



NEWS/TALK MUSIC ENTERTAINMENT

American Public Media Programs

# Marketplace®

Search:  GO >

Podcast / RSS Contact  
 Newsletters About  
 Archive Stations  
 Features

Home Morning Report Marketplace Marketplace Money

Tuesday, May 08, 2007



[LISTEN TO STORY](#)

## Silencing an opposing voice

[Listen to this story](#)

Venezuela's oldest, most-watched TV network is going to have its broadcast license pulled by the government at the end of the month. It's the price for getting on the wrong side of President Hugo Chavez. Dan Grech reports.

Photo: Journalists and employees of Radio Caracas Television sit with their mouths taped shut during a demonstration demanding RCTV's license renewal (Juan Barreto, AFP/Getty Images)

[EMAIL TO A FRIEND](#)

### TEXT OF STORY

**KAI RYSSDAL:** Rupert Murdoch's deep-pocketed interest in the Journal aside, these are hardly boom times for many media outlets in this country. But at least they'll always have the first amendment.

Later this month, the Venezuelan government is going to pull the broadcast license of that country's oldest and most-watched television network. From the Marketplace Americas Desk at WLRN, Dan Grech reports RCTV finds itself on the wrong side of President Hugo Chavez.

**DAN GRECH:** President Hugo Chavez's decision to pull the plug on RCTV has much to do with the events of April of 2002. That month, Chavez was temporarily ousted by a military coup.

The country's four main TV networks broadcast massive anti-Chavez demonstrations that helped force him from office. But two days later, when Chavez supporters dramatically retook the presidential palace, all four major networks declined to cover it.

Instead of Chavez's triumphant return, RCTV aired the film "Pretty Woman."

**JOHN DINGES:** What RCTV did simply can't be justified under any stretch of journalistic principles.

That's Columbia journalism professor John Dinges. He says there are politically biased news networks all across Latin America.

**DINGES:** But when a television channel simply fails to report . . . simply goes off the air during a period of national crisis, not because they're forced to, but simply because they don't agree with what's happening . . . you've lost your ability to defend what you do on journalistic principles.

Andres Izarra was a news manager at RCTV during the news blackout. He quit in protest, joined the Chavez administration and now is one of the channel's fiercest critics.

**ANDRES IZARRA:** This is a violator of a public space. We think that such an irresponsible telecommunications operator should have been taken off the air many years ago.

### ALSO ON THIS SHOW...

[Citigroup warms to climate change](#)

[Chevron may settle on Iraq oil deal](#)

[Putting 'a word from our sponsor' on demand](#)

[Campaigns make bottom-line adjustments, too](#)

[An overbearing and arrogant bully](#)

[Sitting on the news](#)

[Listen to entire program](#)

[Browse entire program](#)

### MUSIC FROM THIS SHOW

*One Sweet World*  
 Dave Matthews Band  
[Buy](#)

*I Want It All*  
 Depeche Mode

*Sister Surround*  
 Soundtrack of our Lives  
[Buy](#)

*X-Ray Eyes*  
 Guster  
[Buy](#)

*Mr. Writer*  
 Stereophonics  
[Buy](#)

DOW -0.04%  
 NASDAQ -0.58%  
 S & P -0.13%  
[Details...](#)

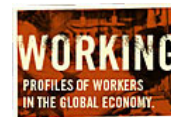
### Browse

By Topic   
 By Place   
 By Show Date   
 By Reporter



The business world can be a real pressure cooker. Don't take out your frustration on the interns — [duck into The Marketplace Confessional](#) and let off that steam anonymously.

### MARKETPLACE FEATURES



[More features...](#)

SPONSOR

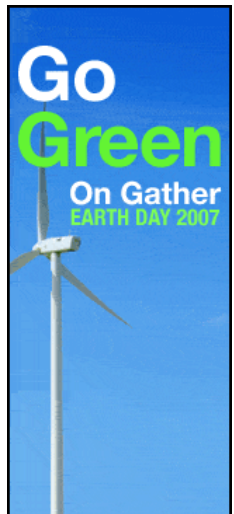


Is your nest egg in need of attention?

Visit our Nest Egg Score Estimator to see how it's doing.



A.G. EDWARDS.  
 FULLY INVESTED IN OUR CLIENTS.  
A.G. EDWARDS & SONS, INC. MEMBER SIPC



Get Inspired  
 See the green resolutions people are making  
 Share your eco-friendly ideas at [sustainability.gather.com](http://sustainability.gather.com)

After the 2002 coup, the four main networks continued to attack

Chavez. He branded them the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," and he crafted new laws that made it easier to take them off the air. That's led to widespread self-censorship.

Venevisión, the nation's second-largest broadcaster, toned down its reports so much it's now dismissively nicknamed the Disney Channel. RCTV took the opposite tack.

**MIGUEL ANGEL RODRIGUEZ:** Yo soy Miguel Angel Rodriguez, conductor del programa la Entrevista.

It launched "The Interview," a hyper-critical morning show hosted by Miguel Angel Rodriguez.

**RODRIGUEZ [voice of intprepter]:** We have always been an opposition channel. We oppose corruption, government inefficiency, injustice, fraud. That's why we have had problems with every administration in the 53 years we have been on the air.

Teodoro Petkoff owns Tal Cual, a thin afternoon daily that's been sued five times by the Chavez administration. Petkoff says he's no fan of Venezuelan TV, whose powerful owners unduly influence news broadcasts. But he says with RCTV, a higher principle's at stake.

**TEODORO PETKOFF [voice of intprepter]:** This isn't a debate about the quality of television, or its abuse by its owners, or the monopoly that two economic groups have over TV in Venezuela. We're in the presence of a much larger power — that of the state suppressing a space for political opinion.

A multimillion-dollar enterprise hangs in the balance. RCTV employs 2,500 people, including 250 journalists. It draws 40 percent of Venezuela's audience, and a similar share of advertising.

Columbia Professor John Dinges:

**DINGES:** It's got state-of-the-art studios, tremendous production capacity, probably the biggest news staff in Venezuela in television. So my question is: What happens to that? Does that just go away?

When RCTV's signal flickers off, Chavez says a national public service channel will take its place.

In Caracas, I'm Dan Grech for Marketplace.

