

Making airwaves for social justice

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Dr. MarkAlain Dery, left, assistant professor of clinical medicine, and doctoral student Andrew Ward are the forces behind WHIV, a radio station whose programming includes HIV awareness and other social causes. (Photo by Sally Asher)

Like many casual encounters in New Orleans that lead to a great idea, the meeting of Dr. MarkAlain Dery and Andrew Ward was accentuated by music and libations. At the Fais Do Do stage at [Jazz Fest](#), standing in the shade, sharing a beer and discussing current affairs, the two friends made a pact to promote human rights and social justice. A year later, in 2014, [community radio station WHIV-FM 102.3](#) was born.

Dery, assistant professor of clinical medicine at Tulane, called the station WHIV because he wanted the letters repeated over and over to destigmatize HIV and build awareness of the disease. But HIV awareness is only part of the station's story.

"Contemporary radio is corporate radio," says Dery. "Community radio 'for the community, by the community' is a concept that has been replaced with just a few voices that continue to support the power structure. WHIV is committed to providing programming dedicated to human rights and social justice."

Dery has succeeded in establishing such a lineup, with diverse programming including shows by members of the Tulane community:

• Dorian-Gray Alexander (standardized patient trainer) hosts "Proof Positive" on Tuesdays, which addresses living with HIV and staying healthy and positive;

• Katy Hobgood Ray (assistant director of web communications) hosts "Confetti Park" on Saturdays, featuring Louisiana children's music and storytelling; and

• Liana Elliott (2007 Tulane graduate) hosts "NOLA Matters" on Thursdays, covering news that affects New Orleans.

Ward, a Tulane doctoral student, is the station's general manager. He is working to add more independent voices to WHIV's mix. "Nowhere else can New Orleanians hear real stories by real people about living with HIV, being a radical black feminist, being a Christian anarchist, overcoming addiction, etc.," Ward says. "These are the people in your neighborhood, and for the first time in history, they have a voice on-air and a place at the table." So pull up a chair and tune in.

• WHIV is committed to providing programming dedicated to human rights and social justice. — Dr. Mark Alain Dery, assistant professor of clinical medicine