

Case 8: Grab That Mic!

By the time he parked his car, Joe's anger had reached the boiling point. While driving to his volunteer job as DJ at the local radio station, KMFN, he had been listening to Martha's Country Western music program on the same station. She often shared funny or personal musings online between pieces, but today Joe thought she had gone too far. She was using the community microphone to spout what could best be described as scientifically debunked misinformation from the anti-vaccination movement.

KMFN is a small FM radio station, broadcasting to the few thousand families in the township, but it also has a streaming website. It plays mostly music but also carries local community announcements about weather, road closings, and so forth. It has no news program. Everyone who works there is a volunteer, like Joe and Martha. The owners don't care about what DJs say between songs, as long as their programs offer the sort of content they've agreed on.

Martha bragged about defying her doctor and not vaccinating her children, and she challenged all her listeners to do the same. "Did you know that those vaccine companies pay for their own studies? Did you know that? And the government approves those drugs based on those very studies? How cozy is that arrangement? Doesn't it bother you that drug companies can't be sued if their products hurt you? Or that they don't even guarantee the safety of their vaccines? Why won't they guarantee them if they're so safe, huh?"

After a few more songs, Martha came back on the air, this time worked up over what she called "those nutty climate-change hoaxers." After listening to five minutes of Martha spouting climate-denier rhetoric, Joe had turned off the radio and sat in his car until he felt he could be civil. His own program was due to come on right after Martha's, so he went into the station and paced outside the soundroom until Martha's theme song came on and she stepped out.

Joe confronted her in the hallway. "Hey,

that's not cool." "What's not?"

"All that anti-vaccine BS. There's no science to support that, and if enough people stop vaccinating their kids, we could lose the herd immunity factor, and that would put a lot of people at risk. That's just totally irresponsible."

"Mind your own business," Martha said. "I can say anything I want. It's my program, and when I can see that Big Pharma and Big Brother are scamming all of us, I'm going to let my neighbors know about it."

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