



PUBLIC BROADCASTING ATLANTA

2020 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



**We are Atlanta's NPR and PBS stations:
WABE 90.1 FM and ATL PBA.**

OUR MISSION:

Public Broadcasting Atlanta inspires a community of lifelong learners.

Public Broadcasting Atlanta (PBA) began broadcasting on the airwaves in 1948 as WABE 90.1 FM, Georgia's first public radio service. Our broadcast area includes the City of Atlanta and the 23-county metro area. WABE and ATL PBA are services of Atlanta Public Schools in partnership with the Atlanta Educational Telecommunications Collaborative (AETC).





2020 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT IN THE COMMUNITY

LOCAL VALUE

PBA is committed to inspiring a community of life-long learners. Our programming and community engagement efforts highlight important issues in Atlanta and build bridges across the people and neighborhoods of the city. Our content takes audiences around the metro Atlanta area, the country, and the world with engaging, multi-faceted stories and commentaries. Through community events, forums and speaking engagements we connect with audiences where they live. We educate and entertain our audiences, resulting in better-informed citizens and an improved quality of life.

KEY SERVICES

PBA produces distinctly Atlanta-focused, award-winning content that our audience enjoys daily in their cars, homes, and online. WABE's in-depth coverage of local issues, original podcasts, innovative digital content, and ATL PBA's broad television line-up, our programming reflects the people and culture of Atlanta. Our community events complement our reporting and programming, and foster critical conversations about a range of issues. As a partner of Atlanta Public Schools, education is a key component of our mission and service to the community. We provide a range of enriching educational opportunities free of charge for all ages.

LOCAL IMPACT

PBA currently reaches over 665,000 unique people weekly in metro Atlanta: 359,000 on the radio, 254,000 on TV, and 201,000 online. WABE and ATL PBA broadcast to 23 of Georgia's most populated counties, reaching more than half of the population of our state, and some of the most influential decision makers in the area. Through our free on-demand tutoring service, TutorATL, thousands of area K-12 students received free homework help in FY2020, with expanded hours and increased availability when schools abruptly moved from in-person to digital learning.

Highlights: July 2019-June 2020

- On WABE 90.1 FM, we provided live coverage of national events, including impeachment hearings and the 2020 primary, plus in-depth local coverage of our state's new voting machine rollout, Georgia's 2020 legislative session, COVID-19, Black Lives Matter protests and the killing of Rayshard Brooks, and many other issues and events.
- We expanded TutorATL, our online, on-demand, personalized tutoring program, to meet the increased needs of students when schools abruptly shifted to virtual learning in March 2020. Usage of the program immediately doubled and has remained high since then. Area students used more than 7,000 TutorATL sessions in the 2019-2020 school year, with nearly one-third of that usage occurring in March and April alone.
- Our engagement in national dialogue increased in early 2020. In April and May, Rose Scott co-hosted a national live call-in conversations about the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 with Minnesota Public Radio and KQED San Francisco. These episodes were part of a six-week series co-created by WABE with seven other NPR stations. *America Amplified: Life, Community, and COVID-19* explored local perspectives on the virus and how it has shaped different parts of the country.
- In late 2019, WABE recognized two individuals who have been the lifeblood of our station's outstanding music, arts and culture programming over the last four decades. WABE aired audio tributes from community leaders, past guests, and friends of the station throughout November to mark the 40th anniversary of [Lois Reitzes](#) (top right), host of WABE's weekday arts and culture program, *City Lights*. In December, the station celebrated the 40th anniversary of H. Johnson (bottom right), host of and *Blues Classics* and formerly *Jazz Classics*.
- Reflecting the vital concerns of our times, ATL PBA broadcast dozens of long-form programs exploring race in America. Created by both PBS and acclaimed documentary producers, the programs focused on protest, policing, and criminal justice from both a historical and current events perspective. On PBA.org, we offered many of these shows and stories as video on demand under a new heading of Race in America.



Awards and Honors

WABE received four first-place Atlanta Press Club Awards of Excellence, solidifying our position as the top radio news source in metro Atlanta. WABE also won three first-place honors in this year's regional Edward R. Murrow Awards for Excellence in Writing, Excellence in Sound, and Podcast.

- [**“Gridlocked: What’s Moving Atlanta”**](#) by Rose Scott tied for first place in Documentary Series in the Atlanta Press Club’s 2019 Awards of Excellence.
- [**“A Look At The Phenomenon Of Freaknik As An Organizer Tries To Revive It”**](#) by Lauren Booker won first place in Lifestyle Journalism in the Atlanta Press Club’s 2019 Awards of Excellence.
- [**“Bystanders Who Perform CPR Exponentially Increase Survival Rates – One Atlanta Man Knows”**](#) by Jim Burress won first place in use of sound in the Atlanta Press Club’s 2019 Awards of Excellence, as well as first place honors for Excellence in Sound in this year’s Regional Edwin R. Murrow Awards.
- [**“Trust Your Gut: What Selling Guns Online Is Like”**](#) by Lisa Hagen won first place honors for Excellence in Writing in the Regional Edwin R. Murrow Awards.

Buried Truths received a national Edward R. Murrow award, adding to its Peabody and Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Journalism awards.

Our organization garnered numerous other honors, including an award from the National Educational Telecommunications Association for the *Buried Truths* lesson plans for middle and high school students.



WABE reporter Emma Hurt (left) covering Georgia Governor Brian Kemp.

Community Engagement

With the goal of creating an informed and engaged public, our topical and relevant events function as a companion to WABE's trusted reporting. In the months prior to the pandemic, we held community engagement events in our studios and at venues throughout Atlanta. We also shared this content to listeners and viewers in WABE broadcasts and digitally. Examples include:

- **Guns and Black Southern Life**, a community conversation with an audience of 125 at Auburn Avenue Research Library co-hosted by WABE's Lisa Hagen in coordination with the Guns and America reporting collaborative;
- An in-person demonstration of Georgia's new voting machines in February and a companion demonstration video that was widely shared and viewed more than 2,000 times;
- The launch of our series, **Coffee Conversations with Rose Scott**, including a conversation with the refugee community in Clarkston to hear first-hand about the issues of marginalization and discrimination facing many in that community. Content from this series was developed into segments for an episode of *Closer Look*.

PBA's community engagement events are now held virtually, but they continue to complement our reporting and programming, expand our reach with audiences, and strengthen relationships in the community. Through our reporting, programming, and community engagement, PBA has encouraged people to be active in the political process and to participate in the 2020 census, producing content that helps citizens to become better-informed and more engaged in their community.



WABE reporter Lisa Hagen (left) co-hosts the **Guns and Black Southern Life** panel at the Auburn Avenue Research Library.

Local Issues, Local Reporting on WABE 90.1 FM

The volume and pace of breaking news and the demands it has put on our newsroom over the last year have challenged our team like never before, but this experience has also clarified our purpose and reaffirmed the importance of our work. As Atlantans navigate the COVID-19, increased unemployment and financial instability, heightened structural inequities, social and racial tensions, and the looming foreclosure and eviction crisis, they turn to WABE for information, context, and perspective. Some of WABE's most noteworthy stories, series, and collaborations from FY2020 include:

- **[Every 30 Seconds](#)** – WABE reporter Martha Dalton joined a national reporting collaborative from CPB and PRI's *The World* to examine the impact of young Latino voters on Election 2020. Martha repeatedly checked in with two young first-time Latino voters throughout the year.
- **["Gridlocked: What's Moving Atlanta?"](#)** – In this award-winning special series from *Closer Look*, Rose Scott dedicated an entire week to examine Atlanta's growing traffic problems, what it means for Atlanta residents' quality of life, and how to create safer streets for all.
- WABE reporter Stephannie Stokes partnered with American Public Media reporter Geoff Hing on several investigative reports in 2019 and 2020, including [this December 2019 story](#) exploring the impact of Georgia's voter purges on people who are homeless in Atlanta.
- In April, WABE reporters convened members of a church in Albany, Georgia, when Albany was the third highest COVID-19 hot-spot in the world. We spoke with church members about resiliency and the crisis in their community, helping to shed light on how communities with limited resources were coping with the pandemic.

WABE's locally produced content in FY2020 included:

- *Morning Edition*, hosted locally by Lisa Rayam
- *All Things Considered*, hosted locally by Jim Burrell
- [City Lights](#) with Lois Reitzes (weekday mornings)
- [Closer Look](#) with Rose Scott (weekday afternoons)
- [Blues Classics](#) with H. Johnson (weekends)
- Five podcasts — [Political Breakfast and its companion pop-up podcast Gold Dome Scramble](#), [Buried Truths](#), [Bottom of the Map](#), and [Did You Wash Your Hands?](#)



WABE reporter Emil Moffat, host Lisa Rayam, and senior producer David Barasoian in studio.



2020 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT STORIES OF IMPACT



A New Approach to Content

In January 2020, Scott Woelfel joined PBA as Chief Content Officer, a new position for the organization. He is leading an organization-wide strategy to create a multi-platform distribution model, fully integrating digital content throughout all our platforms and strengthening collaboration across all content areas. With these changes, our digital content amplifies our radio broadcasting and generates even stronger content across all channels. The goal of this effort is to meet public consumption needs, generate more revenue, and grow a younger and more diverse audience. As a result, we will increase our value and reach to the metro Atlanta area.

Cross-platform collaboration has made our team more nimble and responsive to change. Through this expanding multi-platform approach, our team produces dozens of stories each day for radio and digital. We have done frequent and in-depth reporting in the last year on the rollout of Georgia's new voting machines, the 2020 Census, and the Ahmaud Arbury case. Since March, much of our reporting has focused heavily on COVID-19 and its impacts in Georgia. Our reporters have closely followed the number of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths in Georgia; public health guidance; economic consequences; the debate on mask mandates; and moratoriums on utility shut-offs and evictions. This reporting is broadcast via radio and amplified via digital. It is complemented by a dedicated website with Coronavirus information, story links, and resources; a daily podcast by health reporter Sam Whitehead; and our local daily radio program *Closer Look*, where public officials frequently have the opportunity to share in-depth insights with the community.

Our cross-platform approach was also essential to our coverage of the Rayshard Brooks case and the ensuing protests and calls for police reform. Our reporters were on the front lines of protests, providing deep and thoughtful coverage for radio and digital. We expanded our daily newscasts, providing more time to feature reports from the scene of the protests and speak to those involved, examining their motivations and goals. We instituted [video coverage](#) to accompany our radio reporting so that the story could be told more fully online and on ATL PBA. Reporters convened (via Zoom) a group of individuals living in the neighborhood surrounding the Wendy's that burned after the Rayshard Brooks killing and facilitated a discussion about their concerns for their neighborhood.



2020 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT

STORIES OF IMPACT

Television Highlights on ATL PBA

ATL PBA produces original content and interstitials that are unique to Atlanta. In February 2020, ATL PBA premiered [*Building Atlanta: The Story of Herman J. Russell*](#), a locally-produced documentary that tells the story of the self-made business, community, and civic leader who built one of the country's largest black-owned construction and real estate companies. Russell is remembered for helping to build the Atlanta skyline



and supporting the civil rights movement. PBA hosted a preview event that was attended by Russell's family members, peers, and members of civic organizations that Russell championed during his life.

In October 2019, PBA hosted a screening of *College Behind Bars*, a documentary film from director Lynn Novick and producer Sarah Botstein, both long-time collaborators with the film's executive producer Ken Burns. Novick and Botstein joined us for the live event, along with local experts in prison reform. The most engaging guests, however, were some of the film's subjects, former participants of the Bard Prison Initiative. The lively Q&A with the panel lasted almost 45 minutes after the screening, and discussion continued into the lobby and the parking lot after the doors were finally closed.

In March 2020, just days before the pandemic ended the promotional tour, PBA was able to host Sarah Burns and an intimate audience at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights for a screening of *East Lake Meadows*. Only a few miles from the site of the documentary's subject, the event was especially poignant as we were joined once again by one of the film's subjects, who shared her view of the changes that had happened in Atlanta over the ensuing two decades since the community was fractured by the demolishing of their housing project.

As Black Lives Matter protests gained momentum in early June, ATL PBA expanded and refocused our programming to reflect and facilitate the ongoing national dialogue on race. We began to stream and broadcast several PBS programs about race, law enforcement, and civil disobedience. On June 9, PBS KIDS hosted a virtual YouTube event for parents, teachers, and child development experts to discuss racial issues. ATL PBA added more programming throughout the summer, including *America in Black and Blue 2020*, examining race and policing; and *The Talk—Race in America* chronicling how families of color communicate to their children ways to protect themselves from violence.



2020 LOCAL CONTENT AND SERVICE REPORT STORIES OF IMPACT

Educational Programming



As a broadcast service of Atlanta Public Schools, PBA has never lost sight of our original mission. Education remains at the core of our operations. ATL PBA serves metro Atlanta's children and the adults who care for them with trusted educational content from PBS KIDS on TV, digital, and mobile; in the classroom and in the community. In addition, we serve our community with free family workshops, educational games, lesson plans and homework support.

PBA provided specialized educational opportunities to students of all ages in FY2020. We expanded TutorATL to meet the changing needs of students during the pandemic. We continue to work closely with our partner school systems to provide ongoing access to TutorATL, continuing to meet the demand of the students of Atlanta and adapting to support school reopening strategies.

PBA also offers hands-on podcast training and education for high school students, coaching and studio visits for students in Junior Achievement's 3DE program, PBA-led workshops and lab kits with instructional support for Pre-K and early elementary students, and career exposure and job shadow opportunities for high school students in the Career, Technical, Agricultural Education (CTAE) programs.



PUBLIC BROADCASTING ATLANTA

PBA is committed to inspiring a community of life-long learners. To achieve this mission, our strategic goals are to strengthen our organization and finances, continuously invigorate relationships, and deliver transformational content.

PBA's television and radio stations are focused on providing free programming across multiple broadcasting media and formats. We create distinctly Atlanta-focused, high-quality content that our audience enjoys daily in their cars, homes, and online. Every day, our programming reflects the hustle and heartbeat of Atlanta, its struggles and victories, its rich history and vibrant dreams for the future. We deliver content focused on authentic storytelling, amplifying vital civic conversations, and deep exploration of community issues from multiple perspectives.

"We are living in uncertain times, and so much in our lives is unpredictable right now. Some days, it feels like our Democracy itself is in the balance. But, one thing I know is that I can turn to WABE for the information I need each day. I've been a member of this local NPR station for 30 years, because I always get the facts--not just accurate information but also the bigger picture and stories that matter. I appreciate the coverage of climate change, because it is shaping the world my eight grandchildren and future generations will inhabit. I also appreciate in-depth reports on topics I never even knew were out there. And I appreciate the balance, the relevance, and the quality of every story—day in and day out. "

- Kathy Strickland
Cornerstone Society member
Atlanta, GA

I've fallen in love with all of the thought provoking and in-depth shows.

- Jacob S.

Thank you for all the outstanding coverage during this pandemic. You all certainly went above and beyond.

-Catherine J.

Love starting my day with WABE. I'm always learning something new!

- Sarah W.

Public Broadcasting Atlanta

740 Bismark Rd. NE

Atlanta, GA 30324

(678) 686-0321

www.pba.org | www.wabe.org