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HSQCast: Fostering Diversity in a New Age of Technology

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HSQCAST: FOSTERING DIVERSITY IN A NEW AGE OF TECHNOLOGY



By Shiara Naicker

Have you ever thought about the differences between conventional radio and radio in its modern guise, i.e., podcasts? What is the value of localized, community-powered approaches to share stories and in turn, create and connect communities?

The manifestation of radio in the late 19th century transformed the way that humanity relays information. Radio news began to gain momentum in the 1920s, and soon became the most popular source of breaking news, sports, current events, and popular culture. During its golden age during the second world war, radio became a part of everyday life. As technology shifted and advanced over the last several decades, radio waves were soon replaced by television, the internet, and finally, popular streaming services that we access on our phones today. But how can we increase the value of this endless access to individual artists and creators?

Podcasts are the modern equivalent of a radio show, of sorts. Throughout the 1980s and 90s, radio shows that were more singular and offered individual perspectives began to gain popularity. By the early 2000s, podcasts were being added to streaming services like iTunes and Spotify. This modern, wide range of creators from across the world offered something new that was lacking during the earliest reign of radio—diversity. Although it is possible to listen to some current diverse radio perspectives, from National Public Radio (NPR) to Rush Limbaugh to the North Coast's very own community radio stations (e.g. KRFH, Cal Poly Humboldt's student-run radio, and KIDE, a Tribally Owned and Operated Community Radio), now more than ever, communities that were previously unheard and underserved are able to raise their voices through podcasts. Additionally, because of the accessibility of podcasts, anyone can create their own and make their

voices heard, and anyone can listen to the content of their choice at any time of day. There are currently over 2 million podcasts worldwide, all providing unique and personal perspectives on the topics discussed or stories told.

One such story originates at Cal Poly Humboldt, with the LGBTQ+ podcast *HSQCast*. The host and creator, Spencer Schoening, was originally inspired to create a queer-centric podcast that highlighted stories of LGBTQ+ activists, educators, and community members here in the Humboldt area. Schoening worked with Frank Herrera, the coordinator of the Social Justice, Equity, and Inclusion Center (SJEIC), in order to get the project on its feet and begin planning. In January 2021, I joined the project as a co-host and we began researching immediately. I was enthusiastic about the work that the SJEIC and Herrera were doing. Schoening is the perfect partner for such an incredible project focused on inclusion and education. The first season was centered on former Humboldt educator and activist Eric Rofes, who forged a path with queer activism during a time when the liberation of LGBTQ+ communities was not widely prioritized. Rofes was responsible for the creation of the Critical Race, Gender, and Sexuality Studies major at Cal Poly Humboldt, and was honored with the posthumous founding of the Eric Rofes Multicultural Queer Resource Center.

Schoening and I are currently working on our second season. The focus is on educator, author, and musical artist Tim'm West, who revolutionized queerness in the spheres of hip hop and rap, and created riveting prose about their struggles and triumphs in their written poetry.

As cohosts we emphasize the importance of intersectionality and inclusion in the recounting of queer history—diversity has long been something lacking in both radio and LGBTQ history. Schoening recalls, “When I created this podcast, I knew that so many queer spaces were white queer spaces and felt unwelcoming to people of color, and it is important for us to all foster diverse and inclusive spaces. We all deserve to feel welcome within all the spaces our intersecting identities meet. So I wanted to foster that within the podcast I created; it starts at the individual level with individual steps towards inclusion.”

For those who wish to support *HSQCast*, you can find the podcast on popular streaming services, or you can find the episodes on the SJEIC’s podcast page: <https://sjei.humboldt.edu/hsq-cast>

