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**Background:** [www.fsrn.org](http://www.fsrn.org)

National Board vows to end censorship throughout the network

## **FREELANCE JOURNALISTS END STRIKE AGAINST THE PACIFICA NETWORK**

The 26-month-old strike that rocked the nation's oldest progressive new service is over. Launched in January of 2000 by over 40 freelance Pacifica Network News reporters, the strike marked a national turning point in the battle to save the progressive character of the Pacifica Radio network, which was under assault from within by a corporate clique on its national board.

Claiming censorship, firings and bannings had become a way of life at a network nicknamed "the voice of the voiceless," the freelance reporters launched one of the most important strikes by a contingent labor force in recent decades. The global picketline of freelancers grew to over 150, as progressive reporters from around the world joined the strikers in producing Free Speech Radio News (FSRN), a half-hour daily news program that replaced Pacifica Network News (PNN) on the vast majority of the network's 60 affiliates.

"With all of the problems with Pacifica Network News, we found FSRN the only real option in terms of a progressive national newscast," says Denise Manzari, news director at Pacifica affiliate WPKN in Bridgeport, Connecticut. "When the Pacifica freelancers went on strike, we were afraid their voices would be silenced. But with FSRN came the opportunity to air these reporters again, and we've been really happy to carry it."

Free Speech Radio News is produced by Pacifica Reporters Against Censorship, an independent, worker-run collective with members on every continent except Antarctica. Flying routinely under government censors, FSRN provides breaking news and information not owned by a corporation, controlled by the Pentagon, or vetted by the White House.

Critics say PNN had long-abandoned its progressive mission in tone and content, often sounding indistinguishable from the mainstream media. PNN was cancelled in mid-February by Pacifica's new community-controlled board, which is wrestling with a nearly 5-million-dollar debt.

“We started airing FSRN because we were fed up with the Pacifica network's unscrupulous management practices and were eager to support a viable alternative to PNN,” says Kristen Walsh, program director of Pacifica affiliate KBCS in Seattle. “Since then we've continued to be impressed with the quality of FSRN’s newscasts as they have exceeded the standards of PNN and are the best daily alternative news available. We urge other stations to join us in financially supporting this invaluable news source,” she added.

Duane Bradley, interim general manager at Pacifica station KPFT agrees: "It's just great to have a hard-hitting, investigative, progressive worldwide newscast on the air in Houston. PNN didn't do that, but FSRN does.”

At its March board meeting, the Pacifica board unanimously passed a resolution it had negotiated with the strikers acknowledging the significant role they played in returning Pacifica to its historic mission, and pledging to end censorship of any programming throughout the network. The strikers ratified the agreement in a ratification vote in mid-March and declared the strike over on March 20.

“The strike settlement does not include any financial support from Pacifica at the national level,” notes FSRN’s new host, Deepa Fernandez who is scheduled to start in April. She follows outgoing host Verna Avery Brown, who took a job as Pacifica’s interim Deputy Executive Director, and interim host Nell Abram of Pacifica affiliate WMNF in Tampa. “We are asking stations to contribute financially – if they don’t already – so we can continue to bring their listeners FSRN’s unique kind of reporting,” adds Fernandez.

FSRN now airs on over 50 community stations nationally, including all five Pacifica-owned stations (WBAI in New York, WPFW in Washington DC, KPFT in Houston, KPFK in Los Angeles and KPFA in Berkeley). It is also heard over the Internet, and is beamed to 120 countries via short-wave. The cast is produced at Pacifica station KPFA in Berkeley and Pacifica affiliate WMNF in Tampa, and is available via Pacifica’s KU satellite at 4pm EST on the right channel. MP3 and Real Audio files are posted for download daily at FSRN's web site, <http://www.fsrn.org>.

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