

Caller to Radio Show says he was Rejected because of Stutter



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[Stutter stands up for his "right" to dedicate a song on radio but the radio station said no.] American History - 1700s

Caller to radio show says he was rejected because of stutter

By Tim O'Neil Post-Dispatch

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Robert A. Tart said he just wanted to get on the radio and dedicate a country song to lost love.

Tart, 36, has a significant stutter. He said the person who answered the call-in line refused to let him on the air to dedicate a song to his ex-wife and finally told him bluntly that his stutter was the problem.

Tart filed a complaint April 2 with the [Missouri Human Rights Commission](#) against WIL-FM and Jones Radio Networks Ltd., which produces a country music syndicated show from Seattle featuring a DJ named Lia. WIL broadcasts Lia's show in the evenings.

"It's hard enough to go through life with a stutter, but wanting to get on a radio show takes some courage," Tart said Tuesday. "I talk slow, but they're keeping me off that show because of it."

The commission is looking into Tart's allegations, according to paperwork that he possesses. The commission never discusses its activities unless it finds a violation and sets a case for public hearing. It has the power to assess financial damages.

Tart said a woman named Alexa, who fields Lia's calls, told him on March 21, "[Bobby, we don't do the stuttering thing.](#)"

[Can a private business turn people away using their own criteria?

Could a radio station take all calls?

If no, then do they not have to adopt some guidelines as to which calls to take?

Does society, using government as it's agent, have a purpose for giving the private business guidelines (in the form of laws and regulations) for setting their guidelines?

Does government set some guidelines even now, irregardless of whether you believe they should or should not.]

Susan Stephens, sales director at Jones Radio, said she spoke to Tart when he called

Seattle to complain three weeks ago. Stephens said she could not guarantee anyone getting on Lia's show.

As for Tart's accusation, she said, "I can't go there. I can't imagine Alexa would use those words. We're a professional network with a huge volume of calls. It's incredibly hard to get on the air."

Monica Adams, news director of WIL, knew of the commission's inquiry but said Jones Network handles the Lia show. "It has nothing to do with us," Adams said.

Adams said Tart had gotten onto WIL's own broadcasts a few times. "His stutter isn't that bad," she said. "All calls are taped anyway. You do what you can to help make a person sound good."

That's the thinking of Tammy Flores, director of operations at the National Stuttering Association in Anaheim, Calif.

"There are so many cases like this," Flores said Tuesday. "I don't get how people can be so inconsiderate. There is so much teasing and bullying of kids who stutter, and when adults do it, it's even worse. It's a speech impediment. All it takes is compassion."

The song Tart had wanted Lia to broadcast for his ex-wife in Bloomsdale, Mo., was Joe Diffie's "In Another World." The song is a wistful memory of lost love, with the refrain, "But that's another place in time, back when you were mine in another world."

Tart is single and an unemployed production worker who lives near Benton Park in St. Louis. He has seen both sides of love, the law and civil liberties. He served prison time 10 years ago for burglary and said he had accused the Ste. Genevieve County sheriff's office of brutality over an arrest last year on an assault charge. He pleaded guilty of the assault, by the way.

But Tart said his dispute with the radio world was about the **dignity of stutterers.**

[Is stuttering, or how we speak, a criteria to be legally protected, as color and sex are?]

"We have rights, just like everybody else," he said. "All I want to do is dedicate a song."

[What rights?

Who everybody else?

Is there a right involved here? Even a man made right?

What is the issue from the radio stations point of view?

As a major stock holder of the radio station, what is your advice?]

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