

## Pass The Mic- Women Finding Space on Air: Transcribed Interview Anonymous One

**Interviewer:** How many years have you been in the radio industry?

**Anonymous One:** I started as a volunteer in 1999, and then I was away from it for a bit, and then I came back as a staff member of a radio station in 2004... No, 2005. And then I worked in radio pretty much consistently until now.

**Interviewer:** And did you ever feel you were at a disadvantage as a woman? Please explain.

**Anonymous One:** Um... yeah, in certain departments yes, in other areas, I mean, there was no disadvantage or it was, you know, perhaps even advantageous in the field that I was in 'cause I work in non-profit radio. There's certain priorities related to marginalized groups, so in that way it was nice, so that is what I would call in the "content department"... certainly no disadvantage. But areas where I would have felt a disadvantage would be in financial compensation, um... and in terms of training for technical skills. Typically I worked at 3 stations, and also like a radio association. Typically those roles were always filled by- by males, and the training for that was, you know, it wasn't exactly a "female friendly" environment, so if it was a group training, you're typically maybe the only woman there. And then in terms of like follow up questions and stuff, at one station they were really good, and one of the trainers was really good about responding to questions, but at the other station there was a lot of what I would call like "mansplaining", and I don't think that there was any particular - at any of the stations - at no time was there a particular emphasis placed on making trains-- training that were only for women, or, "How come women never stay in the production and tech department? How come they don't do that? And how come we never invite them? And why does it always seem like tech-guy always has his friends and his favourites on tech team?" So in that way it was... a more exclusive feeling. And then yeah, in relation to the compensation, um... in a unionized workplace I didn't notice any difference, and in a non-unionized workplace I did notice a difference.

**Interviewer:** Have you ever experienced sexism in your job? Please explain.

**Anonymous One:** I have experienced sexism in my job. Um... it was related to social media... so, we were going through a certain process at the radio station and some derogatory, misogynistic... specifically anti-women comments were tweeted and posted and linked with my name, and it took me a really long time to get past that. We've oddly had a handful of men's rights activists at the station that I've been at, so, that was not pleasant as a female trainer. Recently a male trainer handled that, and I thought handled it beautifully with, uh, it was a little more- probably more comfortable than it would've been for me. Once a senior person called one

of my projects “cute”, which, I may be being oversensitive, but I felt like if I was a man with the exact same project, would it be “cute”? I wouldn’t have described a project as “cute”. It wasn’t about animals or babies or anything, it was like... yeah, it was not about anything cute. So I still to this day don’t understand what was “cute” about it.

**Interviewer:** Do you find women have a harder time getting on air jobs?

**Anonymous One:** Yes I do. There’s certain departments where I have noticed it’s easier. Again, because I work in non-profit radio, there’s certain like... remember the women’s pages of the magazine from like, a million years ago? Where it would be like, “Here’s where the women go! At the back to talk about home stuff.” So at a lot of non-profit stations they’ll have that. They’ll have a special show just for women... which you know, it’s good also, but sometimes when you’re forcing that, it can feel patronizing, and it can feel like you’re being asked to go sit at the back of the class, right? When it’s all organic and coming from the host herself, it’s different. But sometimes that feeling would be like, “Oh, you’re a woman! You go over there,” even if that wasn’t particularly your passion, Where else... could you repeat the question?

**Interviewer:** Do you find women have a harder time getting on air jobs?

**Anonymous One:** Then also I’ve noticed that like, for certain advertising things, the voice talent recruitment would use a woman for certain ads and not for others. But in terms of news hosting... more the DJs. The DJs were overwhelmingly, Sports host were overwhelming, overwhelmingly male (laughs) and I think that the women that had trouble getting their proposals through for on-air... yeah, would’ve been in those two areas mainly. Oh! and I did know of one DJ show in particular where, you know, the woman was approved to host, but the existing co-host... would just have her do the social media, or have her do the boring stuff, like the logging. And like, her voice was not actually a lot on air. Yeah, I do recall that.

**Interviewer:** Do you feel women have a harder time getting management jobs?

**Anonymous One:** Yes, I think that women do have a harder time getting management jobs. On-air it seems like it’s segmented, so if it’s news it’s probably okay, but with the DJs it’s probably men, with the sports it’s probably men. In management, in the non-profit sector, I can think of... two, three? Yeah, three, yeah 3 that I know well that are, you know, upper level management. But overwhelmingly it’s male. And the sector itself is really hypocritical in this department, so there’s a lot of attention paid to how the rest of the world should have pay equity. But there’s... I have felt a bit of a lack of, you know, rigorous self-study on that... in the non-profit radio sector. I’m trying to think... there really is only the 3 that I can think of, yeah.

**Interviewer:** And 3 out of how many roles?

**Anonymous One:** Oh, probably something like 45 or so. I'm probably not remembering everybody... I'm trying to think now...like management, right? Yeah, I can only think of probably less than 10 that I know. And that would be probably out of some 40 managers.

**Interviewer:** Do you feel women in general are treated different than men in the radio industry? How and if you have examples.

**Anonymous One:** I do, and I hope it's changing. So, a lot of radio at the upper levels is filled by older people, there's a lack of sensitivity that younger people now have, right? in terms of language and approaching people. So, you know, the assumption is often made that a woman who's new to the position doesn't have knowledge and needs extra... extra attention when she might actually have that knowledge already. [whispers] Uhhh, what else was in the question, miss?

**Interviewer:** It's do you feel women in general are treated different than men in the radio industry? And if you have examples.

**Anonymous One:** Well, I mean, I listen to a lot of radio, so it's pretty plain. I think you would have to be pretty obtuse to listen to radio today – all radio, commercial radio, public radio – and not notice... the type of banter that goes on particularly between morning hosts. Morning host banter is incredibly gendered, and it's incredibly offensive at times, so that's the most obvious example and I think that would be obvious to any listener. Behind the scenes, the training example I think applies, that people assume that she has less technical knowledge, and sort of be reticent about that. And then I think women have to work, okay I've had to work twice as hard I think as a man would have to work for my ideas to be accepted, and sometimes I'm very very puzzled by that. In one example, we had some guest speakers come from CBC, the public radio broadcast room. We had a male and a female come and it was really telling, when they talked about their experiences of joining radio. So both of them were the same age, they were of that kind of 'older generation' and had risen up through the ranks, and the one person talked an awful lot about "Yeah, it was kinda easy! I just kinda fell into this job because like, I didn't know what I was doing and so I did a demo, and so I met someone and I knew someone..." and the woman was rather more, you know, methodical and thoughtful, and it seemed to have taken her much more process to get to the position that she had... at that day.

**Interviewer:** And have you or women you know ever been paid less than a man doing the same or similar work that you know of?

**Anonymous One:** Yes. Uh... yes. So, the most telling example is um... there was an executive director position that came open, and so the person leaving it was a white man, and had the title of executive director, and had a certain salary. And the chosen applicant was a woman who had worked actually really closely with the organization already, and done a lot of that kind of work, and so was an excellent choice. And the finding that came back was that “Yes, she should have that position” but because the organization was in financial straits, that she would be offered less, and also that the title of “executive director” would be taken from her. And I didn’t understand... it’s easier to understand the financial piece, but still kinda like, “Well, you folks were in financial trouble for the last, like... 5 years?” so why now at this point is it convenient to reduce the executive director’s salary? I can guess maybe because of the staff change, they didn’t wanna do that to an existing position, but I mean, to take the title away? What point could that possibly serve except to make that person feel smaller?

**Interviewer:** Do you feel the radio industry is a fair and equitable place for women today? Why or why not?

**Anonymous One:** Do I feel that radio is an equitable place for women to work today... generally speaking, no, I don’t feel that way. I feel like there are less women in the industry and that you don’t have the same freedom of opportunities that men of a certain age in particular enjoy, but I also feel that there are certain segments of the radio industry that are much friendlier to women than other segments. I think public radio tries to do a good job at that. I think non-profit radio’s, in certain departments – in content departments, give more creative freedom to women. In all levels of radio, my experience has been that at the management level, there are very few women.

**Interviewer:** What advice do you have for radio owners and managers with respect to women working in radio?

**Anonymous One:** Don’t call our projects “cute”. Um, no. Hahaha! [laughs] My advice to managers regarding women in their workplace is that whatever you think you know about gender-balancing your workplace and equitable hiring practices, likely need to be updated. You thought that misogyny was gone, but particularly for some reason in the media, like we had a lot of examples in the last 2 years of people reacting very misogynistic, words and social media posts, against women who appear on TV and women who have a voice in a podcast, and women who dare to... dare to comment or dare to post opinion. So that badly needs updating, it’s not like in the 70s feminism fixed that, it didn’t. Managers should be doing diversity studies. You can make them non-obligatory, you don’t have to force people to disclose, but you should be

regularly auditing your workplace with a voluntary survey on gender and diversity. It's good practice, and if anyone should ask you as a manager, you should know "I have this many people doing this and representing these communities". And there are things you can do as a manager that will improve your efficiency, improve the content you produce, improve the finances of your organization... that involve women! So, I would suggest in those ways that proactive hiring practices, you know, including diversity in the hiring and posting of your positions, and then for the women that do work there, there's some really unique perspectives that are going unmined in your own organization, so often you're quick to pay an outside consultant to come and fix something when the answer might be in one of these "cute" projects that you've dismissed.

**Interviewer:** What advice do you have for women seeking to build a career in the radio industry?

**Anonymous One:** My advice to women seeking to build a career in the radio industry is to diversify your skills as much as possible, and then annoyingly at the same time, cultivate a specialty. So if you want to be an on-air voice, make the super cool demo, but have a backup skill. If you don't enjoy, like, the typical women tasks at the station, do everything you can, over-qualify yourself for those other areas. So an example of that would be, um... this is really not a nice thing to say, but they called them the "Twitter Bitch". The social media person is like always a girl. And I understand that communication is like a gendered competency that a lot of people perceive that, "You know, there's more women communications graduates, therefore women are just better at talking, better at social media" but I don't think that's true. And if you don't enjoy posting social media and you don't wanna be the "Twitter Bitch" distance yourself from that on your resume, on your portfolio, distance yourself from it. And you do need to be more networked, and more, like overqualified. So if your backup is sales then do that, get the extra certification. And networking with other women is really powerful and really useful because it will change. A lot of the attitudes I've encountered were, you know, older people, so I think if younger women are in touch about these issues and telling their stories then we can only help each other with job referrals... and also telling people when our workplace has been really lousy, definitely important.

**Interviewer:** Those are great answers!

**Anonymous One:** Well thank you! I could go on... We've had some volunteers also crush on some of the female employees, so that's unpleasant. If I added something to the management section, I would say that you need to have like an action plan in place for members of the public crushing on and obsessing on your female employees and hosts. It's happened a handful of times I can think of, and it's very uncomfortable, and usually the woman involved is like, "I don't

wanna make a big noise about this but this is a little bit weird...” and it actually does come up quite a... kinda regular.

**Interviewer:** So that’s the end of the questions I have but did you have anything else you wanted to add or anything that came up while we were talking?

**Anonymous One:** No... I’m trying to think if there was anything else that was really, like, sexist or weird... No, I think that point about once in awhile volunteers in non-profit radio, or listeners, I’ve heard of, in commercial radio will just like fixate on a female host and it just doesn’t seem to happen to the boys. I know, like, fatal attraction had a woman in it, but in radio it doesn’t seem to happen that way.

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**END of Transcription**