

New York's "public radio" WNYC: a nest of cheats and liars

By Lev Tsitrin

"Can a gentleman call a woman a pig?" is the question posed in the opening of Jack London's story "[Under the Deck Awnings.](#)"

I am not sure whether I classify as a "gentleman," but I recently used an f-word while talking on the phone to a woman. Jack London got his "gentleman" exonerated after his story was told – and I wish to be, too. So, please hear me out.

My call was to the Brian Lehrer show on WNYC, [New York's "public radio,"](#) into its segment featuring a librarian who came under fire for stocking "LGBTQ+" books for her public library who is now bravely fighting "book banning" and wrote a book on the subject. Since librarians – i.e. the Library of Congress – are in fact the main force of "book banning" and censorship in America, (they deny their cataloging services which makes books visible in the mainstream "marketplace of ideas" of libraries and bookstores to author-published books, giving those services only to books published by corporations, thus making it all but impossible for people to speak out of their own mouths), I called to stress the guest's hypocrisy (and for that matter, her laughable ignorance: she defended her book choices by claiming that she only stocked books that received favorable reviews – when in fact the review industry does not operate by sorting all new books in the descending order of quality, and taking the ones from the top to review – on the contrary, they review books issued by paid advertisers, on a "baker's dozen" principle. There is zero journalistic value in "book section" reviews; they are no indicator of quality of a book, or or of lack thereof. Such "reviews" are just another marketing gimmick.)

In any event, the WNYC woman picks up my call and asks me to state my name, and why I called – which I do. We already pretty much know each other: I call, and state my case, and am put on hold, and wait for my turn (which never comes), and she comes back at the end of the segment to inform me that unfortunately they have to move



on, and she has to clear the line. I reply that I will call another time on another occasion, and we wish each other a good day – usual pleasantries. We are being nice, on both ends of the phone line.

This is something of a game, for I know that Brian knows me, and does not want to talk about what I want to talk about – judicial fraud, or Gaza, or censorship; in fact, WNYC automatically blocks two of my phones. So I half-know that my calls are never taken – and tell this the screener when it happens yet again.

This time around, it was different. She clearly did not want to listen to what I had to say, and was impatient to move on, repeatedly interrupting me with an “OK” in mid-sentence and putting me on hold before I finished the thought. Being a little surprised at that, I recalled that a couple of times, I bumped into a substitute screener, and heard the sound of typing – apparently, screeners pass messages to the host about who is on which line, along with the summary of their questions and points, by texting. I recalled that I did not

hear any typing – nor did I hear it in the past occasions when I spoke to that same lady. A doubt crept into my mind – is she even passing my message to the host? Or is she just keeping me there waiting – and wasting my time – from twenty to forty minutes a call – just pretending that my question is in the queue – without putting it there? Is this all just cheating? Is this all just a lie?

So when at the end of the segment she came back telling me that unfortunately my call could not be taken and they had to move on to another segment, I asked point-blank, “did you pass my message?” “It was a little off-topic...” she started to explain – which confirmed my suspicion that she merely pretended to do it, and wasted my time – and I roared back in rage, “did you f-ing pass my message???” “I have to hang up,” was her reply – and so she did. I called right back, and a man picked up the phone this time around – and I told him to tell her how much I did not appreciate her lies and her trickery, and her wasting my time. Couldn’t she tell me right upfront that my call was “slightly off-topic” (if indeed it was), saving me a quarter-hour at least? (The “on-topic” were saccharine appreciations of the guest’s courage and service to learning and community; there was no pushing back.)

And I wonder whether this trickery was hers alone, and not Brian’s. Does she have standing instructions from him to just let me hang out there on a hold line, blissfully unaware that I am not even in the queue, foolishly waiting to talk on-air? Is this how their game is played?

WNYC is a multi-layer liar. It has something called “Community advisory board” that has zero power to force community input on the station, to make WNYC discuss topics that community members (like myself) want it to discuss. (And now this “board” “meets” on-line, and not in-person, so you can’t even ask a question directly; its a “moderated,” and therefore neutered, “discussion.”) WNYC is a “public” radio only in a sense that the “public” pays station’s bills – and hosts’

salaries, of course – but has no editorial control over the contents!

Yet listen to how proudly WNYC touts itself as champion of journalistic goodness! “If you believe that democracy requires a free press, your station is WNYC!” is a slogan played quite a few times a day. Impressive, right?

If you think so, you are too-easily impressed. This is textbook example of tautology. In America, all press is free – including being free to lie (which is the real upshot of *New York Times v Sullivan* which made lies protected speech). Being free and being a liar are by no means incompatible. It would have been impressive indeed if WNYC’s motto was “If you believe that democracy requires an *honest* press...” – yes, that would have been quite a statement! But heaven forbid! WNYC is a liar, at least by omission – it will talk to no end about Trump’s misdeeds, and the disgrace that is his legal immunity – but stays totally mum about the federal judges’ misdeeds, and the immunity they gave themselves in *Pierson v Ray* to act from the bench “maliciously and corruptly”! That’s a taboo for Brian and other WNYCers.

And, of course, the way the screener-woman who is the face of the Brian Lehrer show to the would-be participants in “free and democratic discussion” on WNYC brazenly lied to me, is another glaring instance of WNYC dishonest manipulativenness and duplicity.

So, to rephrase Jack London’s question, “Can a gentleman use an f-word when addressing a woman?” As far as I am concerned, when the woman in question works for WNYC, New York’s so-called “public” radio, the answer is an unequivocal and emphatic “yes!”