entire broadcast channels are tailored to these facts gleaned from audience research. But for Radio CPR DJs, the audience remains a curiosity. They know that there is at least maybe one person listening, but it is not always assured.⁶⁴ DJs create their shows based on a few common themes: is it something they would want to listen to on the radio and is this something that is missing from the commercial airwaves. These two ideas permeate much of the radio programming creativity at Radio CPR.

Chaos or Community is a show that follows this model. Turned Tables states for a fact that what he puts on the air is music and opinion which does not have a home on local commercial channels. Media, in his opinion, should be analyzed through the lens of

⁶³ This of course was changed a bit with the introduction of a cell phone into the studio in 2006. Some DJs made great use of this phone connection, broadcasting the phone number and asking listeners to call in and chat. For my show, I could not seem to master the technology on the sound board and when the phone did ring, I became a little paranoid: was it an irate listener or the FCC? Usually, it was the next DJ calling because they were running late. (Fieldnotes 2006)

⁶⁴ In fact, there have been several times when during the overnight hours, a CD was left on repeat only to be discovered still playing by the first shift for the next evening. This did not happen often, but it did highlight that at least the audience who could fix the problem (other DJs) were not always listening. But this is balanced out by the times in which DJs who lived in the neighborhood would stop by to help with broadcasting problems in the studio (the mics being too hot or the CD players acting up) which they heard at home listening to the station.

colonialization. The commercial radio stations that played rap and hip-hop in the past displayed a wide variety of choices, not just one type of music as is the case today, according to Turned Tables. He sees his show as a chance to resist the colonialization of culture by commercial interests, and he reflects on it this way:

“I grew up with a hip-hop that was as diverse as it actually is. None of us who know anything about it, we know better than to suggest that there was this romantic period of all political conscious rap music. There has always been the booty-shaking, the violent, the gang-banging, dope-dealing version. However, you also had the political version, the consciousness version, the party stuff, the light stuff, you had everything that is produced even to this day. The biggest difference of course is what is popularized is only one version, which is not only the worst but the most harmful intellectually and culturally in general.

What CPR offers is an opportunity to break that pattern. So the hip-hop that I play is much more critical in its thinking, is much more diverse, again we play party stuff, we play...it's not all pimpin' and thuggin' and then also because of the free form format, I can throw some funk in there. I play go-go, I play reggae, I play sometimes rock, I play whatever is moving me at the moment, none of which you'll hear, in at least in any one place, on commercial radio. The idea that we don't need to be pigeonholed for the sake of marketing into very narrowly defined categories of music, which is ridiculous. And so, I see it as resistance. I see it as resisting the cultural imperialism; I see it as resisting the larger colonial forces. I mean you can't colonize people unless you colonize their culture. And freeing up the culture a little bit is just another little bit of rebellion in a society where it is very difficult to pull any off.

And then again, it's therapy. I mean, personally, it's therapy. Because I want to hear what I play on the radio too! I want to hear it. So to think that there might be somebody out there listening that might be like, “Man, I forgot about that song!” or “I haven't heard that song, why haven't I heard that song...” Well, because we didn't have \$20,000 to go down to Radio One and Infinity to have it in the Top 40 Rotation. It is just that simple. So, anyway, it is great to be a part of it. You know, we haven't had our revolution yet but I'm hopeful.” (DJ Turned Tables: 06/05)

For Turned Tables, his show on CPR not only allows him a platform to expound on his ideas and views, it is also place of freedom to play music he supports. Citing that hip-hop is more diverse than most people realize, he purposefully plays hip-hop of a political nature. In some ways, it is a balancing out of the culture scales, which have portrayed hip-hop purely as a culture of “booty shaking...gang banging, dope dealing.”

Hip-hop scholar Tricia Rose maintains that all rap has political aspects, whether or not its lyric content is blatantly political. It is the frames in which this music has been placed that define its politics. As she explains,

Rap's poetic voice is deeply political in content and spirit, but rap's hidden struggle, the struggle over access to space, community resources, and the interpretation of black expression constitutes rap's hidden politics; hegemonic discourses have rendered these institutional aspects of black cultural politics invisible. (Rose 1994: 145)

These are words DJ Turned Tables would heartily second. And it is because people like DJ Turned Tables do not have access to mainstream media, that current images and ideas about hip-hop are allowed to propagate. Just as he explains that his show is therapy for him, because he likes to hear what he plays, he expects that many of his listeners feel the same way. Having the show on Radio CPR allows him to be the outlet that is missing in mainstream media.

All the Punk that Fits: Punk at Home on Radio CPR

So, I've had five great partners and I think the show next week is going to have to be a tribute to them in part, all the great DJs that have helped me out. But a lot of the time, I was just sort of holding it down by myself. It's tough to do a radio show solo, but I'm sort of used to it. It's a lot easier to have someone help you. (DJ Mike Alright: 04/05)

When I interviewed DJ Mike Alright, it was a week before his last show on Radio CPR. Our conversation was a reflection on the founding of the station and his own involvement, both as a DJ and a supporting member of the collective. On the following Sunday night, his show, All the Punk That Fits, featured song sets dedicated to each of his five co-hosts over the six years of the show's existence. The first set went out to his band-mate and first co-host DJ Angie Puff, who gave him his DJ name during their first

show, and it included cuts from the Zombies, the 5.6.7.8's, Broken Siren, Black Flag and the Ramones.

DJ Mike Alright's initial connection to the CPR community was again, through a network of friends involved in the underground punk scene in D.C. Being in a band surely helped things, too. DJ Angie Puff remembers one event most clearly.⁶⁵ Their band, the Savage Boys and Girls Club (a reference to their hometown: Savage, Maryland) played a show at the Wilson Center, a punk venue and community center on 15th and Irving Street in Columbia Heights, opening for Bratmobile and the Make*Up, two nationally known D.C.-based punk bands.⁶⁶ The concert was a benefit for the radio station and she was asked to do the flyers for the show. Because they played in a band within this scene, they were already familiar with many of the founding members of the station. DJ Angie Puff also cited the importance of living in the neighborhood at the time, which made it natural to get involved. DJ Mike Alright felt that living in the neighborhood made him committed to the station. In fact, he sees Radio CPR as a remnant of the way Mount Pleasant used to be.

I'm really glad CPR is around because the way Mount Pleasant is, it seems like boring people took over and they're calling all the shots now. The neighborhood used to be a lot more...I want to say rowdy. That might not be the right word but it just seemed like more fun. There were more people out on their porches all the time, more of that kind of scene, every night. I know a lot more people in the neighborhood who've all been priced out over the years. But I knew a lot of people then and it's like every night, someone was hosting something, hanging out at somebody's house. For me, it was a very different social climate at that time. But that era is gone. But the radio station is still here. (DJ Mike Alright: 04/05)

⁶⁵ I interviewed DJ Angie Puff the following day and she cited this event in particular. (4/05)

⁶⁶ Bratmobile was founded in Olympia, Oregon in the early 1990s, but by the time of this concert, one of its main members was living in the DC area.

For him, the radio station serves as a remembrance of times past, a time when the punk scene was more present in the everyday life of the neighborhood.

Before being a DJ on Radio CPR, DJ Mike Alright's experience in radio was limited to hanging out at WMUC, the college radio station at the University of Maryland, in College Park. Even growing up as a kid living near the campus, he tried to listen to that station, but its signal was very weak. As a result, he hardly listened to radio, except the stations from Northeast D.C. that broadcasted go-go music. He admits to being too intimidated to have his own show in college, and instead hung out with DJ Angie Puff while she hosted her show on WMUC. The idea of having a show in the neighborhood in which he lived helped him to overcome any trepidation. In his final show in 2005, he reminisced about his 6 years of creating radio shows on Radio CPR, with many of those shows being influenced by whomever was co-host at the time. Most of the time the show, All the Punk that Fits, focused on punk hits from the past and efforts from current bands, but it was known to stray into funk, soul, jazz and even country. While DJ Mike Alright says it really was about his record collection at the time, he did not always limit himself to purely musical programming. As he explains, he understood that his commitment to the ideals of the station went beyond broadcasting his records:

...I sometimes felt like I was cheating. There were times when I would do a little more and I would interview people. I guess the times when I was most...I think the time that I felt like I was most engaged with Radio CPR was after September 11. Immediately there was an immediate wave of reactionary conservatism that went crashing over everything and probably as a reaction to that, I went to every protest and I would interview people. I made some pretty good radio programs at that time. Protest shows. And it would be interviews, it would be a little bit of music. I think that that was probably when I was most, when I was really, really fired up about CPR. Probably late 2001, early 2002. Actually, all through 2002 I was pretty...took it pretty seriously. I mean, I really did. I was really, really, really...I put in a lot of energy. (DJ Mike Alright: 04/05)

Realizing that Radio CPR was founded in 1998, and that its main focus at the time was to protest national media policy and neighborhood politics, the fact that the station gave this DJ an outlet to protest national foreign policy in the wake of September 11th proves the importance and endurance of the station for these musicians and activists. And in a time where media is increasingly consolidated and policed by the government, the station has not lost its importance as a place for “resistance fun.”

One of the most lasting effects of DJ Mike Alright’s involvement in Radio CPR was the creation of the Radio CPR CD in 2004. The CD project was the idea of many members of the station, as both a fundraiser and a document of how far the group had come since its beginnings in the late 1990s. The CD features cuts by D.C. bands from all kinds of genres: punk, rock, noise, soul, hip-hop. Interspersed between tracks are clips from CPR shows, either station IDs or interviews conducted by CPR members. During the annual Celebrate Mount Pleasant Festival, the CD is often played between acts at the Radio CPR family stage, giving the gathering audience the feeling they are listening to a live broadcast.

DJ Mike Alright mentions that one of the biggest arguments about the CD was its distribution and publication. The group could not agree on which record company to go with, though the most natural solution would have been Dischord Records, the iconic local punk label.⁶⁷ Many members of the station held noted that while Dischord was run by white men, Radio CPR which was not. So why would they want to deal with

⁶⁷ Dischord Records was founded in 1980 by members of the then defunct punk band, the Teen Idles. After the band broke-up, they counted the money which they collected in a cigar box and decided to put out a record. As band member Ian MacKaye explains, “It was clear from the beginning that no label would be interested in putting out a Teen Idles record, particularly since we were no longer a band, so we decided to do it ourselves.” (from Dischord’s website: www.dischord.com). Dischord has since become a leading label in the DIY punk movement and a chronicler of the DC punk scene, releasing recordings from nationally known bands such as Fugazi and Government Issue to more recent DC bands Antelope and the Evens.

Dischord? There were calls to put the CD out on their own label, Community Powered Records. To DJ Mike Alright's mind, the legacy of Dischord Records outweighed the specific politics. His argument was as follows:

The way I looked at it, we're busy enough running our radio station, we don't have time to run a record label...And I just kind of persistently said, "Look, they [Dischord] have this mechanism in place to make records. All they are going to do is make it and we can do whatever we want with it." So, I won that exhausting argument. And I tell you, I don't have the energy to argue with the radio group about anything anymore after that...I was just glad it worked out. And I got a production credit on it which was sort of gratifying and DJ Angie Puff and I got to have a song by one of our bands. Because everyone that has a band in D.C. wants to, dreams of doing something for Dischord. So I was kind of able to take care of that longing with that project. (DJ Alright interview: 04/05)

It is not surprising that the station would choose to put out a CD, as many of the Radio CPR DJs are musicians and this is a natural extension of their musical personalities. The CD showcased the talents of these DJs as members of the underground music community, while also tying their musical expression to their commitment to the station.

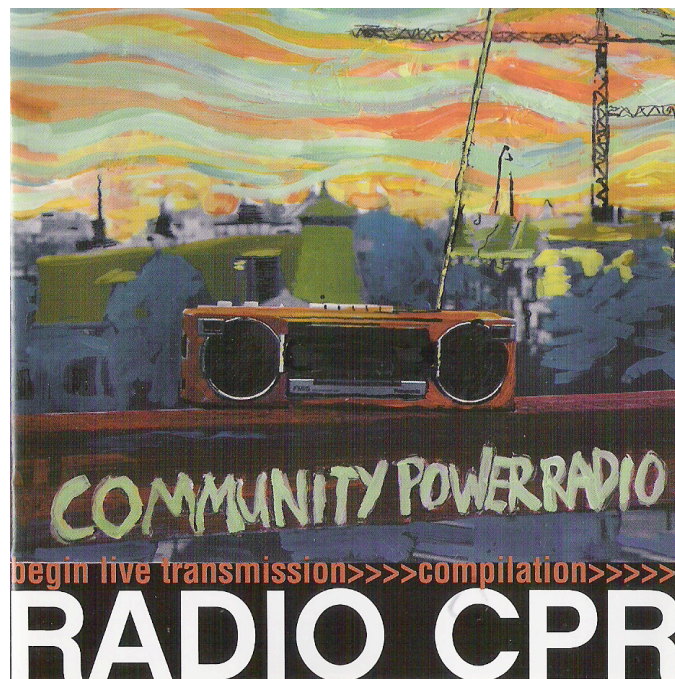


Figure 14: Radio CPR CD, cover art by DJ Carlitos Brown, 2003

Conclusion

Tonight, I'm sitting in for DJ Zombie of the Go-Go Explosion show, which is supposed to start at nine. It's about five minutes to nine and I'm just making my way up the stairs to the studio. From outside the door, I can hear reggae music blasting which means that DJ Paleface is wrapping up his weekly journey through his Caribbean record collection. As I come into the studio, Paleface looks up and states, "Hey, you aren't DJ Zombie!" I explain that she is out sick so I am here as a sub. Paleface seems settled-in and does not realize that his two hours have just expired. Looking at the clock, he puts on another record and begins to ask me what I brought to play this evening. "I'm thinking I might do a bunch of jazz piano: Ramsey Lewis, Art Tatum, Oscar Peterson..." I reply, listing off my first set for the evening. "Oscar Peterson, now that is just too smooth. You need some Bud Powell in there. Now, he could really play." As I begin to defend Oscar Peterson, the clock ticks past nine.

Paleface then starts to quiz me about world music, asking if I had talked to Hussan at the Dollar Store on Mount Pleasant Street. I know Hussan from my days working at the neighborhood café, Dos Gringos, across the street from his store. Almost everyday, Hussan would take a ten-minute break from the store, come across to the café and order an orange juice, then sit at the counter chatting while we filled coffee orders. According to Paleface, Hussan has a great collection of North African 45s and tapes. He will even sell some to you if you ask. With this tip, Paleface collects up his LPs and wishes me good luck with my show. I lock the door behind him and settle in for the next two hours, alone in the studio, with the lights turned down to a warm glow and Oscar Peterson proving his mettle through the speakers.

For almost a year and a half, I also had a show on Radio CPR. My experience being a DJ shadows many of the experiences described here. I understand first hand the trepidation of turning on the transmitter and cueing up the first CD: is anyone out there even hearing this? This question haunts you for the first few shows. Then you begin to let go of those worries and just enjoy doing your show. It becomes something that you look forward to every week. You begin to outline playlists in your head: in the shower or on the Metro or in line at the grocery store. A conversation will inspire an hour long set of music. Connections are made between your well-worn favorite albums and CDs you did not even realize you owned. The turntable becomes a new outlet for musical discovery. Then you start to make weekly trips to the used record store and a new expense is added to your monthly budget: LPs. Should you buy the 78s of cowboy polkas or stick with the Hawaiian luau LP? You still feel a responsibility to the audience, but you want to convey the excitement and love you have for the music you play. And that in turn, you hope, will draw listeners. But of course, you have no way of knowing that an audience is listening except by chance. For me, one of the best moments of being a DJ at Radio CPR was when a fellow DJ stopped by during my show one evening and said, "The guys working at the Salvadoran restaurant are digging your show tonight!" Who knew they loved Hank Williams as much as I do?

For DJs on Radio CPR, the fact that they are given two hours to express their ideas and play their music is a pure joy. It truly is "resistance fun." And it is a responsibility that the DJs do not take lightly. They understand that this space carved out of the ether is tenuous and temporary. There is the shadow of being "busted" which hangs over all actions at the station. But there is also a longing to be out in the open, to

be even more present in the everyday life of the neighborhood. DJs often struggle with wanting to be known as Radio CPR DJs and with their commitment to the underground nature of the Radio CPR community. Knowing their audience is one aspect of this. To connect with the audience is in some ways to come up for air. Most CPR DJs only know about friends who listen to their shows, not strangers. Sharing their music with an unknown audience is a leap of faith, especially when there is no feedback in return. The voices heard and the issues addressed on Radio CPR pertain to a very small neighborhood within the Nation's Capital. However, these voices represent the make-up of Washington, D.C. in general: White, Black, Latino, Asian, straight, gay, male and female. Listening to the station not only tells you much about the residents of Mount Pleasant, but also about life in the Nation's Capital and an urban American city.

The station's founders probably did not anticipate the creativity of its DJs or that their station would provide such a creative outlet for activists. If you ask them, they are surprised that it has continued as long as it has. They also feel a certain privilege to be able to listen to other people's music, music that they may not understand, and know that they are gaining something by listening. As DJ Maude Ontario explains,

DJ Zombie's show is a go-go show, I like go-go music, but I don't really have a grasp on it, I mean I like it when I hear it but I don't really know. But she every week plays different stuff and that's...I feel that it is this huge privilege to tune in on Wednesday's from nine to eleven and I'm going to hear this kind of music and she is going to tell me about it. It's kind of a big learning experience. And then other people you never know what they are going to play. It becomes a hodge-podge, but that's cool because you get inside their mind. It's like, Whoa this is what they are playing, crazy. (DJ Ontario: 01/05)

The collective educates each other and the listening audience about different musical genres, giving room and respect for all types of music. And underlying all of this musical expression is the commitment to the station as a place of resistance. Music brings them

together and individuates them at the same time. DJs are able to express their individual identity as musicians or music lovers within their shows, but also express their collective identity as a movement resisting media consolidation and cultural uniformity. Of course, in addition to their political and social stances, they are having fun with friends through music.

If one were to look at this situation in a more cynical frame, it would be easy to discount Radio CPR as a place where radical community activists can be contained by the illusion that they are affecting change in the community. It could be suggested that this containment benefits the larger structures of power by keeping the activists “occupied” with their radio station and keeping them away from more radical activities which could do harm to the interests of those in power. But if we remember that the station was founded as a place to have some “resistance fun” through music and friendships, this critique becomes a moot point. No matter how much activism inspires the Radio CPR membership, they understand that the station is but one aspect of their activist identity. It is not the sum total of it. Having a show on air and being able to express radical views in a city where there is no outlet for such expression is part of the resistance. Reading out announcements for protest rallies, bringing in special guests to talk about neighborhood issues, playing music by local bands, all of these actions are elements of activism, a means to an end. And what the members of Radio CPR want for their community is conversation: about what kind of neighborhood they want to live in, about what it means to be a part of a community and about the rights and responsibilities each of us has toward each other as neighbors. So while on the surface it might seem like an easy way to keep radical elements preoccupied, the message is still broadcast beyond the bounds

and control of those power structures which the station protests. The point is to put the ideas and music out into world, and to let whomever maybe listening know about alternatives to the totalizing power of the dominant groups in the city.

CHAPTER FOUR

Gentrifying the Soundscape: Live Music, Quality of Life Crimes and Neighborhood Activism

The Mount Pleasant Forum

In Mount Pleasant, many arguments about community and music are played out on the neighborhood listserv, The Mount Pleasant Forum. For example, on December 20, 2004 a “j. heller” posts:

It’s my understanding that Don Juan’s Voluntary Agreement says it won’t host live music, but I’ve noticed that it does fairly often. I’m just curious how/why this is going on. (Mt. Pleasantdc.org: 12/20/04)

A few other neighbors write in to concur that they too have heard “loud music” lately coming from Don Juan’s Restaurant on Mount Pleasant Street. Then someone comments that the live music in question is in fact “karaoke.” The discussion list begins to buzz. Is karaoke live music and is the owner of Don Juan’s breaking the law by hosting karaoke nights? A “g. flecter” writes in:

...What is going on at Don Juan’s is not Karaoke in my interpretation of the word. The guy is definitely a professional singer. And from what I could gather, the patrons were not encouraged to stand and share the mic. (Mt. Pleasantdc.org: 12/22/04)

Are these neighbors actually arguing about the right to karaoke? As the discussion progresses it becomes clear that the argument is about noise and the breaking of an “agreement” that bans the performance of live music at neighborhood establishments. The discussion devolves into a virtual shouting match between Jack McKay, the Chair of Mt. Pleasant Advisory Neighborhood Commission, a localized, elected arm of the D.C. government, and a neighbor named “Bill.” Commissioner McKay writes in:

“What I want to know is—why does anybody care whether the music is live or recorded, if it is inaudible? ...The usual assumption is that live music is performed loud music, but loud music is prohibited, live or not. So what is the purpose of prohibiting live music, if that music is provided within the 60db sound limitation, and thus cannot disturb anyone?” (Mt. Pleasantdc.org: 12/23/04)

McKay’s sentiments reflect the battle cry of the live music supporters in Mount Pleasant.

Why ban live music when the problem is supposedly loud music? The other side sends its volley through the words of neighbor Bill:

Jack, LOTS of people care, especially those of us who live so close to these establishments and have to put up with their bad behavior. We care because they aren’t being good neighbors. We care because they know they aren’t supposed [sic] to be playing their music loudly. We care because they know they aren’t allowed live music. We also care if they are breaking the law with loud music and we care if they are breaking the law by violating their agreement they made. You seem to be avoiding telling us if it was the juke box or a live band as if you are protecting the place... (Mt. Pleasantdc.org: 12/23/04)

This is the state of music in Mount Pleasant. In this neighborhood, residents have quickly taken sides: Are you for or against live music? The question is used as a litmus test as to where your neighborhood sympathies lie: Are you a “gentrifier” or a radical? Are you a new resident or an old-timer? Are you for diversity or comfortable streets? What are your expectations for life in an urban neighborhood? All of these questions demonstrate the constant negotiation of place and identity that is occurring in this inner-city neighborhood, and at the moment, music is one of the loci of this discussion.

The ensuing conflict between the cultural needs of the Latino and other ethnic residents (which include Vietnamese, Somali, and Ethiopian) and the newly arrived, wealthier residents is evident in the issues of gentrification of the neighborhood. These issues are coded in the phrases used by these newer residents such as “Quality of Life” crimes, one of which is, in the case of this neighborhood, “noise.” What is striking in this place, is that neighbors deploy ideas commonly tossed back and forth within social

science debates, as rationale for their positions. The terms, “broken windows,” “quality of life crimes,” and “zero tolerance policing,” all identify a specific vision of the neighborhood while also signaling social science debates. Sociolinguist Gabriella Modan studied the way in which language was used by residents in Mount Pleasant to signal who belongs and who does not. She found that, “Mt. Pleasant residents in powerful positions use themes of filth to exclude some of their neighbors from membership in what they construct as the core community in Mt. Pleasant, and consolidate their own positioning in that core” (Modan 2006: 145). As a result of this language, a few residents have been able to shape the neighborhood as they desire, while other residents are left wondering where the music went.

The Value of Culture in Community

For researchers and academics, especially those who theorize about community and the arts, the natural tendency is to portray the arts as a community building asset. The arts are a valued element to a community and are to be cherished and supported. However, communities are not homogenous and one person’s music may be another person’s noise. If we understand music as being one element of the community, and not the whole, we can start to see how simple acts like the enforcement of noise codes can impact the cultural life of a community. Following the organic response of activists that live in the neighborhood of Mount Pleasant, we can start to understand the complexity of these arguments and the importance of music as marker of neighborhood identity. By organizing for music, the members of this neighborhood have found a common link in their fight for the neighborhood’s future.

These types of battles are not new, nor are they confined to the urban United States. Cultural geographers Chris Gibson and Shane Homan found a situation in Sydney, Australia, where gentrification hastened the “death of live music” in many neighborhood pubs. The early 1980s brought new liquor licensing laws which insisted that bar owners respect the wishes of neighbors in regards to noise. For many urban neighborhood bars, this did not mean much until gentrification hit their streets. As new residents moved into once desolate urban neighborhoods, noise from bars and pubs caused much distress and soon complaints began to rise. Bars lost interest in hosting live “amplified” music as the complaints crescendoed, new licensing restrictions came into effect and demand just seemed to wane. For the Sydney rock scene, many of the incubators of the “OZ rock” tradition refused to host live music, thereby having a death-like effect on the music. Interestingly, the city government instituted a series of live “acoustic” music concerts in public parks (called “live from...”) as a way to counter the disappearance of live music venues. Gibson and Homan write:

The “live from...” events appeal to a certain market of those who have been actively (but often unwittingly) involved in the gentrification process, particularly as students, radicals and cultural producers. The concerts only partially address the loss of venues, but they do disrupt both the dominance of pubs, reliant on alcohol sales, as the locus of live performance, and create new articulations of place and points of gathering in public spaces, thus re-emphasizing (or initiating) a vibrant public sphere. (Gibson and Homan 2004: 81)

By recognizing that music was a resource, the city government took the initiative to placate those who wanted music in the neighborhood by presenting music that was tolerable to many. This may seem like a very cynical outlook on the policy actions. It is, though, the manner in which many discussions about culture are conducted in neighborhood development. Recognizing that those who have the power to shape a

neighborhood look at culture as a resource is an important step in understanding how that resource is to be deployed.

In the late 1990s, as developers looked into urban neighborhoods as the next most lucrative site of growth, ideas about culture and the arts as “civilizers” had already been around for nearly 20 years. New York City had seen waves of gentrification in which artists and their bohemian neighborhoods were redeveloped to bring people back into the city and raise property values. In Neil Smith’s account of gentrification in the East Village, he sees a direct connection between the rise of art galleries and studios and urban redevelopment, writing: “For the real estate industry, art tamed the neighborhoods, refracting back a mock pretense of exotic but benign danger” (Smith 1996: 19). Years later, Richard Florida, a professor of public policy at George Mason University and director of the Richard Florida Creativity Group, a think-tank in Washington, D.C., published his ground-breaking book, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) in which he posits that American society and its economy needs to foster creative means of living and working—that in order to prosper we need to live like artists. Developers and policy makers took to this challenge immediately, creating “communities” in which an artistic, bohemian culture is lauded and emulated, but often at the cost of those who originally lived those lives. In wanting to encourage creativity and entrepreneurial development, the followers of Florida’s formula have effectively run over the arts in the pursuit of business. Music, art and creativity are a commodity and in this sense alone, the arts have value.

These are the ideas that run rampant in public policy today. In order to bring life back to a city, developers are told that they need to make “artsy, safe neighborhoods” and

have diverse entertainment for the new highly skilled residents. With these changes come rising property values and the city is determined to be in a renaissance. Older residents, who can no longer afford the rising property taxes, sell their homes and move away, aiding and abetting the changes. Those who stay find that new residents come in with very different ideas about how the neighborhood should be and how one should live in the city. Sociologist Steven Miles and Geographer Ronan Paddison have observed these trends throughout the world, most notably when governments and developers employ culture to solve urban problems, as Florida suggests. Miles and Paddison suggest that when culture (usually defined as high culture or the arts) is deployed to improve the economics of a neighborhood, the beneficiaries of such culture are seen as consumers.⁶⁸ As a result, those who can partake in this art are those who can afford it. Other definitions of culture are driven out along with those who might subscribe to those definitions. This result is not confined to the urban experience.

Throughout the later part of the twentieth century, policy makers increasingly used culture to promote all kinds of social and economic engineering. Culture is seen as a feel-good cure to the ills of society. Cultural critic George Yudice traced this phenomenon in both the United States and Latin America. Yudice traces the rise of culture as cure for the decline in spending by the government on social services, the end of Cold-War support for the arts as indicator of freedom, and development of cultural mediation (played by arts administrators). In order for culture to compete in this new reduced funding environment, it needed to re-cast itself as a useful tool. As Yudice comments,

⁶⁸ Miles and Paddison, 2005, p.836-most of the writing on the role of culture in urban redevelopment (see Florida 2002) focuses on the panacea of economic outcomes, a sort of “if you build it, they will come” phenomenon. The authors here argue that this just reinforces social inequity within urban centers.

“As previous understandings of culture-cansons of artistic excellence; symbolic patterns that give coherence to and thus endow a group of people or society with human worth-lose force, we see here an iteration of the expediency of culture. In our era, representations of and claims to cultural difference are expedient insofar as they multiply commodities and empower community.” (Yúdice 2003: 25)

If culture is defined as a resource, with which community can be built and nourished, the definition also allows that not all cultures are naturally this empowering. Could D.C. neighborhood elders who see go-go music as the root of violence among young people honestly think that it will nourish the community?⁶⁹ If those that write the laws absolutely can not stand to listen to rap music, why would they agree to pay for youth programs that teach kids how to rap? If neighbors associate the availability of live music with drunken bar patrons, why would they want music in their neighborhood?

The impact of sociological and economic studies of neighborhoods has entered the realm of public policy and everyday neighborhood discussions. Neighbors easily use language that originated in sociology classrooms to describe what their neighborhood is becoming or why it is having “problems.” Activists look at neighborhood conflicts with a keen eye toward programs that will solve certain problems and align with foundation guidelines to secure grant funding. Government officials employ the theories and ideas of think-tanks, armed with statistics and policies to fix neighborhood problems through urban development. Absent from these actions are ethnomusicological studies on the impact of these policies on music communities. Understanding not only what “music as culture” means in a community, but also who is defining what is acceptable and what is

⁶⁹ In the DC media, go-go music and events are consistently represented as locations of violence. In February 2005, a stabbing at a prominent go-go club (ironically housed in a DC government office building) not only caused the club to close, but also reinforced the sense of lawlessness that many see as part of go-go culture. In January 2007, a teen-ager was accidentally shot at a go-go club in the city, which then caused government officials to re-think DC’s all-ages policy on club attendance. (See Alexander and Salmon 2007) For more on all-ages shows and DC music, see chapter 1.

not leads us to a more complex view of the effects of gentrification on musical scenes. The people in the neighborhood, however, are not waiting for another study to tell them this. Over the last 10 years, neighborhood activists have employed their own creative methods to bring music back to Mount Pleasant.



Figure 15: Mount Pleasant Street , Celebrate Mount Pleasant Day, June 2004

The Street

Mount Pleasant Street is where most of the contestation about quality of life takes place. The street itself is only four blocks long, and in the past two decades, it has become a lively center of Latino life in Washington, D.C.. On Saturdays, the street is packed with shoppers, getting their weekly groceries at the Bestway, which stocks Latino, Vietnamese and African goods. Others patronize the several Latino eateries such as Don Juan's Restaurant and Ercilia's Salvadoran Cafe. A few street vendors spread blankets on the sidewalk, displaying the latest CDs of Reggaeton artists for sale or selling bags of mangos and papayas. When the weather is very nice, a man with his Karaoke

machine and amp will set up in front of the Bestway supermarket or other shop on the street and sing Mariachi tunes.

The atmosphere is generally what one would expect on a typical market day. In Lamont Park, the only official public park/gathering spot on the street, the Mount Pleasant Farmer's Market offers up-market vegetables (such as heirloom tomatoes and field salads with chive flowers) organically grown and artfully displayed, alongside milk sold by an Amish woman (dressed in Amish attire) and an artisan bread stand. The market sometimes features music but only of the acoustic variety, such as a klezmer group or an old-time fiddle and banjo group. The difference between the Karaoke Mariachi and the market musicians is, of course, amplification.

In the evening, the atmosphere on the street changes. People do not gather in conversation, but move quickly to their destination. Those who do congregate are seen as potential for trouble. The Latino men hanging out in front of the 7-11 are always perceived as a threat to public safety. Often, a police car will also sit in front of the 7-11 to give those walking on the street peace of mind. In the restaurants and bars, one can see patrons inside but cannot hear them from the street. This is a result of neighborhood action which has tied the permit to serve alcohol to a restriction on live music. If one wants to go to a club or hear live music, one must leave the neighborhood for other parts of the city such as nearby Adams Morgan or U Street. The overwhelming perception about Mount Pleasant is that there is no nightlife in the neighborhood. There are restaurants and a few bars, but none can host live music. This arrangement came into being through the concerted (and quiet) efforts of a few neighbors and their knowledge of D.C.'s ABC laws. As a result, their work to limit "club culture" has drained the street of

its cultural life at night, and changed the sound of the street during those hours. It has also changed the relationship that neighbors have toward the street, from a place of conversation and commerce, to one of surveillance and subterfuge, as seen in the exchange over Don Juan's Karaoke nights.

The ABC Board and Quality of Life Crimes

In 2001, the D.C. city government established the Alcohol Beverage Regulation Administration (ABRA), an independent agency within the D.C. government, which was charged with issuing licenses for the sale of alcoholic beverages as well as adjudicating cases of license violation brought forth by community members.⁷⁰ Overseeing this agency is the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board (ABC Board), a seven-member body that sets the agenda for ABRA, and also holds public hearings on license renewals. When a restaurant wants to apply for or renew an alcohol license, it is required to post an orange sign in its front window which announces its intentions to the neighborhood. The neighborhood then has 45 days to mount a protest to the license; upon so doing, a hearing is called about the matter. In order to assist neighborhood groups and restaurants in resolving disputes about ABC licenses, the ABC board created the Voluntary Agreements. These agreements are negotiated by the neighborhood with the restaurants, supposedly enabling a feeling of cooperation between the two sides as well as fostering a sense of commitment to the community by the restaurants. It was also a way for neighbors to have a greater say when problems arose in relation to alcohol distribution such as drunkenness, public urination or violence that occurred at these establishments.

⁷⁰ ABRA Mission Statement, from ABRA Brochure, Washington, DC, 2007

The law provides that “a group no fewer than five residents” or a “citizen’s association located in the affected area” or the “affected Advisory Neighborhood Commission” may protest the renewal of ABC applications.⁷¹ In Mount Pleasant, the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Association (MPNA) has taken it upon themselves to be the enforcers of the Voluntary Agreements on the main street. The president of the MPNA, Laurie Collins, testified at a D.C. Council hearing in 2003 about the Voluntary Agreements saying:

As a result of MPNA’s efforts, Mount Pleasant has matured from a community that was ravaged by riots a decade ago—riots fueled by alcohol—to a more respectable community with a growing diversity of residents and businesses. (Laurie Collins, Testimony to D.C. Council, Nov. 20, 2003)

This is a common point made by the members of the MPNA—that the riots on Mount Pleasant Street in 1991, which were caused by the shooting of a Salvadoran man by D.C. police, were “fueled by alcohol” and the community needs to be more vigilant in controlling the sale and abuse of alcohol on Mount Pleasant Street. The group also ties alcohol to the “Quality of Life” crimes that offend them: public drunkenness, public urination, crimes which are in turn tied, unspokenly, to the Latino and lower-income population of the neighborhood.

In fact, it was because of these same issues that in the early 1990s, a few neighbors banded together to establish the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Association. The civic group was created to address the quality-of-life crimes being committed in the neighborhood. MPNA President Laurie Collins explained,

I would say Quality of Life crimes are the ones that aren’t the robberies, the burglaries, and guns and stuff or violent, even knives. Quality of Life have to do with, and they are different for everybody so you have to approach it in a way that...ok, quality of life could be garbage. There’s too much garbage on the

⁷¹ D.C. Official Code §25-601: Standing to file a protest against a license.

street. So you try to find out where the garbage is coming from, why it's there and try to get rid of it. The drunks were the same way. I mean, we weren't trying to cure alcoholism or homelessness, but we wanted to do what we could. And I think that any small step in making the quality of life better on the streets then, yeah, we're not trying to go from zero to 100 miles an hour... We set goals but we do what we can... So those are quality of life issues. You know they stretch the spectrum. (Collins: 10/06)

In academic literature, quality of life crimes are characterized as victimless crimes. The victims of these assaults must determine for themselves that in fact these crimes have been committed. In some ways, it depends on what you are willing to put up with. As Collins says, "they are different for everybody." The problem becomes who is allowed to decide what are crimes and what are not. Sociologists have argued about these "crimes" since the advent of "Broken Windows Theory" of urban life.⁷² Seeing the blight of urban centers in the wake of the late 1960s riots which erupted in many American cities, these academics have sought ways to define and solve the problems of these neighborhoods. The "Broken Windows Theory" is one such attempt. The premise is that when law enforcement focuses on petty crimes (like those listed above as "quality of life crimes"), they help the neighborhood gain self-respect and more violent criminals will feel the need to relocate their business. This theory's totalizing influence among policy makers and everyday urban residents is evidenced in much of the discussion about the future of urban neighborhoods, as well as a justification for gentrification.

It is true that no one wants to live in a neighborhood that scares them or in a place where they constantly feel under siege. And there are behaviors which most people can

⁷² The idea of "Broken Windows" originates in Wilson and Kelling's 1982 article which focuses on crime and policing in what they termed as deteriorating neighborhoods. Other manifestations of this thesis include the "Defensible Space" program, supported by the Clinton era Dept. of Housing and Urban Development. This theory asks neighbors to be more responsible for their surroundings and promises low-income residents "an introduction to mainstream life and an opportunity to see how their own actions can better the world around them." (Newman 1996: 9)

agree that are unacceptable: no woman walking down a street appreciates being harassed, no matter what ethnicity or environment they are from. The problem, however, becomes how to determine what aspects of city life are merely inconveniences and which are actual crimes. David Thatcher, a professor in public policy and urban planning at the University of Michigan understands the criticism of “Broken Windows Theory” as a disagreement over the term disorder. He defends the theory this way, “Whether or not disorder causes more crime and disorder, disorder is wrong because these individually-trivial acts would destroy the livability of our public spaces if everyone engaged them. As a matter of fairness, everyone ought to share the burdens of self-restraint.” (Thatcher 2005) However, the people who are allowed to define the parameters of disorder are often those who have direct access to the political means for enforcing their new definitions. Sociologists Robert Sampson and Steven Raudenbusch noticed this in their study of perceptions of disorder in relation to racial, ethnic and socioeconomic make-up of a neighborhood. They discovered that white residents are “primed” to find and define disorder, and thus neighborhoods marked as poor and minority populations are more likely to be seen as disorderly and dangerous. While neighbors may feel powerless and see the cleaning-up actions of the “broken windows” theory as a solution, Sampson and Raudenbusch argue that these solutions:

...may have only limited payoffs in neighborhoods inhabited by large numbers of ethnic minority and poor people...It is due to social psychological processes of implicit bias and statistical discrimination as played out in the current (and historically durable) racialized context of cities in the United States. In other words, simply removing (or adding) graffiti may lead to nothing, depending on the social context. (Sampson and Raudenbusch 2004: 337)

Removing signs of disorder does not, then, always create a crime-free neighborhood.

However, the “Broken Windows” theory of community clean-up has given certain

members of the community more legitimacy to forward their vision of life in the neighborhood.

In Mount Pleasant, the Neighborhood Advisory Commission, an elected body of neighborhood representatives, often takes up the discussion of graffiti, seeing it not only as a signal of disorder but a sign of crime potential (especially when observers are savvy enough to recognize gang tags).⁷³ The argument always seems to boil down to different visions of what the neighborhood is and what it can be in the future. Some long-time residents have seen this as a class and race struggle: those who have money get to write the rules, and those rules are written to effectively run out the Latino residents.⁷⁴ As one new resident wondered where the live music has gone, she commented:

What I worry us that since MtP is mostly Latino, that it is aimed at their culture, in which live music is a major part...I also worry that if this is truly what has happened, that tensions between the new and old are going to become stronger and lead to more problems. I want live music. I loved hearing live music last weekend. I like seeing people have a good time and enjoy life. I mean...the Taliban banned music...and we can't stand them. (Gretchen Hilmers, Sept.17, 2003, Mount Pleasant Forum)

One group of neighbors has taken on the task of defining what type of life the neighborhood would have, supposedly speaking in the interests of the neighborhood, but often without their consent. Many Mount Pleasant residents had no idea that the MPNA was working in their name or that there was a provision in D.C. law which enabled Voluntary Agreements.

⁷³ In January 2004, several members of the Youth Action Research Group presented findings about graffiti in the neighborhood to the ANC and suggested that if students had a place where they could express themselves through art, maybe graffiti would not be such an issue. (Fieldnotes: Jan.2004)

⁷⁴ Many long time white residents mention that their move to the neighborhood after the 1968 riots was a political statement: they wanted to live in a diverse neighborhood and be a part of a community they thought to be neglected by those "west of the park." This is a reference to more affluent areas on the other side of Rock Creek Park which are mostly white neighborhoods. (From Fieldnotes, January 2005 & March 2007)

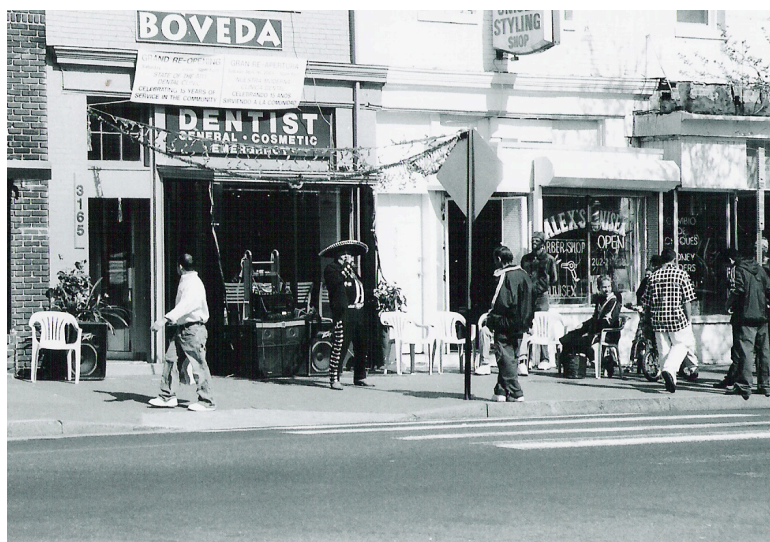


Figure 16: The Karaoke Mariachi, Mount Pleasant Street, April 2005

The Only Mariachi Plaza on the East Coast

In the late 1980s, small groups of mariachi musicians began to stroll up and down Mount Pleasant Street in the evenings, fielding song requests from patrons at the Latino restaurants that lined the street. With the disappearance of the mariachis, some people feel that the street has lost its life. Some miss the camaraderie and joyful community spirit that the mariachis brought when they played on the street. Dave Bosserman, an ANC commissioner and long-time resident, remembers the mariachis as an important part of life in Mount Pleasant, “We had the only mariachi plaza here on the East Coast, I believe. They would gather on the plaza then go over to the restaurants and see if people would want to pay for music... and there were different kinds of groups. You had norteño groups, regular mariachis, three or four musicians, not a whole orchestra” (Bosserman/Cadaval: 03/07). His wife, Olivia Cadaval, a folklorist at the Smithsonian Institution who has written about the Latino culture of Mount Pleasant also

recalls the mariachis as a special part of the neighborhood and a sign of the diversity of Latino culture:

So it was always interesting because the mariachi bands, mariachi conjuntos because you really couldn't call them bands, would be half Salvadoran and half Mexican. The Mexican immigrant population is very, very recent. So you would have, it was parallel to the restaurants where you would have a Mexican restaurant with a huge menu that wasn't very Mexican and a tiny little Salvadoran menu at the back. Well, the repertoire, they would start with all these Mexican songs but soon they would get into the repertoire that was very Salvadoran. It was just very, very interesting to see the little detail there. And I know a lot of people that were interested in music would come and listen to it.
(Bosserman/Cadaval: 03/07)

Others saw this period as a time of chaos in the neighborhood, where the city government was not providing services and neighbors had to take things into their own hands. Some still don't feel safe walking down the street in the daytime, let alone the night. As MPNA president Laurie Collins said, "...I would never walk in Mount Pleasant with my purse. I just wouldn't...I just have never done it. And won't do it. I just don't. I know not to do that" (Collins: 10/06). It is from this sense of threatened safety that the Voluntary Agreements were composed.

The Voluntary Agreements that the MPNA strikes with the establishments on Mount Pleasant cover a variety of subjects. In his original Voluntary Agreement from 1998, Alberto Ferrufino, owner of Don Juan's Restaurant, agreed to follow the sale hours for alcohol as established by the ABC, as well as keep trash and loitering under control and not sell "pitchers to individual customers" or have discounted drinks for sale. His staff was also asked to attend alcoholic beverage server training. However, in 2001, his license was challenged once again by MPNA and a new agreement was struck. This time, Ferrufino was forbidden from hosting "any live music, dancing, nor charge for

admission to the establishment” (VA for Don Juans, 2/27/2001). The agreement also required that he power-wash the sidewalk once a month and not advertise alcohol in the windows or hang banners that are not authorized by permit. At the time, former MPNA president Laurie Collins was on the ABC board and adjudicated this agreement.⁷⁵

These agreements are not limited to restaurants. The local grocery store, Bestway, also has a Voluntary Agreement with both the MPNA and the ANC. This agreement was struck when MPNA member Collins was also an ANC commissioner, thereby doubly enforcing the ideas of the small community group. In Bestway’s agreement, they must discourage loitering in front and in back of their store, remove garbage 3 times a week only between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., and work “cooperatively with ANC 1E and MPNA to improve the overall environment on Mount Pleasant Street to make it a more pleasant and safe area for residents, customers and businesses” (VA Agreement for Bestway, September 2000). This is in addition to specific prohibitions on sale of alcohol, such as “go-cups” and malt-liquor.⁷⁶

Why would a restaurant agree to such demands? The main reason is that to take a license protest to court can cost a restaurant owner thousands of dollars, money which many of the immigrant owners on the street do not have. According to lawyer Rick Massumi, a long-time Mount Pleasant resident, some of the restaurant owners thought that the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Association was an arm of the D.C. government and so thought they had to sign the agreement. The MPNA has also been accused of

⁷⁵ See District of Columbia ABC Board Case 21278-00083P: Application for Retailer’s License CR-renewal application, Don Juan’s Restaurant. May 23, 2001.

⁷⁶ Go-Cups refer to plastic, portable cups of beer sold by liquor stores. This practice, along with the sale of single cans or bottles of beer has been looked upon by community activists as exacerbating the problem of alcohol abuse in the city. Mount Pleasant has refused to ban the single sale of alcohol because the ANC commissioners feel that it would not solve the overall problem, and only shift the sale (and hence the problem) to other neighborhoods. Many commissioners feel that this is not a good solution for the city as a whole. (Interview with ANC commissioner, Jack McKay, 3/16/07)

using harassment to encourage restaurant owners to sign the Voluntary Agreements.

Massumi has documented this in the case of Haydee's, a restaurant that wanted to feature local mariachis bands on a nightly basis. He comments:

Because they (the MPNA) have a long standing relationship with the Police and the ABC, and The Police and the ABC do not really know what is going on in the neighborhood, they (the MPNA) simply made false complaints, not now and then but every single night. So Haydee was visited by the police and inspectors every single night until she gave up. (Massumi: 10/05)

Other residents in the neighborhood did not even know that these restrictions were in place.

Stand for Our Neighbors, a neighborhood activist group that grew out of D.C.'s punk and underground music scene, was one of these unknowing groups. One of the group's founders, tells the story of trying to hold a Neighborhood Cabaret about housing displacement at Haydee's restaurant in the late 1990s. The Cabaret was to feature Vietnamese and Salvadoran poets, a soul singer, a mariachi band and local singer/songwriters. Haydee was supportive of the cause but could not host the event because she had signed a Voluntary Agreement. Stand for Our Neighbors moved the event to Don Juan's, which had not yet signed the agreement. It was after this event that Stand for Our Neighbors became more active in its fight against the live music ban. Each summer, at the annual Celebrate Mount Pleasant Day Festival, the Family Stage is hosted by the group and it makes sure to keep alive the issue: that music is banned in Mount Pleasant.



Figure 17: Radio CPR Table at Celebrate Mount Pleasant Day, June 2004

To organize against the Voluntary Agreements, Stand for our Neighbors took up the plight of the mariachi bands. In the summer of 2003 and 2004, flyers handed out by the group featured the picture of a woman gagged by a cloth reading “Voluntary Agreements.” The headline on the flyer, printed in English and Spanish, read “Where have the Mariachis Gone?” By connecting the actions of MPNA to the repression of cultural expression, Stand for Our Neighbors effectively turned the argument from one of noise reduction to cultural rights. The group argued on its flyer, “When a small group imposes its barren lifestyle on the rest of us, democracy, diversity, and free speech are in jeopardy” (SFON flyer; June 2004). The Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Association has commented that it “doesn’t consider roaming mariachis live entertainment...” and so the mariachis are not covered by the Voluntary Agreement.⁷⁷ The result, however, has been the perception amongst musicians that live music is not allowed on the street and the mariachis have disappeared. As Dave Bosserman says, “Well, those musicians are

⁷⁷ Testimony by Marika Torok of MPNA in DC Council hearing, Nov. 2003

probably playing in Maryland and Virginia right now. But if we opened up the restaurants for live music, you may see their return” (Bosserman/Cadaval: 03/07)

The neighborhood underground radio station, Radio CPR, got into the act as well. The station serves many functions within the community: as a forum for discussion of neighborhood issues, as an outlet for local musical expression and as a catalyst for community activism. Once the station had learned about the situation with the Voluntary Agreements, it sent a call out to its DJs and members to align themselves with the Quality of Life Coalition, organized by another group of Mount Pleasant residents concerned about the situation of live music in the neighborhood. In their call to action, CPR leaders wrote:

As we try to open up and preserve spaces for independent, local, grassroots music on the airwaves...[this] group-[is] trying to preserve spaces for music in D.C.’s bars and restaurants...It is (the VAs) just one more example of how the Williams-era District government has empowered self-serving, self-fashioned citizens groups that represent only a tiny-and profoundly small minded-minority of D.C.’s population, to reshape how public space in our city is used. Sound familiar??...the situation is dire and I really feel like it’s a struggle linked to ours. (CPR meeting notes “Saving Live Music and DJ venues in D.C.”)

The station members have continued to be active in opposing the Voluntary Agreements by hosting shows in the Community of Christ Church (known as La Casa), keeping Mount Pleasant’s punk heritage alive and keeping local music on Mount Pleasant Street. They also keep the issue in the minds of their listeners through shows such as “Get off the Internet.” On one evening, Host DJ Natasha Nighttrain was in conversation with local D.C. hip-hop artist Head-Roc, and the two were comparing the role of activism in both the D.C. punk and the D.C. hip-hop scene. DJ Nighttrain mentioned that it was interesting how artists keep sections of the city alive and then the forces of gentrification push them out. To this Head-Roc responded, “It’s the American way. I’m sorry, but it’s

the American way...Everything that has to do with progress in this nation has to do with the suppression of music” (Get off the Internet, Radio CPR, 02/04). Head-Roc then commented that he is still working on this theory but he believes it to be true. Through discussions like this, Radio CPR continues the conversation about the cultural life of Mount Pleasant and gives voice to those in opposition to the totalizing presence of gentrification.

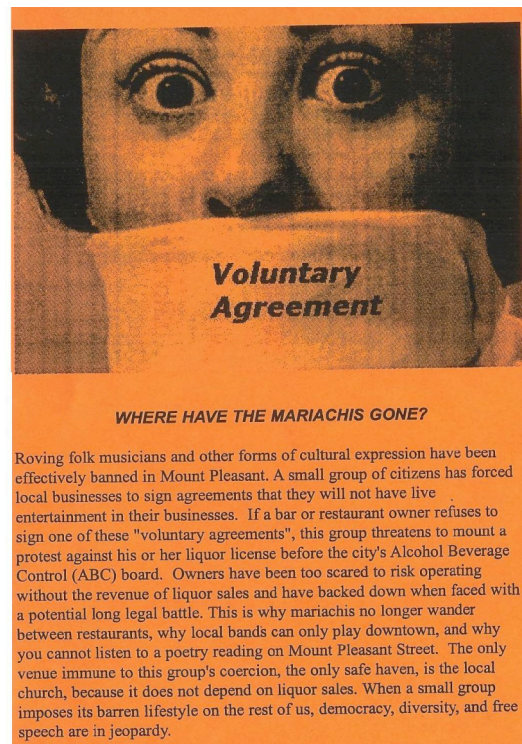


Figure 18: Radio CPR flyer about the Voluntary Agreements, 2004

The Noise Code and Results

Have their actions against the Voluntary Agreements produced results? This question is surely on the minds of those who are active against the ban on live music. While members of the community have participated in hearings to amend the ABC laws, these actions have not helped to bring actual change to the laws. In August 2003, the

Advisory Neighborhood Commission, an elected body of citizens from Mount Pleasant, voted 6-0 to remove the prohibitions on live music and dancing from the Voluntary Agreements. In their role as advisors to the D.C. government, the issue came up for a hearing in November 2003. At the hearing, D.C. city council members heard testimony from neighborhood activist groups, like Stand for Our Neighbors and the Quality of Life Coalition, as well as from members of the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Association. Councilmember Jim Graham of Ward 1, the ward in which Mount Pleasant is situated, took in the concerns of his constituents for live music and asked the witnesses appearing before the committee “how to limit the Voluntary Agreements within certain parameters.” Councilmember Graham then said that the real problem here was noise, not from music, but from what he called “disrespect.” “Licensees are disrespecting their neighbors at times by permitting poor sound proofing, loitering and littering.” (From History of Bill, p.17) At this same meeting, The D.C. City Council added a new rule to the D.C. Code, which outlines the topics Voluntary Agreements should address. One subject for inclusion was a noise provision under D.C.’s Official Code which prohibits the production of “any sound, noise or music of such intensity” that it can be heard on premises other than that of the licensee. The code then outlines what might cause sound to be produced in such a manner: “(1) mechanical device, machine, apparatus, or instrument for amplification of the human voice or any sound or noise; (2) bell, horn, gong, whistle, drum or other noise-making article, instrument or device; (3) musical instrument.” (D.C. Code § 25-725) With this statement, the lawmakers correlate noise with music.

The Code does not specify which types of music are more unacceptable, only that the amplification of the noise makers listed above are subject to regulation. The argument then becomes one of amplification, not merely liveness. Like the classic joke about the amplifier so powerful it goes to “11,” the power of amplification is what causes most neighborhood distress. Seen in another light, a restaurant blaring its music is surely claiming a spot on the street and advertising itself to potential patrons. French economic theorist Jacques Attali expounds on the relation between noise and power, suggesting that noise is a tool used to delineate territorial boundaries. But with that boundary definition also comes noise subversion, the rejection of standardization and control of noise.

Describing the manner in which totalitarian regimes respond to subversion he writes:

...it is necessary to ban subversive noise because it betokens demands for cultural autonomy, support for differences or marginality: a concern for maintaining tonalism, the primacy of melody, a distrust of new languages, codes, or instruments, a refusal of the abnormal—these characteristics are common to all regimes of that nature. They are a direct translation of the political importance of cultural repression and noise control. (Attali 1985: 7)

While not all members of the Mount Pleasant neighborhood would agree that they live under a totalitarian regime (although some might), Attali presents some points that do apply to the imposition of a particular worldview on the neighborhood soundscape. Like trash in the street or graffiti on the wall, some neighbors recognized noise as another symptom of disorder. Noise correlated with the people who make noise equals disorder to the leaders of the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Association.

These same neighbors see other parts of the city as prime examples of noise acceptance taken to the extreme. To the south of the neighborhood, the club-lined main thoroughfare of 18th Street in Adams Morgan is often used as an example to describe

what is not wanted in Mount Pleasant. Adams Morgan's 18th Street features clubs and restaurants that attract young people from all over the city and the suburbs. On a summer weekend, it turns into a late-night carnival scene with young people dressed to impress, bikers displaying their Harleys and Suzukis in highly-polished rows, and befuddled tourists looking for the Ethiopian restaurants. Bars with rooftop decks blast music and serve drinks under strings of white Christmas lights. During the rest of the year, the carnival atmosphere goes inside, escaping out into the cold through the doors as patrons bar-hop up and down the street. Many consider Adams Morgan one of the few centers for entertainment in the city (along with the newly rehabbed U Street corridor). Of course, with this clubbing environment comes crime. Adams Morgan has seen its fair share of assaults, robberies and shootings. It is not a place devoid of danger. In contrast, across Rock Creek Park from Mount Pleasant, Cleveland Park is a model of residential and business life of which those advocating for the Voluntary Agreements approve. A strip of small specialty ethnic restaurants and stores line either side of a major city thoroughfare, Connecticut Avenue. The residents and clientele of these establishments are upper-middle-class and enjoy sitting at outdoor cafes, grabbing a coffee at one of the two chain coffeeshops, walking to the historic Uptown movie theater and patronizing the up-market local groceries. If the sound of buses and traffic drowns out the sound of a traditional Irish music session at the neighborhood's two Irish pubs, no one complains. It is definitely a space in the city where upper-middle-class whites feel safe and amongst their own. Issues of music and noise are not as divisive in this neighborhood because the residents have agreed to the long-standing pattern of living in this section of the city: a comfortable, up-market space with some local commercial diversity. Clean but not

Disney-fied. For the members of the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Association, this way of life, or “quality of life” is what they aspire to: that their historic homes be surrounded by a placid, upper-middle class respect for silence.

While many have seen the arguments in Mount Pleasant as an issue of amplification, the law stipulates no live music, no matter what type of amplification. Many residents have worked to see the return of acoustic live music that would be within the noise parameters of the D.C. Code. At a Mount Pleasant ANC meeting in 2005, a neighbor who is a musician took issue with the idea of enforcing decibel limits.⁷⁸ The neighbor had played a concert in Lamont Park and was told that his amplifiers went above the decibel limit and that he should turn them down. ANC Commissioner Jack McKay, a retired physicist, often monitored such concerts with a decibel reader, in hopes of allaying arguments about noise. However, the presence of a decibel reader in this case was perceived as a threat and in support of those who are against live music. Still, all this arguing did not help to bring back live music or resolve the problem of music being characterized as noise.

One man’s noise is surely another man’s music. As Wayne Kahn, a Mt. Pleasant resident and former ANC commissioner, has commented on the situation in the neighborhood, “I live in Mount Pleasant. Home of no live music...I don’t want to live in a city shrouded in silence and where musicians cannot make living” (2003 Hearing Testimony). Specifically, musicians who live in the neighborhood cannot earn a living in the neighborhood. This point is often raised by those who want to overturn the ban on live music. However, one resident who helped to write the ban on live music considers that musicians need to do their part for the community first. To that end, members of the

⁷⁸ Fieldnotes of ANC meeting 2005 & interview with Frank Agbro, 10-05

neighborhood group MPNA started a summer daytime concert series (featuring amplified music) in Lamont Park. The musicians had to play for free.

Music in the Parks Series-Getting Opposition

...I feel like MPNA is offering my band an opportunity to play in my neighborhood, and wish people would shut up already about hypocrisy, stop playing politics with the musicians as your chessmen and just let us try and entertain. No guarantees, of course, but we'll do our best. We'll try to keep it to a dull roar and welcome Jack and his gizmo. Excessive volume just makes my tinnitus flare up anyway. (Chuck from Mount Pleasant Forum, June 9, 2006)

Groups like Stand for Our Neighbors and Radio CPR have been successful in arguing that the cultural life of Mount Pleasant has been suppressed and destroyed by the Voluntary Agreements and this argument has not fallen on deaf ears. Taking a play out of its opposition's playbook, in July 2005, the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Association, sponsored a Saturday afternoon concert series in Lamont Park featuring local musicians. In its petition to the Advisory Neighborhood Commission for support, the MPNA described the series as "an exploration by a neighborhood civic association of long standing to showcase local performers" (ANC resolution to support MPNA concert series, 06/05). To advertise the concert series for Summer 2006, organizer Laurie Collins posted this entry to the Mount Pleasant Forum, in which she describes the aims of the series as well as its association with MPNA and approval by government and police officials:

MPNA started this program in 2005 and it quickly became a great success supported by Ward 1 Councilmember Jim Graham as well as Third District Commander Larry McCoy. There are many resident musicians in Mt. Pleasant. The Music in the Park Series is a wonderful opportunity for local neighborhood musicians to do community service and give back to their community by playing music or performing a talent for free. Mount Pleasant is a diverse neighborhood. Lamont Park is a place where you can hear a variety of languages spoken and one of the few places in this city where people of all demographics come together.

Our music selection offered is of a wide spectrum and it is MPNA's goals and objectives to bring our neighbors out to the park to meet their neighbors, enjoy some music and feel safe in their neighborhood park. The Music in the Park Series is a celebration of Mt. Pleasant's diversity as well as an opportunity to nurture respect for the diversity that exists in our neighborhood.

We promote neighbors meeting neighbors, our events encourages them to maybe shop on our commercial strip, talk to those they haven't had a chance to meet, have the children play in a safe and clean environment—enjoy and embrace the diversity of our neighborhood-- The series offers a venue for wholesome family activities in Lamont Park, rather than letting drug dealers and drunks take it over. (Laurie Collins, June 7, 2006-Mount Pleasant Forum)

The concerts ranged from Blues guitar to Alternative Country to Springsteen cover bands. While the concerts were advertised around the neighborhood by flyers on lampposts and utility poles, attendance varied and was minimal at best. None of the musicians and artists who have been active countering the ban on live music were invited to perform.

In fact, many musicians who answered a previous call for bands posted by the MPNA were not aware of the connection between the MPNA and the Voluntary Agreements, the same agreements that prohibit them from making a living as musicians in the neighborhood. In one such case, the band Machetres, which played on the first broadcast of Radio CPR, originally planned to play the concert series. When they found out who was organizing it, however, they pulled out. In interviews with other bands, I found that band members were also unaware of the connection at the time of performance and felt that they were doing a service to the community. At the same time, they were furious about the situation created by the Voluntary Agreements. In the end, these feelings conflict with one another: musicians doing something constructive for the community, feeling like they are participating in the celebration of their neighborhood,

while not being allowed to profit on their talents as musicians and provide entertainment at night within their own neighborhood. It has the feeling of musicians and bands being used without their knowledge and turning something celebratory into something sour.

Former MPNA president Laurie Collins insists that there is no connection between the concert series and the Voluntary Agreements. She has stated often that the concert series is a moment to celebrate diversity and community spirit. When questioned about this she responds:

There is a difference between having an open Music in a Park and having live music in restaurants which do affect quality of life. I mean, we're a very small commercial strip. We are abutted by homes on both sides and even above the businesses are homes. And some of those are very poor Latino and Asian families who have no voice in the community and need to have their kids in bed at 8:00 or 9:00 at night....so you try to come up with a balance to deal with those issues and no one has gone out of business. We've never put anyone out of business. (Collins: 10/06)

Despite this, Collins does see a future for music on Mount Pleasant Street, but she does not think that the neighborhood should allow bars and restaurants the ability to have live music just to stay economically competitive. She sees that great economic changes are happening in the neighborhood (especially in the adjacent neighborhood of Columbia Heights) and the effect of those changes may in fact make this argument moot. As she has commented, "This isn't 'Footloose.'" There are venues where you can have live entertainment in Mount Pleasant, one is the Music in the Park. There are other places in Mount Pleasant that don't sell alcohol where you can have live music, so there isn't a ban on live music." (Collins: 10/06) While her neighborhood group may not see the connection between the concert series in Lamont Park and the Voluntary Agreements, many within the neighborhood who have been fighting the ban see the concert series as something a little sinister.

HEAR Mount Pleasant: New Organizing against the VAs.

As I mentioned in an earlier post, the Mount Pleasant Heritage Trail does a wonderful job of showing how music was an integral part of our neighborhood in the past. This morning, my housemate urged me to go and read the plaque on our block next to Bancroft Elementary School.

And what I learned gave me just a little more inspiration and belief that bringing live music back to Mount Pleasant is important for our cultural growth. I was honored to know that Bo Diddley called my house home during the summer of 1962.

[From the plaque]

"In the summer of 1962, R & B star Bo Diddley lived with his wife Kay and baby Terri in an apartment at 1724 Newton Street, across from Bancroft School. The neighborhood's central location, affordable rents, and nearby music clubs on Mount Pleasant and 14th Streets attracted artists and rising performers.

Diddley connected with some neighborhood teenagers when he'd heard "singing on the corner - at least we thought we were singing" recalled former area resident Arthur Wang. "He encouraged and invited the boys to talk music and occasionally ride in his convertible. It was an experience they never forgot.

Village in the City Mount Pleasant Heritage Trail Plaque 7(18th and Newton)
-David Sachdev of Hear Mount Pleasant (From Mount Pleasant Listserv: March 14, 2007)

"Why does Mount Pleasant need live music and dancing?" This question is one of the issue points for a new organization that has emerged in Mount Pleasant to counter and overturn the Voluntary Agreements. In late 2006 and early 2007, a group of concerned neighbors created the organization Hear Mount Pleasant, to "promote culture, music and art in the neighborhood." (Mission statement) The group's first meeting, in February 2007, was held at Haydee's restaurant, where the Mariachis played in the past. The owner of the restaurant, Haydee, dressed in a beautiful red dress, thanked the group for meeting at her restaurant and encouraged them to continue their work. She told the story of customers who wanted to use the restaurant for birthdays and special events, but could not invite musicians to play or even host karaoke. The result is that she has not

been able to provide for her customers in the ways that she would like. Others began to testify about their own relationship to the issue, either as musicians who lived in the neighborhood, or as neighborhood organizers, or just as concerned neighbors who love music.

It's Sunday night, and a few members of Hear Mount Pleasant have gathered at the Marx Café on Mount Pleasant Street to screen the film "Footloose." For many in the group, the 1984 film about the town which banned dancing resonates with their own plight. At the bar, a customer says, "Is this about the mariachis?" People come in and are welcomed to sign a petition to bring back live music to the neighborhood. Some of the organizers mingle through the café, approaching customers seated at tables to talk about the group's mission and the history of the ban on live music in Mount Pleasant. As the evening progresses, a few of the organizers sit around a table and talk about their strategies as well as those in opposition to their efforts. Again and again, the members stress the importance of making their actions transparent, "out in the open," as well as open to debate. The consensus among the group is to work with the businesses on the street to responsibly bring back the music to Mount Pleasant. In so doing, these business owners would be more likely to abide by noise restrictions. Treat them as partners, so the theory goes. It is in stark contrast to the way that the Voluntary Agreements were conducted in the past—with business owners coerced into signing by a small contingent who did not have the consent of the neighborhood, though acting in its name as a neighborhood organization. Hear Mount Pleasant wants to be the other neighborhood organization—the one that opens up the debate about live music and brings it back to the street.

Conclusion:

If one looks back over the list of banned noise-producing instruments (gongs, horns, machines, musical instruments), one might envision a composer like John Cage weeping. In one of Cage's essays on contemporary music, he writes about the confusion of noise and music by posing questions:

Are sounds just sounds, or are they Beethoven?
People aren't sounds are they?
Is there such a thing as silence?
Even if I get away from people, do I still have to listen to something?
(Cage 1961: 42)

Cage invites us to reflect on the nature of sound and its relationship to the environment.

As the demands on the environment change by those who live in the neighborhood, the soundscape of the neighborhood changes as well. And for Mt. Pleasant, those changes have been enacted through laws. In many urban neighborhoods across the Washington, D.C. area, these battles are taking place. In one section of the city, establishments are prohibited from playing hip-hop or go-go music, D.C.'s homegrown music culture.⁷⁹

Residents are re-envisioning what a neighborhood in the city should sound like and who should define that sound. This is not a new phenomenon. In Victorian England, a "Street Music Act" was proposed by a descendent of the Bass Ale family (and passed by Parliament) to allow homeowners the right to demand that street musicians (organ grinders of Italian decent) stop playing without stating any needing any justification.

Historian John Picker comments that this gave homeowners "the power to domesticate the streets" (Picker 2003: 59). The same arguments are being made in Mt Pleasant.

⁷⁹ The Voluntary Agreements are not confined to Mount Pleasant. In the U Street Area, a neighborhood once known for its jazz clubs and black culture prior to the 1968 riots, neighbors wrote very specific VAs which prohibit go-go and rap. In fact, in one voluntary agreement in the Adam's Morgan section of the city, the number of instruments used by musicians is regulated (Ruether 2007: 34).

Gentrification is a grand domestication project. It ranges from the cleaning-up of house facades to the purifying of the streets. Making Mount Pleasant Street comfortable for the more wealthy arrivals does not stop at the addition of a hip restaurant or an organic farmer's market. It can reach deep into the cultural identity of the street, restructuring the manner in which people represent themselves and celebrate different cultural heritages.

How the people respond to this restructuring is where the discussion of neighborhood identity and community takes place. Composer R. Murray Schafer recognized this in his groundbreaking treatise on soundscapes. By comparing noise abatement laws across the globe, Schafer realized that what a society considers noise is subject to cultural constraints. From his world-wide survey, he discovered that in Hong Kong, the slapping of mah jong tiles caused the greatest complaints, while in Rabat, Morocco, family reunions topped the list. Schafer called these specific sounds "soundmarks," or sounds that have specific connection to place.⁸⁰ As more and more noise concerns arise in an area, the list of prohibited noises grows. But as Schaefer points out, "...the moment we place a sound on the proscription list, we do it the ultimate honor of making it all-powerful. It is for this reason that the petty proscriptions of the community by-laws will never succeed, indeed must never succeed" (Schafer 1977: 202). Many members of Mount Pleasant's pro-live music coalition would agree with Schafer on this point. By outlining which type of sound culture is acceptable and which is not, the neighborhood has effectively defined which type of people are acceptable in the neighborhood and which are not. The soundscape, a term used by anthropologists and ethnomusicologists to refer to the sound events within a landscape,

⁸⁰ Schafer defines a soundmark as "...derived from landmark and refers to a community sound which is unique or possesses qualities which make it specially regarded or noticed by the people in that community." (Schafer 1977: 10)

becomes another territory of identity. It is a place of contestation and control, where neighbors decide what they will or will not tolerate.

It is also in these moments of conflict that the neighborhood voices differing claims on the identity of Mount Pleasant. For older residents, lower-income residents, Latinos and punks, Mount Pleasant is a community based on diversity of opinion, of heritage, of lifestyle, and of music. For others, Mount Pleasant is a place with potential, a place that can be diverse but must be contained. In the end, the fight for music in Mount Pleasant presents a case study in noise as related to power, and the aspirations of the “civilizing” upper-middle class whites on “unruly and disorderly” ethnic populations. To see this struggle as merely a fight to restore a decent night’s sleep is to be naïve about the impact of gentrification on neighborhood relations.

When music is targeted for silence, both the music and the audience are the victims of such actions. Alan Lomax noticed this in his career of recording and advocating for musical cultures. In his essay “An Appeal for Cultural Equity,” Lomax stressed the importance of equal access of music cultures to resources such as media, education and money. He writes:

Real musicians, real composers, need real people to listen to them, and this means people who understand and share the musical language that they are using. It seems reasonable, therefore, that if the human race is to have a rich and varied musical future, we must encourage the development of as many local musics as possible. (Lomax 2003: 291)

This is a typical plea by scholars who see applied ethnomusicology as a field which assists musical cultures in their development. Lomax’s words, though, also highlight an important aspect of cultural preservation that is sometimes overlooked, that of the

audience.⁸¹ Musicians do need access to media and access to financial reward for their art, but they also need access to audience. If playing the music is prohibited, it will die. If the audience is not allowed to hear the music, the music will die. In the neighborhood of Mount Pleasant, silencing live music has meant the virtual death of musical cultures in the neighborhood. Musicians must find other places in the city to play. Restaurant patrons in the neighborhood are not allowed to support local musical cultures, which has meant those cultures move to other parts of the city or into the suburbs. Neighborhood residents who want to celebrate the musical culture of the neighborhood can only do so in daylight hours and the musicians cannot financially benefit from the event. This is not a good sign for the survival of musical cultures in the city of Washington, D.C.. Trying to balance the needs of new residents with the needs of current residents is surely a challenge. As one neighbor posted online to the Mount Pleasant Forum,

...we live in the city and other major cities seem to have managed to survive with both live music and apartment buildings and residences nearby. I, for one, would rather be awakened by the sounds of singing and laughter, rather than gun shots and sirens any day. (Mtpneighbor, Mount Pleasant Forum, Dec. 1, 2003)

Ethnomusicologists, anthropologists and folklorists have studied the manner in which music is used as a marker of identity. In these studies, the preservation of one's music culture is often heralded as a measure of pride, such as "We continue to play our music whether or not others see it as old-fashioned because it keeps our heritage (identity) alive." This kind of language is employed when musics are presented at folklife festivals or celebrated on world music CDs. The musicians have agency through

⁸¹ Lomax's words here are not free of problems. By delineating "real musicians," he is making a value judgement about the kinds of music he finds acceptable. I am sure Lomax would not necessarily include the Punks of Mount Pleasant in his category of "real musicians." Still, his observations about the need for local music and audiences which support them are valid in this context.

their struggle to preserve their traditions, often assisted behind the scenes by a cultural mediator such as an applied ethnomusicologist or public folklorist. In this formula, community is upheld as the goal. When communities work together to preserve their musical traditions, those same music traditions are more likely to survive. It is also the case that many scholars find community lacking in modern American society, and take comfort in the grass-roots efforts of community activists on the behalf of musical communities.

However, neighborhoods can generate grass-roots efforts that do not support music within a community. As evidenced by the Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Association's Voluntary Agreements, community groups can work against a community, using the same language and methods that grass-roots organizers and scholars of community see as empowering. By working within a system constructed to empower a community to act, these groups put forward culture-stifling policies in the interest of a few. Their knowledge of the power system within a city and ability to use the system to their advantage cuts off wider community involvement and discussion. The end result is the shaping of the neighborhood into their vision, without the consent or knowledge of the majority of residents. And for music in this particular neighborhood, the result has been fatal.

In the face of changes, from new development to new residents, those who live in cities are constantly redefining and negotiating what life in a city should be. Social scientists supply studies and statistics that tell what the city has been in the past: a crime-ridden, poverty-stricken environment that is compelled to produce more poverty and violence unless it changes. Developers look at vacant, boarded-up houses and see future

sites for luxury condos. Think-tank professors expound ideas about a creative class that will rejuvenate burned-out city centers. And in these moments, the arts are brought forth as the saviors of society. More investment in art will bring around a neighborhood. However, not all art is welcome. Art that is noisy or connotes disorder and violence is not encouraged. Music that brings an unruly or drunken clientele is surely not welcomed. These issues are important points of community evolution, especially in twenty-first century urban American life. As cities change, whether through economic factors like gentrification or environmental factors like Hurricane Katrina, those who have access to the structures of power and the greatest financial assets are the ones who decide what type of culture will be permitted within the city boundaries. Those who do not have that same access will be the ones wondering where the music went.

CHAPTER FIVE

“But what if they call the police?”: Applied Ethnomusicology and Urban Activism in the United States

The crowd was beginning to trickle into the Wonderland Ballroom in Columbia Heights, a neighborhood of Washington, D.C., for an evening of old-time country music. Members of the local band on that night's bill lingered by the entrance, collecting cover fees and mingling with patrons. As I entered the bar, one of the band members introduced me to the rest of the band as “the person who is writing about the live-music ban in Mount Pleasant.” The band only recently discovered, through another band member, that they could not play in a popular bar a few blocks away because of a city ordinance which prohibited the performance of live music in establishments which sold alcohol in that specific neighborhood. It did not matter to the authors of the ordinance that this would prohibit residents of the neighborhood from earning a living as musicians in their own neighborhood. Their concern about noise levels trumped all other arguments.

A few weeks later, while leaving a community meeting on Mount Pleasant Street, I ran into a member of that same old-time band, who immediately told me the band's plan to bring music back to the neighborhood. They would play at the Marx Café on Mount Pleasant Street, right in the heart of the neighborhood, and dare the music-ban authors to stop them. One of my friends from the meeting, knowing the situation asked, “But what

if they call the police?” This question is at the root of what it means to me to be committed to activism. It is not the first context in which I have heard this question asked in the midst of my research. What would happen if those who instituted this ban on live music called the police? Could I and other members of the audience potentially be carted off to jail for listening to music?

Of course, researchers do not always encounter delicate situations like this while in the field. A more typical stance for ethnomusicologists is to observe and participate in musical cultures, forming friendships with their informants, and avoiding any politically charged situations as best as possible. This stance comes from not only a concern for balance in their research, but also from the product which researchers generate: ethnographies. Ethnographic research naturally privileges observations, as researchers chronicle their experiences and their subsequent conclusions as witnesses in the field. In the writing of ethnographies, researchers are trying to capture a “truth” about a life lived.⁸² Clifford Geertz, in his examination of the art and practice of ethnographic writing, comments that this truth is actually elusive and that the use of ethnographic writing in the future could be as a facilitator of conversations. Of that future he writes:

...it will involve enabling conversation across societal lines-of ethnicity, religion, class, gender, language, race-that have grown progressively more nuanced, more immediate and more irregular. The next necessary thing...is to enlarge the possibility of intelligible discourse between people quite different from one another in interest, outlook, wealth, and power, and yet contained in a world where, tumbled as they are into endless connection, it is increasingly difficult to get out of each other's way. (Geertz 1988: 147)

⁸² Geertz is clear to point out that this truth is elusive and a construct, it is the effort to produce this truth or understanding that is the basis of much ethnographic work. He finds that one of the main tensions in ethnographic writing is how the author reveals him or herself in the text and how the text itself is generated, especially when, as he writes, “Finding somewhere to stand in a text that is supposed to be at one and the same time an intimate view and a cool assessment is almost as much a challenge as gaining the view and making the assessment in the first place” (Geertz 1988: 10).

In this quotation, Geertz could be accused of setting out an agenda for applied work.

However, it does not go as far as I suggest we could as scholars. Ethnography can serve as a conduit to conversation, but the main problem is the time involved in generating such texts. While the scholar takes time to reflect on the issues in order to create an ethnography, the community continues to face the problems the scholar is pondering.

What happens when the researcher decides to become actively involved in those scenes she is witnessing, before writing up an ethnographic text? Does an activist stance delegitimize subsequent scholarly observation?

What is Applied Ethnomusicology?

Applied ethnomusicology is a philosophical approach to the study of music in culture, with social responsibility and social justice as guiding principles. Applied ethnomusicologists use their academic training to advocate for musical communities and to act as mediators between the music culture and the general public. (Sheehy 1992, Titon 1992, Graves 2005). In collaboration with musical communities, these scholars seek to find solutions to problems or to address issues of concern in the communities they study. Issues that applied ethnomusicologists address include copyright and traditional music, the survival and preservation of musical traditions, the self-documentation of musical communities, and the training of individuals to become advocates for their own communities. While applied ethnomusicologists are not the only scholars in ethnomusicology to conduct their research in this manner, they do take these modes of research as central to their process of scholarship.

Ethnomusicology, as a field, is diverse in topics and research approaches. Just a cursory glance at the Society for Ethnomusicology's list of sections and special interest

groups indicates the breadth of interests, from Historical Ethnomusicology to Medical Ethnomusicology to sections devoted to Dance and Education. Within all these areas of interest, scholars work toward an understanding of musical cultures and the people involved in those cultures. In the early days of the field, some scholars championed a scientific approach to such research, documenting in such a way as to quantify and catalogue the world's musical diversity. Approaches ranged from the cataloging of musical instruments to the creation of musical analysis tools for non-western musics. Alan Merriam, one of the founders of the field, described the task of ethnomusicology as a balancing act between the humanities and science. He writes:

The ethnomusicologist is, in effect, sciencing about music. His role is not to discuss the art product in terms familiar to the humanist, but rather to seek knowledge of and regularities in artistic behavior and product. He does not seek the aesthetic experience of others from the standpoint of understanding human behavior. Thus the procedures and goals of ethnomusicology fall upon the side of the social sciences while its subject matter is a humanistic aspect of man's existence. (Merriam 1964: 25)

While Merriam points out that subject under study is a human production (and might invite a "humanist" approach, he insists the researcher continue their inquiry in a scientific manner. Merriam later suggests that the researcher will always be an outsider to the cultures he or she studies and in many ways, this outsider stance supports the more scientific approach he advocates. As he comments:

...his [the ethnomusicologist's] position is always that of the outsider who seeks to understand what he hears through analysis of structure and behavior, and to reduce this understanding to terms which will allow him to compare and generalize his results for music as a universal phenomenon of man's existence. (Merriam 1964: 25)

Here we can understand why the scientific method is lauded and the outsider stance is suggested, as the goal of research is to "compare and generalize," to move toward an

understanding of “music as a universal phenomenon.”⁸³ Inserting oneself into the action would make for muddy data and not help to forward the goal of research.

As the field of ethnomusicology developed, more researchers found that their interpretations of what they observed could not be as distanced as Merriam’s methods required. The demands of participant-observer research caused many scholars to question whether their analysis of the cultural scenes in which they engaged truly reflected their position in the research. Anthropologists especially questioned their positioning in their research and in turn incorporated a more reflexive mode of analysis in their ethnographic writing.⁸⁴ Ethnomusicologist Timothy Rice comments that this perspective, which places the researcher in the action as an actor, “affirm[s] personal experience as the starting point for the interpretation of meaning.” (Rice 1994: 10). Experience is the starting point and but one way of understanding. In an article on fieldwork methodology, Rice notices that in the process of doing fieldwork the researcher moves from an outsider perspective (through participation) toward an insider perspective, while the insiders (the teachers/bearers of the tradition) move toward a more distanced perspective in the exchange of teaching and explaining. This is what he calls the “hermeneutical arc,” where experiential exchange transforms perspective (Rice 1997: 119). The resulting ethnographic writing about this transformative experience is tied to Rice’s own transformation and his journey toward his own understanding of insider.

Admitting that the perspective is your own understanding is at least a move toward

⁸³ Merriam’s approach was not the only method of conducting research in ethnomusicology at the time. Ethnomusicologist Mantle Hood advocated what he termed “bi-musicality,” wherein the researcher learns how to perform the music of the culture under study, becoming fluent in the musical language in order to understand the music on its own terms. In many ways, this contradicts Merriam’s outsider stance, asking the researcher to become more deeply involved in the music by participating in it. For more on this theory see (Hood 1971).

⁸⁴ In *Writing Culture*, Anthropologists James Clifford and For a thorough discussion of the turn toward reflexivity see (Davies 2002).

justice of representation. In many ways, advocacy can find a home in this method of research, where the researcher is between worlds: mediating between the academic world (and beyond) and the world of the tradition bearers.

There is a problem, however, when reflexivity is the only method of justice employed by ethnographers. To place oneself in the text can be more truthful of the experience described: it is, after all, an understanding of events in the world through the particular eyes (and mind) of a particular observer, with all the psychological quirks and peculiarities included. But this is not enough when it comes to moving toward a justice of representation. Ethnomusicologist Kay Shelemay suggests a collaborative process between researcher and tradition bearers, where our position (power) as “scholar” can be used to the benefit of those with whom we work. As Shelemay writes, “We must accept responsibility not just for the impact of our entry into the field, but for our abiding relationship to it and our teachers long after we have “left” (i.e., discontinued research).” (Shelemay 1997: 201). Building on that relationship created in the field, researchers can document in respectful ways what they observe as well as share those observations (as Shelemay did through lecture/performances at the behest of the community she studied) with the community. Again, this is another instance when the researcher is seen as an advocate for the community they research/collaborate with.

At some point, though, the ethnographer puts down the gaida (in Tim Rice’s case) and turns on the laptop. The researcher writes up what he or she has seen, in order to arrive at a knowledgeable conclusion, and after which they can become the lecturer at the concert. Returning to the academic world to place this newly gained knowledge into a theoretical framework involves some distancing from the community. This is where

objectivity becomes an important feature of what we do as ethnographers. We can act as advocates for a community if we insist that we are mediators between communities, a full-fledged member of the scholarly world and a (sometimes) accepted member of the community we study. It is a delicate balancing act, one which Rice's "hermeneutical arc" moves toward addressing. Why is it, then, that so many ethnomusicologists believe they are already advocates but do not define themselves as applied ethnomusicologists?

The controversial nature of what applied ethnomusicologists do has contributed to its marginalization within the field of ethnomusicology.⁸⁵ As a result, the history of the development of applied work within ethnomusicology is scattered amongst the history of public projects in the United States. Ethnomusicologist Daniel Sheehy, in his effort to trace the history of applied ethnomusicology, concludes that it is the purpose and strategies employed by applied ethnomusicologists which inform how they conduct their academic and public work. He writes:

By viewing all ethnomusicological endeavor, academic or otherwise, as strategy guided by a sense of social purpose, we can expand the potential of ethnomusicological skills and minimize counter-productive perceptions of barriers between academic and applied work. (Sheehy 1992: 355)

By engaging the social purpose of research, as Sheehy suggests, arguments against the validity of applied work as academic work lessen, since all ethnomusicological work can be seen as being in service to those we study. As folklorist and former director of the National Endowment for the Arts' Folk and Traditional Arts Program, Bess Lomax Hawes developed an insight into applied work which she called "payback," or the

⁸⁵ Sheehy points out that since ethnomusicology developed as a field during a time of political conservatism in the United States (the 1950s and early 1960s), there was already a climate in academia for "pure research" as opposed to the perceived left-leaning activities of applied scholars like Alan Lomax and others. (Sheehy 1992: 325) This point is emphasized in the history of the establishment of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, spearheaded by folklorist Archie Green and objected to by folklorist Richard Dorson. (see Green 1988: 20) For more on the perception of applied work amongst founding members of ethnomusicology, see (Sheehy 1992).

moment when scholars switch from merely collecting folklore and reporting their results to the responsible stewardship of that information and the fostering of relationships. She comments, “Payback, then, functions as an underlying principle, a state of mind, or a state of conscience...” (Hawes 1992: 69-70). This “state of mind” informs how one does research in the first place, not just occurring as a result of a relationship. It becomes the manner in which one operates in the world.⁸⁶

I would argue that this is how applied ethnomusicology becomes a method of research that goes beyond simply being a responsible steward of a “tradition bearer’s” knowledge and life story. It is a manner in which ethnomusicological research can be conducted. Ethnomusicologist Jeff Titon addressed this idea in a conversation with ethnomusicologist John Fenn published in the 2003 edition of the journal *Folklore Forum*. Titon recognized that applied ethnomusicology is at heart about problem-solving, not about project-producing or resume-building. He comments:

...applied work doesn’t just involve participant-observation research in musical cultures, but also collaborations as people in the community take a major role in the practical problem-solving having to do with the place of music in the life of the community. (Fenn and Titon 2003: 131)

By collaborating with the people we are studying, we not only teach them about our field, what an ethnomusicologist is and does, but we use those skills learned in the classroom to assist problem-solving in the community on the community’s terms. In the process, we also learn more about the meaning of music in their lives.

Being committed to problem-solving in communities, however, does involve a deeper commitment over time. To be an advocate for musical cultures and communities

⁸⁶ While Hawes and Sheehy’s views may echo “the prescriptive list” laid out by Shelemay, it does not seem to me that Shelemay is placing applied ethnomusicology central to her concerns but as a result of her interactions. For more on Shelemay’s thoughts on fieldwork methods, see Shelemay 1997.

does not require that one reside in the community. Scholars often act as advocates in their position as researchers and teachers, acknowledging in their writings and lectures their role as a mediator between the different communities. To be an activist for musical communities one needs to bear witness to the everyday struggles and align in common cause with ones neighbors. Activism has been defined as “a doctrine or practice that emphasizes vigorous action (as the use of force for political ends.”⁸⁷ Activist scholarship may not sit comfortably in a university setting, because the researcher who engages in activist work loses any sense of neutrality or distance, allowing their work to become controversial and questioned.⁸⁸ But then, as Bess Hawes has commented on this issue, “Aside from neutrality’s making for boring conversations, I think this position overestimates the actual weight and importance of scholarly opinions” (Hawes 1995: 187). She found that when groups were denied funding from the NEA Folk Arts Program, they usually decided to do the project anyway, without government support.

Involving oneself in applied work means engaging with a sort of politics that might not sit comfortably in all of academic departments. While liberal, progressive politics often do have a home in university settings, and these political views were instrumental in the founding of area studies as a discipline, today’s universities have been characterized by a many as “corporate universities,” where business models and values are applied to the managing of research.⁸⁹ With this business model comes the pressures

⁸⁷ See Webster’s Third International Dictionary, Unabridged, 1993.

⁸⁸ The folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett took issue with public folklore for this point, stating that because folklorists are reliant on governmental funding and all the restrictions and representations that entails, there is a “need for critical discourse independent of advocacy,” which she feels is a role academia should play. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1992: 33)

⁸⁹ The term “corporate university” is often used to describe the relationship between industry and scientific research on university campuses. Journalists Jennifer Washburn and Eyal Press chronicled the impact of corporate funding on universities in their March 2000 *Atlantic Monthly* article “The Kept University.” In

of professionalism, which privileges knowledge produced for specialized audiences.

Engaging with public audiences could be seen as a political statement, despite the call for a narrowing of the perceived gap between the public and the academic. As sociologist Charles Derber explains in relation to the field of public sociology:

Professionalism is part of an ongoing political struggle for ideological hegemony and the control of knowledge...I argue that professionals could be seen as a new knowledge class integrally linked to broader systems of domination. The movement towards historical emancipation might then eventually transform or abolish professional sociology and professionalism more broadly, creating a different knowledge and class structure. (Burawoy, et al. 2004: 121)

This radical viewpoint, of abolishing an entire discipline, was actually echoed by ethnomusicologist Anthony Seeger in relation to the field of ethnomusicology. Seeger contends that the study of ethnomusicology should be structured around questions, not departments. He writes:

To the extent that ethnomusicology exists, it is a group of questions, approaches to responses, publications, recordings, and people that are open to examination and discussion along with the ideas of many others who are identified with the social sciences, physical sciences and many other fields. Take what you want, leave or criticize what isn't useful, and see how what you take helps you to answer old questions and create new and interesting ones. (Seeger 1997: 252)

The questions that applied ethnomusicologists address do benefit from the insight of multiple fields, such as anthropology and sociology. But these questions (or problems) also insist on input from the community, an engagement and responsibility to the community that supersedes detached theoretical frameworks. This engagement however, goes against the traditional system of academic achievement. For example, the recent interest in advocacy in the Society for Ethnomusicology has generated panels and roundtables to discuss the issue, with the implication that advocacy is a by-product of

the article, the authors mention the downsizing of the humanities in favor of fields which seemingly better prepare students for the technical business world.

academic inquiry, instead of being central to the endeavor. A deeper engagement with communities must come first from the discipline itself through recognition that such involvement is valued and not stigmatized.

Folklorists especially, have created an entire field within their discipline for the public application of folklore research. By working within institutions and in grassroots organizations, folklorists have contributed to the debates about cultural pluralism, cultural heritage preservation and presentation in the United States. (Loomis 1983, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1988, Payne 1998, Feintuch 1988, Baron and Spitzer 2007, Hufford 1994) Through festival presentations, arts apprenticeships, educational programming and various other methods, folklorists have worked to engage the public in a greater appreciation and understanding of expressive culture. It is through these public presentations that folklorists actively pursue the public discussion of diversity and preservation on a local and national level. Folklorists have been able to do this in national institutions like the Smithsonian and the Library of Congress. Within a more local environment, folklorists use their training in ethnography to document the diversity of the communities in which they work.

The impulse toward advocacy in public folklore is an important turn, deciding to actively intervene to revive and maintain cultural traditions. Folklorists and ethnomusicologists have been doing this for years, through arts apprenticeships and grants which assist community projects. As folklorists Robert Baron and Nick Spitzer write:

In the end our concern must be human agency first at the community level to advocate for appropriate culture continuity as a fundamental freedom and means to a better quality of life. Whether one is part of a community or culture newly in diaspora from a disaster or political depredations, or long-settled on a landscape

imperiled by changing economies and ecologies, the possibilities of sustainable cultural diversity expressed aesthetically at special performative moments, through material creations or simply lived in the aesthetics of daily life, should be the concern of all people. (Baron and Spitzer 2007: xviii)

This call to action is not limited to folklorists or ethnomusicologists. But it is a call to not only to acknowledge our positions as academics in communities, but also to place the welfare of those who we study and the survival of their cultural traditions at the center of what we do as scholars. Advocacy is the entry point, the decision to be another spokesperson for the community within the world of academia and institutions. I would argue that activism is a further step, in which we sign on to the causes in the community on the community's terms. In this way, we are not speaking for the community as an expert (as I feel the word advocacy implies), but rather adding our voice to the many other voices within the community.

While governmental institutions like the NEA operate within a cultural policy which privileges the preservation and dissemination of musical traditions, the threat to musical expression is not always one of extinction. Threats can come in many forms, even legal prohibitions to participate in musical expression itself, whether that expression is based in traditional cultures or created within popular culture. Other threats can originate in the society, through laws and policies that impact the everyday life of musicians and musical culture. As people trying to live within complex governments and societies, it is not easy to separate out music from the existence of everyday life. Like other artists, musicians can face eviction, deportation, harassment from police, drug and alcohol abuse, not to mention the denial of the right to perform and make a living with their art. These are issues which have deep societal roots, and the addressing of which requires a deeper sense of commitment to community. Not all applied

ethnomusicologists will or should deal directly with these kinds of issues, but to be a responsible member of society, it is important to first acknowledge that these problems do have an impact on the lives of those we study. There are different approaches to addressing these problems: as an advocate for musical communities, applied ethnomusicologists can work within larger institutions, reminding others of the plight of those communities. As an activist, however, those issues become central to the work that an applied ethnomusicologist does within these communities and effects how the applied ethnomusicologist operates within the community. The interconnected nature of how people live their lives and the effects of social inequities on these lives pushes applied ethnomusicology toward activist work. To be an activist for music requires that one needs to be an activist for social justice issues as well.

To be an applied ethnomusicologist does not mean one is necessarily in control of a project. Sometimes, the best way to be an activist is to observe and participate in what is already happening around you. In most cases, the applied ethnomusicologist becomes an advisor or assistant, providing support, a more typical method of advocacy. But we can also, as applied ethnomusicologists, observe how community scholars are already doing what we called applied ethnomusicology. While people in communities who are doing this work may not have the academic training of ethnomusicologists, their common sense approach toward music and culture in their communities are good models for ethnomusicologists to follow. Empowering community members to continue in this good work can be an important role for an applied ethnomusicologist. These community scholars are not ethnomusicologists in the strict sense of being attached to the methods and theories of academia, but they are scholars of their community and the ways in which

their community works. By witnessing how a community reacts to problems through cultural work, applied ethnomusicologists can find ways to get involved that fit into how a community thinks about itself. And by taking notes from and following the lead of community responses to community issues, we can better serve those we seek to assist.

Please Sign our Petition!: Being Involved in Community Issues

The neighborhood pro-music group, Hear Mount Pleasant, was setting up their information table in front of Don Juan's restaurant. It was supposed to be a protest event and a chance to stand in solidarity with the businesses on Mount Pleasant Street in opposition to the live music ban. The group organized a Karaoke night at Don Juan's to protest the Voluntary Agreements which prohibited Alberto Ferrufino, Don Juan's proprietor, from holding karaoke or similar live music events in his restaurant. The plan, however, was drastically changed by unforeseen events and neighborhood politics. On Good Friday 2007, at the annual Via Crucis procession down Mount Pleasant Street, a D.C. police officer was injured in an automobile accident. The officer later died from his injuries. A neighbor, instrumental in creating the live-music ban in the neighborhood, notified the community, via a listserv, about a vigil for the officer and his family taking place on the following Friday. This was same night as the Hear Mount Pleasant karaoke celebration. In a scramble to be respectful and to keep to their cause, the members of the group transformed their event into a show of support for the police officers. They delayed the start of the karaoke until after the vigil, and invited the officers to come back later that evening to enjoy a night of music and community spirit.

While the group assembled their table in front of Don Juan's, one of the group members noticed that the neighbor who notified the neighborhood about the vigil was

present in the crowd. In fact, she placed herself at the front of the vigil procession to escort the deceased officer's family, with the D.C. Mayor on one side and the neighborhood ward's city councilmember on the other. It was a trifecta of the powerful in the neighborhood, and this neighbor's placement of herself at the head of the crowd only underscored her claim to power and privilege. The Hear Mount Pleasant member said to me, "What if she sees you here?"

It was known in the group that I had interviewed this neighbor for my dissertation, in my quest to hear all sides of the music-ban issue. During my many attempts to secure the interview, I received emails from the neighbor, suspicious of my aims and confrontational towards my project. We finally sat down to talk at a Starbucks in a posh section of the city, where I represented myself as a dispassionate researcher. This was partially true. I did want to understand her side of things, but my involvement with the community radio station had already colored my opinion of this informant. And it was in this moment, after the interview, that my bias towards the community proved stronger than my commitment to objective research. I had just sat down with a woman whom many in the neighborhood considered "Enemy Number One." This was a woman who is thought to create such a culture of fear that highly educated, independent thinkers who organize in the neighborhood sit back in awe (but never surprise) at the nasty and vindictive actions she takes on behalf of her neighborhood organization. This was the same woman who when interviewed a few months later by the *Washington Post*, was quoted saying, "And I will be damned if people outside my neighborhood come in and do something that affects my property value by worsening the parking situation."⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Quoted in "A Counteroffensive on Mt. Pleasant's 'Voluntary' Music Bans," by Marc Fisher, in the *Washington Post*, B01, 4/12/07.

Surely her objection to outsiders was not solely based on parking spaces. But her statement indicates how activists work in a community and the importance of community-led solutions to community-based problems. Her statement also gave me justification for what I did next.

In the week following the interview, I went to the monthly meeting for Radio CPR, the neighborhood underground radio station. As we sat waiting for the other members, one of the DJs asked me how the interview with the neighbor had gone. This DJ knew about the progress of my research and knew that I had been trying to secure this interview for several weeks. In the course of telling her about our meeting, I mentioned that this neighbor had been asked by the D.C. government to organize a series of concerts in Columbia Heights, the adjoining neighborhood to Mount Pleasant. The news made the DJ extremely upset, and understandably so, because this neighbor had helped to organize a similar concert series in Mount Pleasant. The Mount Pleasant series was billed as a community event, but in reality it was a tactical move to undermine the idea that music was banned in the neighborhood. By presenting a summer live music series, this neighbor and her organization could say music was allowed in the neighborhood, although all knew it was only on their terms.

As I was already an active member in the Radio CPR community and I knew what the fight for live music meant to those who live in the neighborhood, I decided to send the DJ a transcript of the interview. At first I only sent her part of the transcript, and months later I sent her the second half. By the time I sent the second half of the interview, I was already literally signed-on to the cause of Hear Mount Pleasant, the neighborhood group organizing to lift the ban on live-music. My name and address was on their

petition, so there was no doubt where my sympathies resided. While the action is small, the implications could be large for a researcher. The transcript really did not shed any new light on this neighbor's view of life in the neighborhood. But it did re-affirm to those involved in battling this ban on music that they were justified in continuing to fight. And for me, the ability to share my research immediately and not hesitate about the "objective" nature of what I writing was surely freeing.

Naturally, this encounter is rife with ethical dilemmas. When I finally was able to sit down with this informant, I asked for her permission to use the interview for my dissertation research. I said that I was studying music in the neighborhood and started the interview asking her about the Mount Pleasant Concert Series, which her neighborhood group sponsored. I also knew that the same neighborhood group was involved in establishing the ban on live music, and I really did want to understand her motivations for creating such an ordinance. Did I have a loyalty to this informant that superseded my loyalty to the community groups in which I was already an active participant? To be a fair and a balanced researcher, should I have also joined the neighborhood organization which created the music ban? Or maybe I should have not even bothered to interview this informant at all, if I was not going to be able to be objective, thereby avoiding one ethical dilemma while creating others. I have encountered a reaction amongst some ethnomusicologists that my actions in this instance were not ethical, and that in fact, I did break the consent of my informant by sharing the interview. My answer to this is that the efficacy of my research needed to be more immediate than waiting for members of the community, with whom I actually had developed relationships based on trust and

reciprocity, to read this particular informant's views in my dissertation, months, if not years later.⁹¹

This action should not imply, however, that I do not operate under a code of ethics. The Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) and the American Folklore Society (AFS), academic societies to which I belong, both set forth statements of ethics as guidelines for their members to follow. It is surprising how developed the AFS statement is in comparison to the SEM statement. While both insist that their members represent themselves truthfully in their relations with informants, the SEM code of ethics begins in a very relativistic manner, stating that "ethical systems and values may differ between ethnomusicologists and their field consultants," and that "ethical systems differ among ethnomusicologists and the ethical values affirmed by these statements do not necessarily represent those of all practitioners everywhere."⁹² This relativist strain in the SEM ethics statement is in line with the general tenor of the founding of field, in which the use of relativism is seen as respect for other cultures, which for ethnomusicologists usually meant "non-western" cultures.⁹³ Relativism creates problems of its own, when social justice issues are overlooked in an effort not to impose "western values" on other world cultures. Of course, the statement then outlines "responsible conduct" in the field, which includes representing oneself in an honest manner and being sensitive to the needs and

⁹¹ Ethnomusicologist Kofi Agawu addressed similar ethical dilemmas during his field research in Africa. His conclusion is that deception is an important tool for doing work in this region and that "If deception is judged to be unethical, then the construction of an ethnography can never be an ethical process." (Agawu 2003: 212)

⁹² See http://webdb.iu.edu/sem/scripts/aboutus/aboutsem/positionstatements/position_statement_ethics.cfm

⁹³ Ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl brings up this point directly when he writes, "Fundamentally, ethnomusicologists must be relativists... They believe that each culture and each music must be understood first and foremost in its own terms." (Nettl 1983: 10) Nettl does acknowledge that ethnomusicologist sometimes get more involve themselves in the culture they study, as political or social activists, but it seems that he limits the value of such action to teaching which will "promote understanding of these 'strange' people..." (Nettl 1983: 10).

ethics of those with whom we collaborate. The ethical statement set forth by the American Folklore Society, however, delves more deeply into the nature of ethnographic work and how that work is dependent on the relationships established in the field. Realizing that folklorists deal with human lives, and that these lives are complex, the membership of the AFS has crafted an ethical statement which at least acknowledges those complexities, especially in statements such as these:

Because folklorists study issues and processes that affect general human welfare, they are faced with unusual complexities and ethical dilemmas. It is a major responsibility of folklorists to anticipate these and to plan to resolve them in such a way as to do least damage to those [with] whom they work and their scholarly community.⁹⁴

While researchers can not anticipate all the problems that they will face in the field, or the ethical dilemmas they will face in the process of research, the emphasis on “do least damage” does underscore that researchers will do damage in the first place. Asking questions and poking around in people’s lives can turn up all sorts of problems. How is it possible to maintain relationships in the field while also striving to be a fair “objective” researcher, especially when the relationships ask for a commitment beyond objectivity? This is not to say that I was forced to choose a side for the sake of research. But it is to say that my ethics led me to value some relationships over others. As an applied ethnomusicologist I saw that music was a driving force for how people in this neighborhood expressed themselves and related to each other. I also saw that some community members were leading a charge to bring music back to their neighborhood. To be involved in a community like this, both as a researcher and as a resident, I could not sit idly by and wait to see what happened. To me, that is actually more irresponsible

⁹⁴ see <http://www.afsnet.org/aboutAFS/ethics.cfm>

than sharing an interview transcript. What would have happened if I had chosen not share the transcript? Keeping the transcript to myself would have put me in a position of knowing things that my fellow community members did not know. My interactions with them would have been false, and I would rather be openly biased than fight to maintain an unreasonable objectivity.

This is the dilemma which many who want to become more involved in their communities face as researchers and potential activists. The anthropologist Lynn Stephen chronicles how she as an anthropologist dealt with the Human Rights abuses she witnessed in the course of her research. As she studied the Zapatista movement in Mexico, Stephen became more aware of the injustices around her and sought a method for chronicling those injustices in her anthropological research. She concluded that to be an anthropologist in these situations meant that one must bear witness to what has occurred. From her experience she devised a list for fieldworkers working in similar environments. The list covers situations in which the researcher may not be allowed to record or take notes of field observations for fear of government confiscation. Stephen also stresses that fieldworkers who do research in an environment of “low-intensity war,” should throw the idea of being objective out the window, instead using ones position of privilege and access to the benefit of those we study. In particular she writes:

Witnessing, telling and conversing were primary modes of conveying information both “in the field” and on the page-and how and why we become engaged in the research projects we do is an important part of the stories we tell. Finally, I found that I was expected to follow the lead of those I was working with, and to use my skills, resources, and access to make a contribution to ongoing work in what have come to be called the human rights and indigenous rights movement. (Stephen 2002: 31-32)

While working within an urban neighborhood is surely not the same as working in a low-intensity war in Mexico, the issues presented by Stephen do apply to all kinds of research environments. To be a witness to things happening in the neighborhood translates into action, insisting that one get involved with groups working to change problems.

As a music researcher, I can not stop my observations when the conversation drifts away from musical concerns. As Stephen points out, the field is all inclusive. The way lives are lived in this neighborhood impact the health and diversity of the musical culture. To be an activist for music in a community means that you must also be an activist for people. For my work in Mount Pleasant, this has meant sitting in on a community meeting with the police about the murder of a neighbor or attending a community forum on police harassment of teens in the neighborhood and recording it for later broadcast on Radio CPR. It has also meant being committed to and supporting the underground radio station and its act of civil disobedience by being a DJ, attending meetings and helping out when I can. All of these actions are small actions. They are not resumé-ready or worthy of huge accolades. Admitting to ownership of them is ultimately a bit embarrassing-there are others who put themselves on the line more than I and deserve the attention. But these actions are all a method of conducting research that commits me to a cause larger than academia. It involves me in community and impacts the way I write about my observations. Certainly it creates a bias in my writing. The fieldwork experience has taught me that one needs to choose sides and one needs to use the tools gained through hard work in academia for the betterment of others, even if it jeopardizes the legitimacy of one's research. If we do not do these things as applied

ethnomusicologists, we will be relegated to writing about musical cultures in the past tense, permanently.

Sharing Skills: The Community Ethnography Class

On the last day of my class at Bell Multicultural High School's summer session, the students huddled around the computer in a make-shift production meeting and one student named Simon turned to me and said, "Miss, this is going to be huge publicity for Nate!"⁹⁵ Exactly, was my thought. But of course, being the teacher, I decided to expand on the finer points of music and advocacy: "Well, Simon, Nate is our friend, right? We like what he does and we think that it is important that other people know about his hard work." Throughout the class we discussed the flow of the radio piece, the placement of musical clips, the troubles of being a perfectionist and knowing when to let go of your creation, all discussions that concerned the presentation of our radio production. Central to all these conversations were two questions "How do we best represent the life story of a musician to people who don't know him?" and "Why do this in the first place?"

The documentary film historian, Eric Barnouw, commented in his history of the genre, "True documentarists have a passion for what they find in images and sounds...It is in selecting and arranging their findings that they express themselves; these choices are, in effect, their main comments...They present their version of the world." (Barnouw: 348) As an ethnomusicologist, I am always struggling with which version of the world I am presenting. According to Barnouw, if I were a "true documentarist" it would always be my view of the world. The field of ethnomusicology and anthropology have both

⁹⁵ This 6-week class was a part of the summer school offerings at Bell Multicultural High School in 2005. The students ranged from freshmen to seniors and represented a diversity of cultural heritages, including Salvadoran, Eithiopian and Dominican. The radio documentary produced by the class was later broadcast on Radio CPR and published on the DC independent audio 'zine *Sockets*.

acknowledged the crisis of representation through the writings of post-modernist scholars. Whose reality are we seeking when we set out to create a documentary? Is it the person talking into the microphone or is it the person pushing the record button? Is it right or fair for a white, upper-middle-class woman like myself to document and represent the lives of Latino and African American lower middle-class inner-city youth?⁹⁶ In response to these questions, I have reflected that teaching people how to document their own lives reaches more toward an equity of representation. It also reaches into realities that I would not have access to through standard research.

Radio is a format that is uniquely suited to the field of ethnomusicology. As it is a concentrated aural experience, the listener can be drawn into the world of the ear and the world of the mind. Like the ancient verbal art of storytelling, a visitor enters your home, sits down by the fire and spins out a tale of mystery, suspense, adventure...a small snapshot of an unknown world. In radio, we can tell those stories that we find in the field, but with the actual voices of the "informant." We also immerse ourselves in their aural existence, their musical world. As ethnomusicologists, we already spend much of our time in conversation with informants, gaining insight into the lives of musicians and the role that music plays in everyday human existence. We record these encounters for our research, to be examined and then reworked into a theoretical text that speaks to our colleagues, but usually does engage other audiences. As Jeff Titon has written about in his work with blues musicians, these conversations lead to relationships which have their own requirements. (Titon 1994: 263) Relationships established through the fieldwork

⁹⁶ This question is not a unique realization; in fact, it is the basis of the reflexive approach in ethnography discussed earlier in this chapter. What I am arguing here, as I have in that earlier section, is that it is not enough to just acknowledge my position and the power that position creates, but to move toward a more just sense of representation through skills-sharing and other methods of applied ethnomusicology.

experience also lead to new ways of understanding the place of music in a person's life. For the students of Bell High School, engaging in conversation with their classmate, Nate Allen, not only allowed them to learn more about him and his music, but also to become advocates for his music (ie Simon's realization that the radio segment will be free publicity) and for the community. They have entered into a deeper relationship to their neighborhood and the place of music here. I argue that if researchers conducted their recordings in ways that not only collected information for academic audiences but also secured the stories that people tell about their lives, then radio could work as a format for the presentation of ideas that ethnomusicologists explore in their written academic texts to lay audiences.

The radio documentary allows the informant to explain his or her world in his or her own voice. As Barnouw stated, the choices made by the documentarian determine which kinds of stories are told. Often, the stories that informants tell about music in society are not based in ethnomusicological thought and theory. The ethnomusicologist might be brought in as a "talking head" dispensing knowledge about the musical community under discussion, but the production of the documentary might be handled by others. Why is it important that ethnomusicologists have a more authoritative say in the production of radio explorations of musical communities? Through our training, we are especially attuned to issues of representation, identity, and presentation. Instead of being the talking head or the expert, why not give those who act as our informants another tool toward representing their lives to others? It is not enough to hand the microphone over to those we "collect" from and say, "Ok, tell your own story." How many times have you encountered this response to your well-crafted and thought-out question, "Well, I've

never really thought about it that way." Days later, your friend has ruminated on your question and gives you a thoughtful answer, expressing a view of his or her life that he or she may not have reflected on before in such a way. This is where theoretical training aids methodology-in the structuring of questions. But it is not the answers to theoretical questions that illuminate radio documentaries-it is the stories.

Just as in a social situation, stories draw people into one another's worlds. What documentaries can do is situate these stories within a context. As opposed to most journalism, which relates facts and some analysis about an event, documentaries can feature the stories that give those facts a context. The great American oral historian Studs Terkel has taken this form, storytelling, and shown how stories tell us more about the world than just one person's experience. In his collection of stories on death and faith, Terkel comments that his informants, "heroes of the ordinary," as he calls them, were always more eloquent expressing their feelings about death than he or they themselves expected. He writes, "The storytellers here, once started on the subject, can't stop. They want to talk about it..." (Terkel, p.xix) And nothing encourages a person who wants to talk about something more than an attentive listener.

By thinking of fieldwork as a way to collect stories, the researcher not only has a plan for the kinds of questions that will be asked, but also knows that the encounter will develop into a conversation. Following the model of oral history, where the researcher gathers up the threads of someone's existence in a historical time through the stories of their lives, ethnomusicologists can more deeply explore the relationship between everyday life and music in our informants' lives. In his exploration of the "life story," Jeff Titon explains that the stories we are told in these encounters are naturally fictions,

molded by the teller's personality, and colored by the situation in which the story is being told. (Titon 1980: 290) Titon sees these stories as a natural outgrowth of friendship, writing:

...if he [the folklorist] is interested in his friend as a person, and what makes him or her a tradition bearer, he will look to the life story as an expression of his or her personality and self-conception, the who and the why rather than just the what and the how. (Titon 1980: 290)

Through this type of encounter, we begin to engage the person in a conversational mode that will invite them to tell us a story. The job of the scholar is to listen and follow up with questions that extend the story or lead to others. Some of the best material originates from spontaneous questions and engaging conversation. The documentarian's job is to translate that conversation to a meaningful and concise vision of the speaker's life and to present an insight into this person's life in music.

Why does music need advocates? The music genre we explored in our documentary, hip-hop, is surely not endangered. Misunderstood, perhaps. The students at Bell High School are all conversant in hip-hop, understanding the culture in deeper ways than their teacher could hope to since it surrounds them in their everyday life. As advocates for Nate and his music the students disprove stereotypes about D.C. public school students: that they are disorderly, inarticulate, violent gang members, the list goes on. They have created a positive view of D.C. public school students, showing how creative hip-hop is as a musical genre and thereby giving it and its artists the respect it deserves. In the District, funds for the public schools are appropriated by the United States Congress as part of a larger appropriations bill for the city. Because of this, Senators from across the country have a say in the use of these funds-or at least feel entitled to express their opinions about the D.C. public school system, opinions which are

overwhelmingly negative and disparaging of local administration. In this action, the documentary not only gives voice to the creator of the music, but also works toward a social justice of representation. These students have the tools to think critically about the life of culture in their neighborhood, as well as the ability to speak out.

Learning from Communities: The Mount Pleasant Mural Project

Large boards of plywood lined the fence of the Peace Park next to the 7-11 convenience store. It was Celebrate Mount Pleasant Day and the boards, painted with many colors and figures, looked as if they were just another one of the several artist displays found on Mount Pleasant Street that day. But a closer look revealed that this wasn't just any art, but graffiti art. The colors swirled and popped, vibrant and pulsing as images emerged from the chaos: a DJ spinning tunes, a library surrounded by barbed-wire, a microphone and a spray paint can. The line-up of art turned out to be a preview of work done by the Midnight Forum, a community group dedicated to giving youth life-skills through hip-hop arts.

In collaboration with the neighborhood economic group Mount Pleasant Main Streets, the affordable housing non-profit MANNA and the neighborhood youth organization YARG (Youth Action Research Group), Midnight Forum's artists created the boards to mask broken windows on an apartment building on Mount Pleasant Street. The building housed lower-income tenants until it was damaged by fire in 2002. In the summer of 2004, the building's owner donated it to the non-profit MANNA, which intends to renovate the building for those same displaced residents, a move which is contrary to the normal trend in the neighborhood. Most apartment buildings are either turned in to condominiums or redeveloped into luxury apartments, effectively shutting

out the previous tenants. These actions have impacted the diversity of the neighborhood, as the lower income residents move to other parts of the city or into the Maryland and Virginia suburbs.

This collaboration is a perfect example of the importance of activist work in the arts and its involvement in other aspects of community activism. It is also a prime example of the good work that grassroots organizations are doing within communities for communities. Midnight Forum used its talents as a location for the artistic expression of D.C. youth and channeled that energy into a project which not only benefited the neighborhood but also raised awareness among its residents to the artistic nature of graffiti art. In a neighborhood where residents often see graffiti as a criminal act of property defacement, these artists contributed to the beautification of a scarred building and also used their canvas as a platform for community issues. This is not unusual for a group like Midnight Forum. The teens who participate in its programs learn a variety of music and art skills, all within the context of hip-hop. In the midst of their training as artists, the students also learn about community issues and the representation of their ideas. The Mount Pleasant Street Mural Project was a prime example of how the students used their emerging skills as artists for the community in which they live.



Figure 19: The Mount Pleasant Street Mural Project, Winter 2005

When Dominic Painter, a teacher at Midnight Forum, talks about the Mural Project, he laughs, especially if you ask him about the ethics of graffiti art or the students original plans for the project. Painter considered the mural project an opportunity for the students to use their training to think big: what are the issues that affect their daily lives and how would you translate that experience into an image? The students confronted all these ideas when they started on the murals for the building in Mount Pleasant.

However, their first idea for a board needed to be toned down, since their client was ultimately a neighborhood organization which wanted to encourage business in Mount Pleasant. Painter recalls that moment with understanding and humor:

I can think of the first idea they had that they were really excited about, “Yeah, I want a bunch of cops, around a guy that’s wearing a hoodie and some jeans and they’ve got their clubs out.” I was like, “ah man, I don’t think that is going to happen,” (laughing)...that’s not going to happen man, we’ve got to think of something a little different...(laughing)...how about education? I know you have certain views of your school and what you are lacking, go in that direction.”

We'd been talking a lot about gentrification and how Bell was about to get closed and they were about to put up a new one. Kids aren't stupid. These youth are smart enough to realize that that building is not for them. Yeah, they'll get to go there for a year or so, but in the long run it is not for them. So they went in that direction and they came up with a way...it's kinda funny how that picture came out because their depiction of it was...they had a kid running down the street and he looks happy, but in the background it's like a McDonalds and a Starbucks getting put up. And it has two arrows, one with money leaving the community and none coming back in. So if you are not really looking at it, you're like, it's cool, it's a kid running in front of the McDonald's and he's happy, but no... (laughing). (Painter: 03/06)

Under the guidance of their teachers at Midnight Forum, the students were able to get out a message which represented how they feel about the community while also using their graffiti art skills to express that message. Painter feels that if residents in the community look at the mural and only see graffiti, they are relying on an old definition of the art style, one associated with criminal defacement. Through the Mural Project, students re-appropriated the style of the art form and employed it to express ideas about life in their community.

Projects like Midnight Forum are good examples of grass-roots responses to community issues. The teachers are engaged in the topic in such a way that all issues about community life are moments of learning. In Midnight Forum, the students learn how to hold an aerosol can, how to spin a record for a party and how to write as an MC. These skills are the artistic medium within which each of the students work, however the teachers understand that they also have a responsibility to engage the student beyond the skill. It is not enough just to have a canvas, but what are you going to say on that canvas? As Painter explains, "realizing the impact of what their art is on a broader spectrum whether it is social activism or how having a voice can be used. So the music usually comes from a place where they talk about issues that affect them or anything that is in the

news during that time in the semester” (Painter: 03/06). This is the root of grass-roots work: understanding that individuals have a voice in their communities and working to employ that voice in different forms and forums.

By studying the work done by grassroots organizations, applied ethnomusicologists can begin to understand what elements of the culture are important to communities. Often scholars look at a community and seek ways in which they can contribute, looking at the large picture without seeing how individuals in those communities are already doing good work. Grassroots organizations respond to specific needs within the community and most times, are started by residents within that community. In the field of folklore, public folklorists label these community activists as community scholars. This term gives those who live these issues everyday scholarly authority through experiential-based knowledge. Community scholars work for the betterment of those they live with, as stewards of the neighborhood’s history, as teachers of artistic skills, or as residents concerned for the cultural life of their community. They know what the issues are immediately and can seek creative ways to address them. While the individual can be the catalyst for action within neighborhood, a community scholar can not be effective by operating as the lone voice in the wilderness.

Folklorists have made efforts to assist community scholars in their activities by holding summer workshops in grant writing and documentary skill training. For example, in South Carolina, community scholars gather every other summer for a two-week workshop in which they learn how to navigate the state’s arts grants, how to document their communities through photographs and audio recordings, and how to archive their materials. The Institute for Community Scholars was initiated by

independent folklorist Lesley Williams in conjunction with the South Carolina Arts Commission to not only develop community documentation skills but also widen the field of potential candidates for grant awards from the state.⁹⁷ This workshop inspired one group of attendees to start the Piedmont Harmony Project, which sought to document musical traditions in that part of South Carolina. The project is now part of the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor, one of several National Heritage Areas created by the US Congress in 1996. (Missouri Folk Arts Program: 2003) By sharing these skills with community scholars, folklorists become collaborators with the communities they study. The origins of projects in this model come not from the academic scholar, but from the community. In this relationship, the community scholar takes the lead and the academic works as consultant.

Cultural theorist George Yúdice comments that agency, sometimes defined as the power of those in weaker positions to resist structural pressures, is not something that we have to ourselves as individuals. As an individual, we can identify a problem in a community but we can not change the situation on our own. Working with groups of like-minded individuals, our thoughts and efforts have a much more substantial impact. To prevent our individual voice from being squelched in the process, as Yúdice writes, “...rather than a frontal action against a single source of oppression, it requires working in a range of groups and organizations, working with and mediating to help provide interfaces among diverse agendas...” (Yúdice 2003: 157). In the case of the Mount Pleasant Street Murals, the youth organization YARG made sure to stand its ground,

⁹⁷ When I attended the Institute in 2003 at Clemson University, the attendee’s projects ranged from creating a writer’s retreat in the Piedmont to documenting and reinvigorating jubilee singing in Coastal Carolina churches. Most of those in attendance were not familiar with folklore as an academic discipline prior to their involvement in the workshops.

impressing upon the neighborhood economic group that the students of Midnight Forum must be allowed to create murals using their own voices as community youth. All three of the organizations, as grassroots, community-based groups, each had different agendas but could negotiate with each other and respect each other. And in the end, a building got a needed facelift and students developed their artistic skills and political views.

Conclusion

In the end, to be an applied ethnomusicologist in this current moment is often to be conflicted: about methodology, about ethics, about stance. All of these are concerns of academic research. The field where we make observations is not isolated and nor is it singular. There are many different fields, encompassed by the thing we call community. When working inside an urban neighborhood, one starts to understand the inclusivity of fields and people. It is the multi-layered sense of place and being that creates community. Music is just one of the aspects that make up a community. In order to be an activist for music in a community, one must also be an activist for the community. This idea impacts the manner in which I conduct my fieldwork. It means that I need to stand up and be counted when called upon by my neighbors. Signing a petition, attending a rally or protest, getting involved in the mechanics of community building are all methods of being an activist. These are not empty involvements or the accidental results of participant-observer research. I am not attending the protest just to observe but to lend my voice and assistance.

My help should not stop when the topic diverges from my research. Music is not created in a vacuum and its survival is affected by everyday social issues all over the world. To be an advocate for music means that you should also be aware of all sorts of

issues that affect a community, as well as understand what type of commitment you are willing to make. How long will you be involved in the community? What kind of assistance is most useful under the constraints of your project? For my dissertation project, I struggled with the ethical dilemma of commitment and time. Seeing the good work of the activists around me, I knew that their level of commitment was often (but not always) in direct relation to how long they had been residents (or how long into the future they assumed they would be residents.) I could not stay in the neighborhood indefinitely. This is a very important point if one is going to be an activist. It takes a long time to build up relationships in a community, and as such, one must be ready to make a long-term commitment to that place before engaging in applied activist work.

Maybe this seems like a very common sense idea, but I think that it is not stressed enough in applied work. Most times, applied ethnomusicologists work within institutions, either academic or governmental, in which involvement in a community is dependent on the funds and time allowed by that institution. Applied ethnomusicologists who work within institutions must also deal with ideological constraints. Maybe a university would have problems with a university-based project which assisted radical leftist or right-wing political elements in documenting and preserving their musical traditions. Governmental institutions are less likely to involve themselves in politically dangerous topics which might bring the eye of congressional appropriation committees to their activities and the potential of funding cuts. Because many scholars will continue to do this work in spite of lack of support by institutions and governments, the place of grassroots organizations becomes an important aspect of applied ethnomusicological method. By working on this level, scholars have a direct involvement with the

communities they study as well as a direct responsibility to those whose lives their research is based. Assisting and working in grassroots organizations allows the scholar to support work already occurring in their field of study, instead of reworking and undermining the work of the community with institutional and governmental imperatives.

With all these types of constraints, to be an applied ethnomusicologist is to be political. These scholars decide to take a stand for the music and musicians they study. By taking a stand and acknowledging that there is no apolitical act, applied ethnomusicologists deal directly with the issues of everyday life. As a method of research, applied ethnomusicology informs decisions made throughout the fieldwork and research process, from gathering interviews to participating in protest rallies. The scholar becomes part of the community and acts with the community.

CONCLUSION

The Challenge of the Everyday Life

November 2007: Mid-City, New Orleans

In a section of the city which had been visited by flood waters from Hurricane Katrina, people wound their way past shotgun houses in various states of repair on dimly lit streets, finally arriving at a turn-of-the-century wooden warehouse. Before the flood, the warehouse was a housing and arts activist collective called Nowe Miasto (which translates as “New Town” in Polish). The residents of this “new town”, in an effort to raise funds to repair the damage caused by Katrina, resorted to a tried-and-true model of DIY punk culture: a benefit concert. As the patrons entered the venue, they were directed to a pot-luck dinner on one set of tables and further inside, a table filled with radical literature for purchase. Friends bundled in scarves and multiple sweaters greeted each other, sharing news and gossip. Colored Christmas lights hung from the rafters, barely illuminating the audience huddled in small groups below. A large bulletin board alongside the stage held the posters of events past, concerts and gatherings similar to this one. The box-like stage was set with two tall floor lamps, a stool and a set of drums.

The Evens were in town. For these musicians from Washington, D.C., the unusually cold weather did not seem to bother them. In many ways, the event was reminiscent of benefit concerts in Mount Pleasant: a relaxed atmosphere with an appreciative audience coming out for a cause and good music. As the band launched into

a full set of songs from their two albums, many in the crowd sang along. Then Ian Mackaye introduced the next song, “Mount Pleasant Isn’t,” saying “This is a song about our neighborhood in Washington, D.C..” He told those gathered around the stage the story of the riots in Mount Pleasant, struggling to remember the exact day, when a single voice shouted from the audience, “It was Cinco de Mayo...That was my neighborhood too!”

The Challenges to Everyday Life in Mount Pleasant

Mount Pleasant is the kind of place that engenders fierce loyalties. Its residents have opinions of all kinds about how one should live in an urban space. For such a small place, it has a great diversity of opinion. And for many of the residents, music is the locus of these discussions about life in an urban neighborhood. For the punk community in Mount Pleasant, music is both the center of the discussion and the means to creating more debate. The manner in which the punk scene in D.C. has lived in Mount Pleasant has done much to influence their commitment to the neighborhood. Being neighbors creates connections, not only other punks, but with other residents who live in the neighborhood.

In a time marked by the alienation of human relationships, this sense of connectivity seems outdated. When social scientists fret over the increased use of computer technologies over face to face contact, the actions of the punk community in Mount Pleasant prove that young people in urban areas are not as disconnected and disaffected by society as they are perceived to be. They are involved in social justice campaigns which they feel are for the benefit their neighbors. They actively participate in the politics and protest the policies that affect the cultural life of the neighborhood.

They also do not limit their activism to local movements, but draw from national campaigns, like the low-power FM movement, to express their protest of local issues.

But what does it really mean to be a punk activist in Mount Pleasant? In a study of collective behavior in the United States in the last quarter of the twentieth century, sociologists Hank Johnston and Shoon Lio took special interest in the actions of punk communities and ideologies. They questioned whether, “in the postmodern age,” individuals could really establish a social movement that went beyond their own sense of identity. They found that punk groups organize for issues, but in the researchers’ opinion, it was challenges to the everyday life of being a punk that really caused the mobilization. As they write:

Without challenges to everyday lifestyles by agencies of social control, it seems that the highly expressive punk identity, grounded in the identity repertoire of fashion, music and patterned interaction with cohorts, is sufficient to provide *raison d’être* and subcultural cohesion. (Johnston and Lio 1998: 466)

They argue, while the “highly expressive punk identity” can provide “subcultural cohesion” on its own, it is when the ways of being punk are challenged by outside authorities that punks rise to protest. Certainly, from the experience of punk life in Washington, D.C., many creative movements were reactions to limitations on life in the city. Finding spaces to play, having access to music, being able to live independently, all contribute to the DIY mentality of punk activism in the city.

But this does not mean that punks merely respond to issues that affect their own way of life. Groups like Positive Force and events like the protest at the South African Embassy in the 1980s demonstrate that the punk community in Washington, D.C. does not engage in navel-gazing. They are citizens of the Nation’s Capital and the World. Being part of the punk community is but one aspect of their identity. It shades how they

view the world, but it does not mean that they only protest when their own lives are challenged. Radio CPR is a prime example of a protest that has its creative roots in both a local community and a national movement. The station provides an outlet for music created by many of the residents of the neighborhood, music which does not have a place on local broadcast outlets. It also gives neighborhood activists a platform to address issues of gentrification and urban life as it pertains to the specific neighborhood of Mount Pleasant. Finally, it is rooted in a national alternative media movement which seeks to give more people access to media through low-power FM. The members of Radio CPR use music culture, whether it be punk, hip-hop or Latin rock, in the service of social justice, seeking to even the scales of power in the neighborhood and the city.

The station also provides the individual DJs with a space to explore and develop their own voices as activists within the community. Radio CPR DJs come to the station through various networks in D.C.: the punk community, the hip hop community, activist circles or merely through friendships. Once they begin to DJ, they create a persona through their show based on their personal aesthetics and politics. Each show reveals a specific personality, while also retaining a connection to the original mission of the station. In this way, DJs develop their individual sense of identity while participating in a collective. Shows vary from one hour to the next, revealing the diversity not only of the DJs but of their musical tastes. The collective identity of the station is expressed by the DJs' commitment to social justice and the station's statement of civil disobedience in which one of their reasons for broadcasting is outlined thusly, "We BROADCAST

because we find INTOLERABLE the relentless corroding of public discourse and social activation by the homogenization of transmissions in our public space.”⁹⁸

It is not just the public space on the airwaves that is being controlled and shaped by a small section of society. The demographics of urban cities are changing, favoring those who can afford the high-rise condos which spring up like weeds in the cityscape of Washington, D.C.. Rowhouses that once housed multi-generational families or groups of people in affordable apartments are converted into single-family homes, often for upper-middle class couples. And those who move into the inner cities expect services and have demands which challenge commonly held notions of how life is lived in an urban neighborhood. In Mount Pleasant, arguments about noise and drunkenness lead to moratoria on live music. A small segment of the neighborhood was allowed to define community to their liking, using their knowledge of and access to governmental regulations.⁹⁹ It may have been inevitable that members of the neighborhood who had their cultural roots in the punk community would take to this challenge. As the sociologists cited above might comment, this was a threat to their sense of self-expression. However, it was not just the punk community who took issue with this attitude. Others who lived in the neighborhood realized the actions taken by a small civic association censored culture and limited everyone’s right to musical and cultural expression.

⁹⁸ See Appendix for entire Radio CPR Statement of Civil Disobedience

⁹⁹ The membership of the neighborhood group, the MPNA, which instituted the ban has always been in doubt. This is due to the fact that there has never been a printed list of members made available. Because of this, the members of the neighborhood group countering the ban, Hear Mount Pleasant, make a point of displaying its support via its “Supporter Map” on its website. The point here is that the perception is that the MPNA is a small secretive group, while Hear Mount Pleasant is open and enjoys large support. For a view of the “Supporter Map” see: <http://www.hearmountpleasant.org/maps/addresses.php>

Culture Shapers: Politics and Power in 21st-Century America

These responses to events in both the neighborhood (the ABC laws and gentrification) and the nation (media policy) have their roots in the economics of everyday life. Those who have the most money have access to the most power. As the neighborhood of Mount Pleasant changes from a working-class population to an upper-middle-class white collar population, the ideas about how to live in the neighborhood change as well. As the national government gives over more and more of the broadcast spectrum to single corporate interests which favor deregulation and consolidation, the voice of ordinary persons as well as their cultural expressions are lost. Addressing the position of capitalism in our understanding of culture, cultural theorist Susan Willis writes:

As I see it, culture is the ensemble of practices and ideologies that define our relationship to capitalism. The analysis of culture is most useful when it provides a means for apprehending something about capitalism itself. (Willis 1993: 381)

Willis in particular is discussing how subcultures in the United States depend on consumers to sustain them: for her study, she investigates hardcore punk culture and how youth position themselves as consumers to construct their identity. But her words have much import on how culture is considered, by certain segments of American society, as a product which can be controlled, regulated and contained. For the residents of Mount Pleasant who did not want noise to infringe on their lifestyles in their houses (as one resident protested that noise from clubs prevented her from enjoying her historic house), consumption of culture is denied to those who do not have access to that same power invoked by the civic group. Corporations (with the help of government regulations) determine how citizens will consume media in urban centers, limiting access to the

airwaves, and limiting which voices and which cultures will be heard. To protest the consolidation of media is to demand a widening of the cultural spectrum as well.

These are issues which ethnomusicologists should have a specific interest in as they impact our ability to do research as well as our informants' ability to live creative lives. Applied ethnomusicologists seek to use tools gained in the academy to the benefit of others, ultimately seeking to address issues of social and musical justice. The reality of life in the 21st century is that governments and institutions have a larger say in cultural change than individuals.¹⁰⁰ To stand back and observe is ultimately irresponsible. And to contend that scholarship should be apolitical is to be willfully ignorant of the negative forces upon culture in everyday life. As George Lipsitz has recently observed about popular culture's importance in the expression of everyday life:

Popular music takes on significance in relation to these issues because most people in today's world do not have the opportunity to express their political opinions or to participate meaningfully in the decisions that shape their lives. (Lipsitz 2007: xv)

When scholars talk about the agency of individuals in today's world, they try, through their scholarship, to give power back to the people. In fact, most people do not have access to real power, as Lipsitz suggests. Think, for example, about the pleading of Hurricane Katrina victims on CNN in the hours after the storm, asking desperately for help from a government that abandoned them to the elements. A government that was engaged in an invasion of a foreign nation and had little time for its own citizens in peril. And then, think back on the labyrinthine process to which those same victims were

¹⁰⁰ Of course, governmental programs like the National Endowment for the Arts Folk Arts Program support and sustain traditional artists who would otherwise be overlooked by arts funding programs. However, if we think about the totality of social justice issues facing people today, which can not be addressed by arts funding programs, and role that governments have in actually creating many of those problems, individuals can feel powerless and that their lives are under the control of others.

subjected in order to apply for assistance in the chaotic bureaucracy of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Or for an example closer to the topic of this dissertation, how Latino proprietors of establishments on Mount Pleasant Street were denied the ability to host important cultural celebrations like Quinceañeras for their patrons because of the political intervention of a few powerful neighbors who valued a good night's sleep instead. To recognize these power dynamics is to be more realistic about the nature of culture in today's society.

In the end, this dissertation is an exploration of how people live in communities, how they express themselves in twenty-first century America, how music contributes to self-expression and protest, and how media contributes to peoples understandings of cultural diversity. As members of Radio CPR contend, "When a small group imposes its barren lifestyle on the rest of us, democracy, diversity, and free speech are in jeopardy."¹⁰¹ These are important observations about how we as individuals rely on and relate to culture. Understanding, respecting and cooperating with our neighbors does not stop at the bar-room door. It has everything to do with how we as citizens of the world participate in the world. As people become more connected virtually through technology, respect and understanding become imperative to living in a peaceful (not noise-free but non-violent) world. Making sure that there is a musical culture to respect and understand in the future is an important step toward that goal.

¹⁰¹ Radio CPR flyer "Where have the Mariachis Gone?" as quoted in Chapter 4.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:

Interviews:

Interview with DJ Maude Ontario: 01/05
Interview with DJ Dialex: 03/05
Interview with DJ Turned Tables: 06/05
Interview with DJ Angie Puff: 03/05
Interview with DJ Natasha Nighttrain: 02/05, 03/05 & 05/05
Interview with DJ Poinsettia: 06/05
Interview with DJ Mike Alright: 04/05
Interview with Dave Bosserman and Olivia Cadaval: 03/07
Interview with Laurie Collins: 10/06
Interview with Rick Massumi: 10/05
Interview with Frank Agbro: 10/05
Interview with Mara Cherkasky: 08/07
Interview with Ian MacKaye: 08/07
Interview with Jack McKay: 04/07
Interview with Amanda Huron: 01/05
Interview with Natalie Avery: 03/05
Interview with Nate Allen: 07/05
Interview with Dominic Painter: 03/06

Fieldnotes and Ephemera

The Capitol of Punk, Yellow Arrow Cell Phone Tour,
<http://yellowarrow.net/capitolofpunk/>, 2006.

The Evens. "Mount Pleasant Isn't," *The Evens*. Dischord Records. 2004.

"A Look at Urban Music with Nate Nice" Radio Documentary, produced by students
at Bell Multicultural High School, Washington, D.C., July 2005.

The Mount Pleasant Forum, www.mountpleasant.org/forum:
9/03, 12/03; 12/04; 6/06

The Mount Pleasant Yahoo Group, <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MountPleasantDC>:
3/07

Washington, D.C. City Council Hearing, Testimony from Public Hearing on Bill 15-510

“The Restaurant Amendment Act of 2003” Committee of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, November 19, 2003.

“Get off the Internet,” Radio CPR radio show, 2004.

Radio CPR Archive, Stand for our Neighbors Literature, n.d.

Hear Mount Pleasant Literature, 2007

Fieldnotes, 01/05-03/07

Secondary Sources:

Abbott, Carl. 1990. “Dimensions of Regional Change in Washington, D.C.” *The American Historical Review*, 95 (5): 1367-1393

Alexander, Keith L. and Jacqueline L. Salmon. 2007. “D.C. Teen is Killed at D.C. Area Nightclub: Victim, a Bystander, Is Shot in Scuffle” in *Washington Post*, 01.21.07, A01.

Andersen, Mark and Mark Jenkins. 2003. *Dance of Days: Two Decades of Punk in the Nation’s Capital*. New York: Akashic Books.

Attali, Jacques. 1985. *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Barnouw, Eric. 1993. *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Becker, Howard. 1982. *Art Worlds*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Beckerman, Gal. 2003. “Inside the Indymedia Collective, Passion vs. Pragmatism,” *Columbia Journalism Review* 5:Sept-Oct 2003.

Bennett, Andy and Richard A. Peterson. 2004. “Introducing Music Scenes” in *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Brinson, Peter. 2006. “Liberation Frequency: The Free Radio Movement and Alternative Strategies of Media Relations,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 47: 543-568.

Burawoy, Michael, et al. 2004. “Public Sociology: A Symposium from Boston College,” *Social Problems*. 51 (1): 103-130.

- Cage, John. 1961. *Silence: Lectures and Writings by John Cage*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan Univ. Press.
- Casey, Edward. 1997. *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Chambers, Erve. 1985. *Applied Anthropology: A Practical Guide*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Connell, John and Chris Gibson. 2003. *Soundtracks: Popular Music, Identity and Place*. London: Routledge.
- Connolly, Ceci and Griff Witte. 2004. "Poverty Rate Up 3rd Year in a Row," *The Washington Post*, August 27, 2004, A01.
- Coopman, Ted. 1997. "Pirates to Micro Broadcasters: The Rise of the Micro Radio Movement." Paper presented to Western States Communications Association. Accessed from www.rougecom.com/rougescholar/TCoopman.html. (Jan.11, 2007)
- _____. 2000. "Hardware Handshake: Listerv forms Backbone of National Free Radio Network." *American Communication Journal*. 3 (3).
- D'Andrade, Roy. 1995. "Moral Models of Anthropology," *Current Anthropology*, 36(3): 399-408.
- Delanty, Gerard. 2003. *Community*. London: Routledge
- District of Columbia Official Code. 2001. Division V. Title 25., Chapter 6.§25-601.
- Douglas, Susan. 1999. *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination, from Amos 'n' Andy and Edward R. Morrow to Wolfman Jack and Howard Stern*. New York: Times Books.
- Dunifer, Stephen. 1998. "Micropower Broadcasting: A Technical Primer." Pp. 185-205. in *Seizing the Airwaves: A Free Radio Handbook*, ed. by Stephen Dunifer and Ron Sakolsky. San Francisco: AK Press.
- Federal Communications Commission. *Amendment of Section 73.202(b)*, MM Docket No. 90-385, 6 FCC Rcd. 5835 (1991).
- _____. *Creation of Low-Power Service, Eligibility and Ownership-25*, MM Docket No.99-25, FCC 00-19 (2000)
- Feintuch, Burt., ed. 1988. *Conservation of Culture: Folklorists and the Public Sector*. Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press.

- _____. 2002. "Longing for Community." *Western Folklife* 60(2-3): 149-161.
- Finnegan, Ruth. 1989. *Hidden Musicians: Music Making in an English Town*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fisher, Marc. 2007. "Regulation at D.C. Clubs a Sobering Failure," in *Washington Post*, 02.18.07, C01.
- Florida, Richard. 2002. *The Rise of the Creative Class*. New York: Basic Books.
- Fouche, Rayvon. 2006. "Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud: African Americans, American Artifactual Culture and Black Vernacular Technological Creativity." in *Rewiring the Nation: The Place of Technology in American Studies*, Special Issue of *American Quarterly*, ed. by Carolyn de la Peña and Siva Vaidhyanathan, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Fox, Richard G. and Orin Starn., ed. 1997. *Between Resistance and Revolution: Cultural Politics and Social Protest*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1988. *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Gibson, Chris and Shane Homan. 2004. "Urban Redevelopment, Live Music and Public Space: Cultural Performance and the Re-Making of Marrickville." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 10(1): 67-84.
- Ginsburg, Faye. 2004. "Foreword." Pp. viv-xvii in *Local Actions: Cultural Activism, Power and Public Life in America*, ed. by Melissa Checker and Maggie Fishman. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Glassie, Henry. 1982. *Passing the Time in Ballymenone: Culture and History of an Ulster Community*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Godfrey, Sarah. 2004. "Rhyme and Punishment", *Washington City Paper*, January 23, 2004: 6
- Gosling, Tim. 2004. "Not for Sale: The Underground Network of Anarcho-Punk," in *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual*, ed. Andy Bennett and Richard A. Peterson. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Graham, Jim. 2007. "Opening Statement to Protection and Safety of Underage Persons Amendment Act of 2007, Washington D.C. City Council Hearing." Downloaded from website:
http://www.grahamwone.com/downloads/jgraham_open_state_re_minors_nightclubs.pdf

- Graves, James Bau. 2005. *Cultural Democracy: The Arts, Community and the Public Purpose*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Green, Archie. 1988. "Stiching Patchwork in Public," in *The Culture of Conservation: Folkorists and the Public Sector*, ed. by Burt Feintuch, Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press.
- Hawes, Bess Lomax. 1992. "Practice Makes Perfect: Lessons in Active Ethnomusicology." *Ethnomusicology* 36 (3): 337-344.
- _____. 1995. "Reminiscences and Exhortations: Growing up in American Folk Music." *Ethnomusicology* 39 (2): 179-192.
- Haenfler, Ross. 2006. *Straight Edge: Hardcore Punk, Clean-Living Youth and Social Change*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Hamelman, Steven. 2006. "Straight, Narrow and Dull: The Failure of Protest in Straight Edge Rock 'n' Roll," in *The Resisting Muse: Popular Music and Social Protest*, Ed. by Ian Peddie. Aldershot, England: Ashgate Press, 188-205.
- Hayden, Doris. 1995. *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Hebdige, Dick. 1979. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London: Routledge.
- Hilmes, Michele. 1997. *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting 1922-1952*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Hilmes, Michele and Jason Loviglio. 2002. *Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio*. New York: Routledge.
- Hufford, Mary, ed. 1994. *Conserving Culture: A New Discourse on Heritage*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Irwin, Neil. 2004. "D.C. Slow to Reduce Its Ranks of Jobless: Boom Eludes Many Poor Neighborhoods," *The Washington Post*, August 16, 2004, A01.
- Johnson, Hank and Shoon Lio. "Introduction: Collective Behavior and Social Movements in the Postmodern Age: Looking Backward to Look Forward." in *Sociological Perspectives* 41 (3): 453-472.
- Keith, Michael C. 2002. "Turn on...Tune In: The Rise and Demise of Commercial Underground Radio," in *Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio* ed. Michele Hilmes and Jason Loviglio. New York: Routledge Press.

- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 1988. "Mistaken Dichotomies," *Journal of American Folklore* 101: 140-55.
- Landis, Rosanna. 1992. "An Institution of Democracy: The Mount Pleasant Public Library." Unpublished MA Thesis: University of Notre Dame.
- Lasar, Matthew. 2000. *Pacifica Radio: The Rise of an Alternative Network*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Leclair, Louise. 2003. "Carnivals against Capitalism: Rooted in Resistance," in *Representing Resistance: Media, Civil Disobedience and the Global Justice Movement*. Ed. Andy Opel and Donalyn Pompper. Wesport, Conn: Praeger.
- Lipsitz, George. 2007. *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lomax, Alan. 2003. "An Appeal for Cultural Equity." In *Selected Writings: 1934-1997*. ed. by Ronald D. Cohen. New York: Routledge.
- Mattern, Mark. 1998. *Acting in Concert: Music, Community, and Political Action*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- McAvan, Em. 2006. "Boulevard of Broken Songs": Mash-ups as Textual Re-appropriation of Popular Culture," *M/C Journal*, 9(6). Retrieved 10. Jan. 2008 from <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0612/02-mcavan.php>
- Melucci, Aberto. 1996. *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mencimer, Stephanie. 1999. "When Hell Freezes Over" *The Washington City Paper*, November 5-11, 1999, 19 (45), <http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/display.php?id=18442>
- Miles, Steven and Ronan Paddison. 2005. "Introduction: The Rise and Rise of Culture-led Urban Regeneration." *Urban Studies* 42 (5/6): 833-839.
- Missouri Folk Arts Program. 2003. "A Sampling of Folklife and Cultural Tourism Projects in the United States" <http://maa.missouri.edu/mfap/articles/folklikesampling.html>
- Modan, Gabriella Gahlia. 2007. *Turf Wars: Discourse, Diversity, and the Politics of Place*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Nettl, Bruno. 1983. *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-nine Issues and Concepts*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

- Newman, Oscar. 1996. *Creating Defensible Space*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy and Development Research.
- Nichols, William. 1995. *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Nightline website. 2004 "Springsteen Talks About Anti-Bush Concert Tour;" transcript of interview from *Nightline* TV program (ABC News), August 4, 2004. Retrieved from <http://abcnews.go.com/Nightline/story?id=128976&page=1>
- O'Connor, Alan. 2002. "Local Scenes and Dangerous Crossroads: Punk and Theories of Cultural Hybridity" in *Popular Music* 21(2): 225-236.
- O'Hara, Craig. 1999. *The Philosophy of Punk: More Than Noise!* London: AK Press.
- Opel, Andy. 2004. *Micro Radio and the FCC: Media Activism and the Struggle over Broadcast Policy*. Wesport, Conn: Praeger.
- Payne, Jessica. 1998. "The Politicization of Culture in Applied Folklore." *Journal of Folklore Research* 35(3).
- Picker, John. 2003. *Victorian Soundscapes*. London: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Postive Force D.C. Website, n.d. "What is Postive Force D.C.?" <http://www.positiveforcedc.org/about.html>
- Powell, Michael. 2005. "Opening Remarks of Chairman Powell, FCC Low Power FM Forum, Washington, D.C., Feb.8, 2005" see http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-256625A1.doc
- Press, Eyal and Jennifer Washburn. 2000. "The Kept University." *Atlantic Monthly* 285(3): 39-42, 44-52, 54.
- Project South. 2007. "The Critical Classroom," in *Race, Poverty and the Environment*. 14 (2): 68-70.
- Rachman, Paul. 2006. *American Hardcore: The History of American Punk Rock 1980-1986*. AHC Productions. Film
- Rice, Timothy. 1997. "Toward a Mediation of Field Methods and Field Experience in Ethnomusicology" in *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, ed. Barz and Cooley. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Riisman, Paul. 2002. "Radio By and For the Public: The Death and Resurrection of Low Power Radio," in *Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History*

- of Radio.*, ed. by Michele Hilmes and Jason Loviglio. New York: Routledge.
- Rose, Tricia. 1994. *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press.
- Rothenbuhler, Eric and Tom McCourt. 2002. "Radio Redefines Itself, 1947-1962," in *Radio Reader: Essays in the Cultural History of Radio* ed. Michele Hilmes and Jason Loviglio. New York: Routledge Press.
- Ruether, Susan. 2007. "Booze Battles: U Street and Logan Circle Learn the Ropes in Liquor License Negotiation." *DC North*, February 2007: 34-35.
- Sakolsky, Ron. 1998. "Frequencies of Resistance: the Rise of the Free Radio Movement." Pp. 68-80 in *Seizing the Airwaves: A Free Radio Handbook*, ed. by Stephen Dunifer and Ron Sakolsky. San Francisco: AK Press.
- Sampson, Robert J. and Stephen W. Raudenbusch. 2004. "Seeing Disorder: Neighborhood Stigma and the Social Construction of "Broken Windows." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 67(4): 319-342.
- Schaefer, R. Murray. 1977. *Soundscapes: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 1995. "The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology" *Current Anthropology* 36(3):409-440.
- Schloss, Joseph. 2004. *Making Beats: The Art of Sample Based Hip-Hop*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Seeger, Anthony. 1997. "A Response to Henry Kingsbury." *Ethnomusicology* 41(2): 250-252.
- Shank, Barry. 1993. *Dissonant Identities: The Rock and Roll Scene in Austin, Texas*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press.
- Sheehy, Daniel. 1992. "A Few Notions About the Philosophy and Strategy in Applied Ethnomusicology." *Ethnomusicology* 36(3):323-336.
- Smith, Jen. 1997. "Doin' It for the Ladies-Youth Feminism: Cultural Productions/Cultural Activism," in *Third Wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism*, ed. by Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Smith, Neil. 1996. *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. London: Routledge.

- Smuylan, Susan. 1994. *Selling Radio: the commercialization of American Broadcasting, 1920-1934*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Spitzer, Nicholas and Robert Baron, ed. 2007. *Public Folklore*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.
- Stephen, Lynn. 2002. *¡Zapata Lives!: Histories and Cultural Politics in Southern Mexico*. Berkely: University of California Press.
- Taylor, Steven. 2003. *False Prophets: Field Notes from the Punk Underground*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Terkel, Studs. 2001. *Will the Circle Be Unbroken? Reflections on Death, Rebirth, and Hunger for a Faith*. New York: New Press.
- Titon, Jeff Todd. 1980. "The Life Story." *Journal of American Folklore* 93 (369): 276-292.
- _____. 1992. "Music, the Public Interest, and the Practice of Ethnomusicology." *Ethnomusicology* 36 (3):315-322.
- Titon, Jeff Todd and John Fenn. 2003. "A Conversation with Jeff Todd Titon." *Folklore Forum* 34 (1/2): 119-131.
- Tsitsos, William. 1999. "Rules of Rebellion: Slamdancing, Moshing and the American Alternative Scene," in *Popular Music* 18(3): 397-414.
- United States Census Bureau. 2000. "DP-1. Profile of General Characteristics: 2000, District of Columbia."
http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTable?_bm=n&_lang=en&q_ name=DEC_2000_SF1_U_DP1&ds_name=DEC_2000_SF1_U&geo_id=04000US11
- _____. 1990. "DP-1. General Population and Housing Characteristics: 1990, District of Columbia."
http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTable?_bm=n&_lang=en&q_ name=DEC_1990_STF1_DP1&ds_name=DEC_1990_STF1_&geo_id=04000US11
- Valliant, Derek. 2003. *Sounds of Reform: Progressivism and Music in Chicago, 1873-1935*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Walker, Jesse. 2001. *Rebels on the Air: An Alternative History of Radio in America*. New York: New York University.
- Weiss, Eric M. 2005. "D.C. Assessed Values Rise 14.6 Percent: Housing Pressure Give Working-Class Neighborhoods the Biggest Increase." in *Washington Post*, February 25, 2005, B01

- Willis, Susan. 1993. "Hardcore: Subculture American Style." In *Cultural Inquiry*, 19(2): 365-383.
- Wolfe, Charles. 1999. *A Good Natured Riot: The Birth of the Grand Old Opry*. Nashville: Country Music Foundation Press and Vanderbilt University Press.
- Yúdice, George. 2003. *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

APPENDIX

Letter from Dischord Records to D.C City Councilmember Jim Graham (Ward 1),
02.02.07 (from www.dischord.com)

Dear Councilman Jim Graham,

I have read that in response to the senseless killing of Tashia Ford outside a nightclub in Northwest you are considering offering legislation to the D.C. Council that would ban minors from music venues that also serve alcohol. I have long supported the need to address the violence that is all too common for our young people but I think banning young people from activities that connect them to the District's rich and diverse musical community is both short sighted and ill-considered.

I grew up in Washington D.C. and I started going to concerts in 1979 when I was 14 years old. The choice for me was very clear at that time, find something useful and creative to do or follow the drug addled battle cry of a generation who was destined for this city's worst. I chose the former. Thankfully this was a time when Washington's underground music scene, both punk rock and go-go, was coming into it's own and many of the band members were themselves under the legal drinking age, which at the time was 18 years old. Rather than being segregated to "minor" status we were embraced by fellow musicians and a select group of club owners who encouraged and supported our efforts to take control of our status and find ways to integrate ourselves, as underage audience and band members, into the larger community.

We knew that people were taking a chance on us so took it upon ourselves to show goodwill to local club owners by policing our own shows and drawing "Xs" on our hands to show we were underage so the bartenders knew who not to serve. This cooperation between bands, concert goers and nightclub owners led to the establishment of Washington's world renown all-ages venues, like the 9:30 Club, Black Cat, etc., who tightened up the policies we invented and made them part of their standard operating procedure. I have since toured in both the States and Europe and can tell you first-hand that not only does Washington enjoy an international reputation for musical excellence but is unique in its management of its all-ages music community.

None can argue whether the inclusion and active participation of "minors" in the Washington music community is one of the major reasons for it's initial rise and continued vibrancy. Nor can one argue that the active participation in a community that cares for it's own, offers positive mentors, cultural diversity, and teaches self reliance has saved many, many more souls from the violent and dangerous distractions on our streets than it has claimed.

DC is the home of Chuck Brown, Fugazi, Positive Force and many other musical groups, labels, venues and organizations that work outside the usual boundaries. You must recognize and make the distinction between "watering holes" and responsible community entities. If irresponsible venues need to be held to a higher standard, so be it. However, further segregating and alienating young people from our cultural communities and painting all of the District with the same stroke serves no one, never has, and never will. If you need guidance, talk to Dante at Black Cat or Seth at 9:30 Club and ask their advice on how to maintain a safe and positive atmosphere for all-ages shows that are neither teen dances nor free-for-alls. They have been doing it for more than 25 years and both this city and their businesses are better because of it.

Respectfully,

Alec Bourgeois, Dischord Records

Radio CPR Statement of Civil Disobedience

Printed on the inside tray of the Radio CPR CD
“Begin Live Transmission/Radio CPR” Dischord Records (2003)

WE BROADCAST
because governmental
machinations have made it clear that the
voices and interests of residents will be
ignored. **WE BROADCAST** because we find
INTOLERABLE the relentless corroding of public
discourse and social activation by the homogenization of
transmissions in our public space. **WE BROADCAST** because
we believe that our system of Government rules best when the
voice of the people is heard. **WE BROADCAST** because by
announcing what kind of Government our community will respect
we take one step toward obtaining a respectable Government. **WE**
COMMIT this act of civil disobedience in order to protest the
injustice of the forces described above. **WE COMMIT** this act of civil
disobedience ever more enthusiastically because in doing so we
also conduct the same crucial civic action that has, inconceivably,
been forbidden. **WE COMMIT** this act because we understand that
we have the support of residents and organizations in Mount
Pleasant, Adams-Morgan, Shaw, and Columbia Heights to
commit this act in their interest, as well as the support of
social activists everywhere who will **RESIST** the silencing
of many voices to protect the interests and profits of a
powerful few. **WE COMMIT** this act of civil
disobedience to remind us all, through this
very act, that tyrannies such as these
cannot go unprotected.

Radio CPR's Statement of Civil Disobedience

