

See also Axis Sally; Lord Haw Haw; Propaganda by Radio; World War II and U.S. Radio.

Tokyo Rose (Ikuku Toguri D'Aquino). Born in Los Angeles, California, 4 July 1916. First of four children of Jun Toguri, an immigrant farmer and later successful importer, and Fumi Iimuro; grade school and high school in California; attended University of California, Los Angeles, 1936-40, graduated with zoology degree; six months of pre-med graduate work, UCLA, 1940; traveled to Japan, July 1941; employed as typist by Domei News Agency and Radio Tokyo, 1942-43; one of several hostesses of *Zero Hour* propaganda broadcasts on Radio Tokyo, 1943-45; married Felipe D'Aquino, 1945; arrested 1945, but freed; rearrested 1948 and tried for treason in San Francisco, California, 1949; convicted and imprisoned,

1950-56; employed as store clerk, Chicago, Illinois, 1956-1980s; granted presidential pardon, 1977.

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Top 40. See Contemporary Hit Radio Format/Top 40

Topless Radio

Multiple sexual partners, methods of self-gratification and the pleasuring of others, odd sexual proclivities: though these may sound like some of the recurring topics of shock jocks like Howard Stern, they are actually examples of the hot topics discussed three decades ago on radio. The format of such programs became known as "topless radio."

Similar to much of today's "adult talk" radio and TV, topless radio was a format in which audience members called in to discuss graphically sexual issues with hosts who tried to titillate the audience by teasing every explicit detail out of a caller. Although a predecessor, and perhaps an ancestor, of today's "adult" radio, topless radio initially began as quite a different format and was certainly targeting an entirely different audience.

Origins

Topless radio's humble beginnings in the United States date back to the late 1960s, when some AM talk programs began to experiment with light, humorous discussions about relationships with female callers—aimed at younger female listeners.

FM radio stations, with their higher-quality stereo signal, had begun replacing AM stations as the place of choice to listen to popular music. As traditional talk radio began to fill up the AM airwaves, female listeners tuned out. The new format was an attempt to bring younger female listeners to a format (talk) that attracted predominantly older listeners. Program hosts would ask female listeners to call in to have a candid discussion about "relationship issues." Up until then, radio had carefully avoided direct reference to sex—and innuendo was often dealt with swiftly by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) with "cease and desist" orders. The medium, and the FCC's oversight of it, lagged behind television, print, and film of the era in terms of dealing with explicit subject matter.

The first topless radio programs required callers to phone the station the night before a program aired. Hosts would discuss topics with callers off the air and edit together a program for later broadcast. Compared to books, film, and even television of the time, the resulting programs were considered to be quite tame. Despite that, the format was considered somewhat risqué by the extremely conservative radio standards of the day. More important, producers felt the shows sounded

“canned” and dry. So in 1971, KCBS in Los Angeles began experimenting with live discussions of sex by women callers that were aimed at female listeners. A male all-night disc jockey for the station, Bill Ballance, hosted the midday show, *Feminine Forum*.

Topless radio was an instant success and quickly spread across the nation. By 1973 there were 50 to 60 stations that allowed only women to call in and talk about the predetermined topic of the day. As the format became more popular and spread to other stations, the content became more explicit. Truly talented hosts were able to draw extremely detailed and explicit answers from their callers. Naturally, listenership grew dramatically.

Complaints to the FCC were also on the rise. As a result, the commission announced that it did not consider topless radio to be in the public interest, as prescribed by the Communications Act of 1934, and the FCC threatened to take action if the industry did not police itself. FCC Chairman Dean Burch considered the format “prurient trash” and did not feel that the format was broadcasting in the public interest, convenience, or necessity. Further, he did not feel that the First Amendment protected broadcasting discussions of this sort in such an easily accessible medium—a medium particularly available to children. Despite these warnings, topless radio programming did not change.

In 1973 the FCC announced its intention to fine WGLD-FM in Oak Park, Illinois, \$2,000 based on two individual excerpts from a show called *Femme Forum*. This was the stiffest penalty then available under the Communications Act of 1934. The declaration did not go without dissent. Two organizations, the Illinois Citizens Committee for Broadcasting and the Illinois Division of the American Civil Liberties Union, along with one FCC member, complained that the ruling was outside the purview of the FCC and went against the organization’s goal to maintain broadcasting in the public interest. They stated that the ruling would have a chilling effect on the discussion of important public issues and that, taken as a whole, the content of topless radio programming (specifically *Femme Forum*) was *not* patently offensive by community standards.

Hoping that this would be a test case of the FCC’s ability to fine stations based on the commission’s perceptions of the obscenity or indecency of the programming, the agency invited WGLD’s parent company, Sonderling Broadcasting, to take the case to court. However, Sonderling, stating that they could not afford the cost of testing such broad constitutional issues in the legal arena, paid the fine instead, and the FCC was denied a judicial declaration of its ability to police radio decency. Despite the lack of a court ruling, the FCC achieved its goal. Not only did Sonderling pay the fine, they also canceled their sex-talk show. Indeed, such shows nationwide were canceled or drastically restructured after this event.

Topless radio was quickly banished. Thanks to the Sonderling fine and similar cases over the ensuing years—particularly the “Seven Dirty Words” case in 1978—the FCC managed to keep references to sex on radio primarily limited to risqué jokes and somewhat suggestive song lyrics. However, the FCC was not able to keep this format off the air for long. Not only did sex talk on the radio return, it evolved into a variety of forms, showed up in a number of parts of the day, and sought out multiple audiences. Particularly important were shifts in the regulatory focus of the FCC from behavioral regulation to allowing marketplace competition to “police” the actions of stations. In 1980, Dr. Ruth Westheimer began her serious but frank discussion of sex on local New York radio. In the early 21st century, Dr. Laura Schlessinger’s nationally syndicated program dealt with moral and ethical discussions of relationships, sometimes resulting in discussions of sexual behavior and choices.

Another offshoot of topless radio is exemplified by Howard Stern—the self-proclaimed “King of All Media.” In the mid-1980s, Stern and several other national and regional hosts stretched the limits of “patently offensive” to the breaking point—dealing with religion, politics, race, and naturally sex in a manner many consider particularly juvenile. Unlike earlier programming, shock radio sought out the lucrative male 18-to-49 demographic. These programs caught and held the attention of their audiences with guests from the porn industry, celebrity feuds, off-color phone pranks, stripping on the air, outlandish phone-in contests, and alternative dating games. Surprisingly, corporations backing this type of radio have managed to forestall significant FCC censure—in many cases simply paying massive fines after stalling the organization for a number of years. As the format cannot advance much further than it has, it appears to have simply spread into other parts of the day. Not only is this format aired at night, it has actually become most popular in evening and morning drive times.

Although the antics in this format have escalated since the early 1970s, topless radio may have helped usher in the new era of explicit radio discussions of sex.

PHILIP J. AUTER

See also Censorship; Controversial Issues; Federal Communications Commission; Licensing; Obscenity/Indecency on Radio; Seven Dirty Words Case; Shock Jocks; Stern Howard

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Totenberg, Nina 1944-

U.S. Reporter and Legal Affairs Correspondent

Most of Nina Totenberg's radio reporting career has been focused on the Supreme Court and the other highest levels of America's legal system, including the investigations that have shaken presidents and the role of Congress in legal affairs. She may be best known for breaking stories that helped derail or disrupt the confirmations of Supreme Court nominees. In the process, Totenberg has made powerful enemies and won most of the top awards in broadcasting.

Born in New York City and reared in nearby Scarsdale, New York, Totenberg is the eldest of three daughters of concert violinist and music educator Roman Totenberg. She attended Boston University but left in 1965 to take various newspaper jobs until 1968, when she moved to Washington, D.C., and landed a job on the now-defunct *National Observer*.

While at the *Observer*, Totenberg wrote a profile of J. Edgar Hoover that so enraged the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) director that he tried to have her fired. She recalls it as "the first time a credible news organization wrote a profile of Hoover that was neither a fan letter nor a hatchet job." At the *Observer*, Totenberg began to develop her interest in legal affairs, especially in the background of decisions at the Supreme Court.

In 1973 Totenberg moved on to *New Times*, an irreverent and short-lived national journal, where she created a stir on Capitol Hill with an article called "The Ten Dumbest Members of Congress." One of the men profiled, Senator William Scott of Virginia, compounded the publicity by holding a news conference in which he denied that he was the dumbest.

Totenberg went to work for National Public Radio (NPR) in 1974, learning the basics of radio production from colleagues as she perfected her legal research skills. Her persistent and aggressive reporting style won the admiration of many Washington news people but the ill will of those who were used to thinking of reporting from the Capital as an all-male club. "When I started," Totenberg recalls, "I was pretty much the only girl, and I thought the way to succeed was to be tough as nails. Over the years I've mellowed, but I'm also not the only girl anymore."

Linda Wertheimer, cohost of NPR's *All Things Considered*, ascribes Totenberg's success to hard work and persistence: "She'd do a tremendous amount of research on the whole Supreme Court docket before each session, so she'd go into all those cases knowing a lot about them." Wertheimer, who shared office space with Totenberg in the early years, also recalls that Totenberg was "dogged and tenacious when it came to following up leads. She just wouldn't take no for an answer."

Iran-Contra Special Prosecutor Lawrence Walsh says Totenberg has cultivated a wide network of sources over the years because of "her absolute honesty and trustworthiness" and because she is always imaginative in seeking out people to question.

Her imagination and persistence paid off in 1987, when Totenberg broke the story that Supreme Court nominee Douglas H. Ginsburg had openly smoked marijuana in the 1970s when he taught at Harvard Law School. Totenberg interviewed people who knew Ginsburg at the time, including former students and colleagues. "I was there before the FBI was," she recalls, "and I'm not sure they would have asked." The disclosure embarrassed the Reagan administration, which had promoted the federal appeals judge as a strict upholder of the law. Shortly after Totenberg's report, Ginsburg withdrew his name from consideration.

Totenberg's national fame stems from scoops such as the Ginsburg case and an even bigger one: uncovering sexual harassment allegations against Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas in 1991. Thomas' supporters were furious that the allegation had leaked. Senator Alan Simpson of Wyoming attacked Totenberg's integrity when the two appeared together on American Broadcasting Company's (ABC) *Nightline*, and the two had an angry exchange outside the studio that was widely reported. The *Wall Street Journal* ran an editorial accusing Totenberg of being fired from the *National Observer* for plagiarism 19 years earlier. In interviews with *Vanity Fair* and other journals, Totenberg has said that she did copy quotes for a story, calling it "a stupid mistake," but she main-

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