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Commentary: Harrassment Charges at KPFA Must Be Taken Seriously By BOB BALDOCK

Long-time Berkeley resident Marc Sapir, not a man hesitant to declare his views, chose last week to advance instead in the Daily Planet the words of KPFA manager Roy Campanella, Jr, and two of Campanella's supporters on KPFA's Local Station Board. In doing this, Sapir dismissed, or certainly tried to, the sexual harassment claims of eight KPFA women workers—all against the manager, all now filed with the state—by ignorantly belittling them and then by insinuating the claims all have a common and ulterior motivation. This is unbelievably insulting to the women and to those who care about them. In my judgment, each of the women and each of their claims must be taken very seriously.

Interested readers should type "KPFA-workers" into their Google slot. The www.indybay.org destination also has information on the statement of no confidence (in the new manager), the names of the 80 KPFA workers who have signed to date, and on the Hard Knock opposition (to the new manager).

But what is all of this new strife about? Like many of us, Sapir dislikes certain aspects of what he acknowledges is "the premier alternative radio station in the region." Can his dislike alone account for such uncritical championing of the new manager? For his absurd assertion that "many of the permanent staff have little respect for the activist community"? For his peculiar characterizing of much of the real core of the KPFA staff as a "dissident group?"

Only six years ago some 12,000 to 15,000 individuals marched through the streets of Berkeley in vigorous support of KPFA Radio, an astonishing turnout even for the first listener-sponsored radio station in the United States. Essentially the same workers then being endorsed are running the radio station now. There have been some internal changes, of course, some shows added, a few old friends gone, a few younger folks moving into place, but the core staff—both paid and volunteer—is the same reliable and conscientious entity.

What is different since six years ago? For one thing, the political climate throughout the country has grown emphatically grimmer, rendering alternative media far more endangered. That must be understood. KPFA is imperiled and increasingly vulnerable. Partisan disinformation is injurious to

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it. Demonizing of the staff or portions of it is only divisive. The situation is already far too polarized, and the Local Station Board has certainly not proven helpful in strengthening this invaluable community asset. What we have in common is simply too important to be jeopardized by ideological manipulations and distortions of our differences.

Bob Baldock has been KPFA's public events producer since 1988.

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