



Paulina Arruda

My name is Paulina Arruda. My husband and I own WJFT 97.3 FM, the Portuguese radio station. 97.3 started back in the fifties as an ethnic community radio station, which they transmitted. They had programming in several languages. one of them being the Portuguese. It was called the Portuguese hour. And to this day I still run into people, we still have audience members that tell us that they started listening to us back in the fifties, when they first came to the United States. In 1975, Edmund Dinis, a well known figure in New Bedford, he was an attorney, a state representative, district attorney, bought 97.3 and he named it after his father, Jacinto [inaudible 00:01:01] Diniz. That's why we are WJFT and turned it into Portuguese radio station. So since 1975, we have been transmitting in Portuguese 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Because we are 50,000 watts FM we reach all the Portuguese communities in New England. We reach all the Portuguese communities in Massachusetts, Rhode Island. We reach part of New Hampshire, Maine, Connecticut, and a tiny little bit of Long Island, New York.

There are not that many independent ethnic radio stations, 50,000 watts in the United States. We are the biggest Portuguese radio station in the United States. We are actually the biggest Portuguese radio station in North America, and we are the biggest Portuguese radio station outside of Portugal. Just in New England we reach over half a million Portuguese. We are a true community radio. We started when this community first started, when the big wave of Portuguese started coming to the United States is basically when WJFD started. So we have grown and we have been here with the community as they established themselves in the United States.

We are an entertainment radio station. So we play Portuguese music mostly, but we play some world music, music from Spain, Italy, France, Brazil, et cetera. We have news from Portugal every day, several times a day. We have local news. We play the soccer games. We have many programs related to community issues. We have a big focus on community issues, events, and things that are important to the community and that the community should be informed and on top of like, just recently with the COVID, we had always every day, several people, doctors, and other people, politicians informing the community of what was going on, what steps to do, what to expect.

So we always try to be on top of all issues that are important to the community. I think there are three roles that we play that are very important to the community. We are the connection to the Portuguese community in the United States to Portugal. It's been many years. There's been many people that have been here for 50, 60 years. There's multiple generations already. Some people have been back. Some people have not, believe it or not. There are people that were born in Massachusetts that speak Portuguese and have never been to Portugal, but listened to us and they have that link, that connection to Portugal through us. So that's one of our main roles. We have news and other top shows, other events of things of interest to the community that we focus on a lot. Portugal, of course, like the world has changed a lot in 50, 60, 40, 30 years, so we have provided that information that changed how things have changed, a lot of it through the music we play.

We also provide the link between all the communities in New England, because we reach all of them and people know what is going on in other Portuguese communities in New England through us, by them advertising events and things with us, or by us sponsoring. We sponsor all the major Portuguese cultural events in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. So through that, people know what is going on and keep in touch with the various communities and what's going on in the communities. The third role that we have, and that I think it's fascinating, and this is just recently, we have been noticing that is the connection between different generations.

One of our challenges at WJFT is who our audience is. Most radio stations have a particular audience, a particular age group in a particular type of music they play. We, because we are the only one, we have all the ages, we have from 10 to 90 and with different tastes in music, different interests in historical cultural events. And we have to, in our programming, figure out how we are going to reach all of those ages, the different age groups. And community clubs, associations, schools, the local schools that teach Portuguese, they all listen to us. And what we



find lately is that we have this younger generations, teens, twenties, early thirties, that listen to us and they tell us that they listen to us because we are the link to the culture and the link to the grandparents or to the fathers that in some cases have died, but because growing up with them, they listen to us.

So we are that connection. So lately we find ourselves being this link between generations, and we have this whole new age group that is interested of what is new in Portugal, very interested in culture and history of Portugal. Very interested in the language, very interested in the music, and Portugal has wonderful music right now. And also interested in what is going on in the Portuguese communities in United States, because some of them don't necessarily live in the community anymore, but they still want to go to some events in the community, or they have children now, and they want to expose those children to those community events. This is why we work with many of the schools in the area that teach Portuguese, many of the clubs that have activities for children. We have programming for young adults. We have stories for children. We have literature, readings, many events for that age group to attract them. And because they want it, they're asking for it, like Portuguese literature, Portuguese poetry. So that's our role right now.

Our big challenge for the future is how do we continue? How do we go on from here? It's been over 45 years. Radio has gone through a lot of changes. It's continued to going through a lot of changes. It's particularly difficult for ethnic radio stations. It's particularly difficult for independent radio stations, meaning that it's one owner that owns one radio stations, which is us. We are a family business. We own only this radio station, and it's increasingly hard to keep it.