



The Right Livelihood Award

for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people

Amy Goodman (USA)

(2008)



"...for developing an innovative model of truly independent political journalism that brings to millions of people the alternative voices that are often excluded by mainstream media."

Photo: Wolfgang Schmidt

The media is sometimes called the fourth estate in a democracy. But in many countries of the world, the media is today no longer willing or able to play this role. Instead it defers to commercial and political interests, thus eroding democracy. With Democracy Now!, Amy Goodman has shown what the alternative to this dangerous trend can look like. Democracy Now! is the largest public media collaboration in the U.S. which is now available to people seeking alternative viewpoints around the globe.

Career

Amy Goodman was born in 1957, graduated from Harvard in 1984 and became news director at the New York radio station WBAI a few years later. In 1996 she launched the daily one-hour news broadcast Democracy Now!, which she now hosts with Juan Gonzales, and which is produced live from 08.00 to 09.00 US EST.

Unembedded reporting

Democracy Now! focuses on issues its producers consider under-reported or ignored by mainstream news coverage, like global news or reporting on anti-war activism in the U.S. It provides hard-hitting, independent, breaking coverage of war and peace, U.S. domestic and foreign policy, and struggles for social, racial, economic, gender and environmental justice in the U.S. and abroad.

Democracy Now! seeks to give voice to the voiceless. Its broadcasts include:

- in-depth interviews with community members, activists, academics, artists and journalists shut out by the mainstream media,
- debates between activists and people in power,
- investigative reports and exclusive interviews with usual and controversial guests,
- and on-the-ground reporting from protests, the recent conventions and hot spots round the world.

Democracy Now! - Facts and figures

Democracy Now! is the fastest growing independent news program in the USA. The show is now syndicated to more than 700 radio and TV, satellite and cable TV networks in North America. It is hard to give figures, as there is no audience measurement for non-commercial stations, but Amy Goodman estimates that Democracy Now! reaches millions of people worldwide.

Democracy Now! is produced by seven producers, 20 full-time and 15 paid part-time staff as well as many volunteers. Broadcast daily as an hourly TV show, but with its founding on radio, it is produced in such a way that the stories never rely on the pictures, which allows it to be sent out as a radio show on community radio stations all over the US.

Democracy Now! has an outreach team working to encourage communities to demand that their community radio stations transmit the programme.

Democracy Now!'s innovative technical solutions allow for high usability for any kind of audience. There is 'close captioning' for deaf people and numerous voluntary transcribers produce full transcripts of the show. On the website, there are different types of streams and downloads, e.g. audio files, but also high-quality video files that are sent out, for example, by a Japanese TV channel once a week. Democracy Now! also keeps a complete archive of all its shows, which people can research for free.

Democracy Now! receives no government or corporate funding. Because of its educational mission, it has charitable status according to US law (501c3). Major organisational donors have been the Lannan Foundation and the Wallace Global Fund. Significant contributions also come from listeners themselves.

Trickle-up journalism

Goodman describes Democracy Now! as 'trickle-up journalism', because the stories it runs are often taken up by the mainstream media and her interviewees are very often interviewed by other channels after they have appeared on Democracy Now! Thus, the significance of Democracy Now! goes beyond the show as such: It also serves to open up the media landscape, acting as a 'conveyor belt' for stories that otherwise would not reach the mainstream media.

Awards and books

Goodman's awards include the Golden Reel for the Best National Documentary for 'Drilling and Killing: Chevron and Nigeria's Oil Dictatorship' in 1998, and the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Prize for 'Massacre: the Story of East Timor'. This story had almost cost her life: In East Timor, she survived a massacre in 1991 in which Indonesian soldiers gunned down 270 Timorese. In 2009, she received the first annual Izzy Award.

Goodman has also written three hard-hitting books with her brother, David Goodman: *The Exception to the Rulers* (2004); *Static: Government Liars, Media Cheer-leaders and the People who Fight Back* (2006); and *Standing up to the Madness* (2008). She also syndicates a column to national papers.

Democracy Now! is broadcast daily from 8-9am EST/1-2pm GMT. To watch today's show and for a list of international and domestic stations that carry DN!, please go to www.democracynow.org.

Quotation

"I am deeply honored to have my work and the work of my colleagues held in such high regard, it shows how important the work of bringing a truly independent voice to broadcast news and journalism really is. Independent journalism as a powerful tool for peace, for understanding. It is so important, especially during times like these, that the media hold the politicians feet to the fire... This is why I get up every morning and go to the firehouse where we broadcast everyday, still as excited as my first day at Democracy Now! over 12 years ago."

Amy Goodman

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