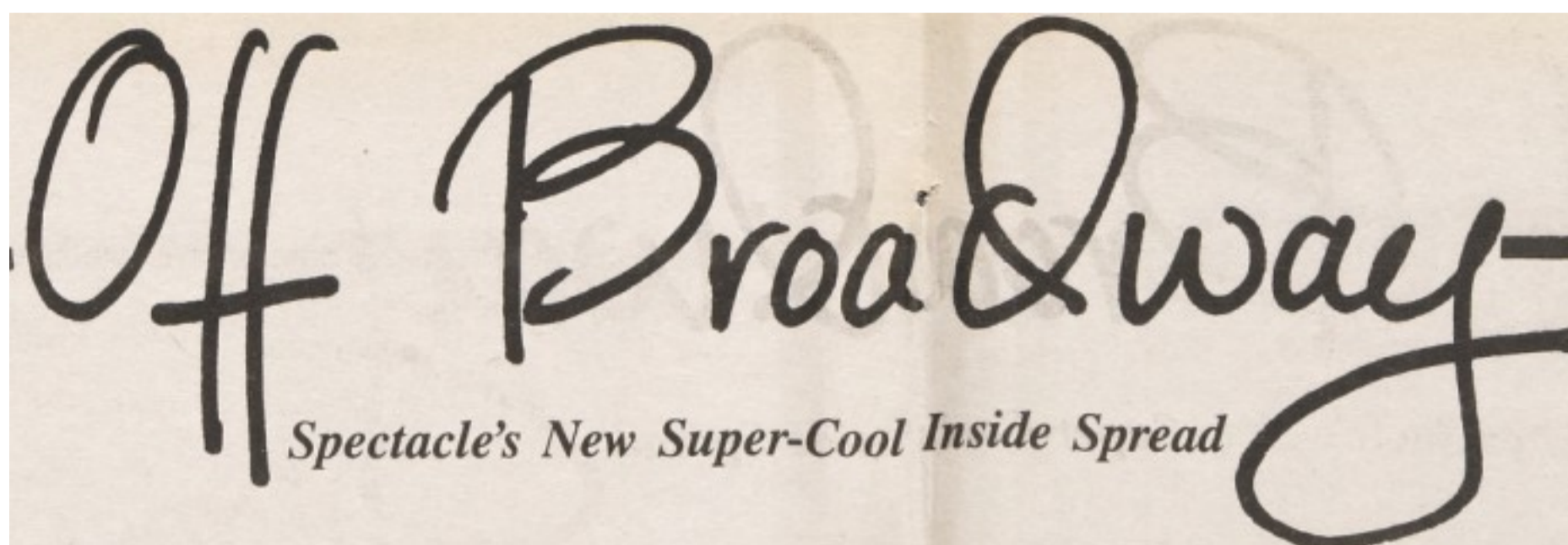


COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

Columbia Daily Spectator, 2 November 1989 — Off Broadway Spectacle's New Super-Cool Inside Spread WKCR Explores Gender, Race and Sexuality [ARTICLE+ILLUSTRATION]



WKCR Explores Gender, Race and Sexuality

By Robert Kolker

The students who work on **Gender Neutral**, WKCR's one-month-old news magazine program, have certain ideas about gender, class, race and sexuality. But rather than broadcast their own views, the show's staff members provide a forum for

people from the University and the rest of New York to express themselves on the air.

Gender Neutral's magazine format allows for coverage of news issues, arts-related features and even a brief listing of cultural events. The first installment, which aired on Oct. 3, featured two Columbia celebrities: Laura Brown—the General Studies graduate who initiated the movement to place a women writers banner on Butler Library—and occasional Columbia writing division lecturer Bharati Mukherjee, who read aloud from her collection of stories that won the National Book Critics Circle Award.

Producer Serena Satyasai, CC '91, began the ground work on **Gender Neutral** earlier this fall by establishing contacts with many city organizations. But in a recent interview, Satyasai said one of her long-term goals for

Gender Neutral is to "work together with the Columbia community on a project where we would provide the technical expertise and they would provide the research background."

As a radio show that actively seeks input from the University

community, **Gender Neutral** reflects a change in WKCR's programming—in the past the station has catered more to the city than to the University. WKCR news director Frank Tipton, CC '91, says that **Gender Neutral** "reflects a trend in the news department" to improve the station's relationship with the student body. Satyasai says that she hopes **Gender Neutral** will become a "link between the Columbia community and New York at large," as well as a way to give city figures exposure to the University.

Student guests on the show have spoken about issues which are relevant to both the University and New York City. On Oct. 24, Colette Brown, CC '91, Risha Henry, CC '91, and Kenyatta Monroe, CC '91, delivered an opinion piece on issues concerning women of color. The following week, Holly Beale, CC '91, spoke about gender-neutral language.

Guests from the city have offered first-hand insight—on Oct. 17 **Gender Neutral** interviewed Marilyn Nigaki, co-founder of the Sister to Sister counseling program for black, female AIDS patients. "These are the people who are behind the statistics," Satyasai says.

The scope of issues that **Gender Neutral** covers is much wider than the show's title suggests. In her opening state-

ment during the show's debut broadcast, Satyasai said that the meaning of the title will be left "wide open to interpretation." So far the show has focused on issues of gender,

race and health care. In the works is a three-part series on multisexuality and religion as well as a feature on organizations which help gay and lesbian youth.

"Those issues are all large," says Satyasai. "I left the focus wide open on purpose, expecting that people on the staff would bring in their ideas . . . I have not set an agenda—I've encouraged people by connecting them with different resources."

One month after the Oct. 3 debut, **Gender Neutral** is still in its infancy—several staff members have yet to be fully technically trained. But Satyasai and Tipton remain confident. "Once the technical hurdle is passed," says Tipton, "the show can become a very powerful forum that can reach a potential audience of 20 million."

In her opening statement in the first broadcast, Satyasai said, "Somewhere in this sharing of stories, we hope our fresh outlook will provide the link between old conflicts and their overdue resolutions." For now, **Gender Neutral**

serves as a medium for editorials, but Satyasai admits that "it's hard to pinpoint someone who has a necessarily opposing opinion."

As a result, the show so far has been unable to foster an on-air debate. But that will change this Tuesday, as **Gender Neutral's** Election Day special will feature a discussion about the mayoral race.

Gender Neutral can be heard on Tuesdays on WKCR (89.9 FM), 9-9:30 a.m.



The staff of WKCR's new show, *Gender Neutral*