

Talk show gets flak for conservative views

BY SUZANNE L. PARKER
STAFF WRITER

It's hard enough to be a conservative when the country is awash with Democratic euphoria, the year of the woman, and a resounding stance by black voters for a liberalized America. No one wants to hear you cry about the demise of a 12-year Republican reign or the fracture of family values.

But to be a black female conservative today can be an even truer test of the firmness of one's principles. Marie Kaigler ought to know.

Kaigler, who hosts a community-oriented talk show which airs weekly on local Booth Communication and Continental Cablevision West Channels, has lived through more than a decade of receiving phone calls and letters threatening her life, having her office ransacked, losing jobs and even been the target of gunshots.

Her show, "Marie Kaigler's Perspectives" which airs at 10 p.m. Mondays on Booth Communications cable Channel 11, however, is not the source of her strife, says Kaigler. While her conservative stance may come out during the show, the forums serve as a discussion of current issues concerning all of metropolitan Detroit communities.

Lately, sex education curriculum has been a hot topic ever since tempers boiled in Southfield and discussions about whether to teach students about homosexuality have caused great controversy in community as a whole, rather than segments of the population such as the black community," Kaigler said. "Maybe that's what makes me appear conservative."

A native Detroit

But the 48-year-old who was born, raised and now lives in Detroit knows better. It might be her lack of focused attention on the black community in her show, or her public stance against abortion, affirmative action and schools of choice which have brought about her conservative moniker.

But, in Kaigler's opinion, it is her vocal opposition to the black liberal and separatist sentiment, which she says reigns in Detroit, that has brought on those groups' wrath.

Detroit, in her opinion, has spent too much energy focusing on race relations and not enough on improving the lives and education of black families.

"I don't want to see the fate of black America focused on hating white people," she said. "It's my personal belief that we need to look at ourselves and focus on goals like being good parents and working to get off of welfare."

It is this approach of blacks in Detroit, Kaigler said, that is tearing

ing the community apart. And it's when she began expressing this view back in the 1970s that she began taking heat for it.

"The dissension didn't start with my show," she said. "It started with James Reese and 'People Want to Know'—when we didn't support Coleman Young."

"People Want to Know" was one of Kaigler's first ventures into the world of broadcasting. From 1974 to 1979, she co-hosted the hourlong talk show on radio station WJLB with Jim Reese. She made the move to this type of programming, she said, as a result of her work with sexually abused children.

"You can't look at these little babies who have been abused and close your eyes for very long," she said. "I needed an outlet for my anger and my concern."

No more love

Kaigler had been a part of the Civil Rights movement as a college student majoring in sociology at Flak University in Tennessee in the 1960s. It was also the change she saw in the movement after she left that sparked her anger.

"After Jim Crow fell in 1965, Stokely Carmichael took over as leader and the movement took on a very militant, violent and separatist approach," Kaigler said, adding the racial hatred that she saw taking over was not serving these little children she worked with in Detroit.

"When I was there, it was a movement of brotherly love and human respect," Kaigler said. "Now oppression exists within the black community and it's tearing us apart. One look at these babies and you can see that."

Since Kaigler returned to Detroit from Tennessee, she has received a master's degree in guidance counseling and is a doctoral candidate in developmental and behavioral psychology at Wayne State University. It has been in the years since she left Tennessee, while working with abused children, working as community agent with Detroit Public Schools and teaching and counseling at local community colleges, that Kaigler has developed her public voice.

In 1972 she worked on a radio talk show called "For My People"; from 1974-79 she focused her efforts on "People Want to Know" and from 1980-1982 she had a television talk show called "Ask Your Counselor."

In 1990, however, she made the move to a wider audience with a Sunday night call-in program on radio station WXYT which focused on local issues in general and last year's birth of her cable television program. Next January, Kaigler has plans to debut a pro-

gram on am station WCAR called "Metro Motor City Newstalk."

Trouble starts

Her move to an expanded focus on metropolitan communities is a natural outgrowth of her non-separatist position on black-white relations, Kaigler said, but her views have always brought her trouble.

She has lost more than one job because of her outspoken rejection

of Detroit black liberals and has had her offices ransacked. When she chaired President Ronald Reagan's inaugural ball in 1981, the threats on her life began.

Even recently, Kaigler wonders if someone might be trying to scare her into silence. One evening, after returning home from the cable studios last September, Kaigler went back out to her car. As she approached her car, four or five gunshots rang out very near

by and Kaigler dove under her car in fear, Kaigler said she never saw anybody, but her baby sitter who came running out after her, said he saw someone riding off on a bike.

"I imagine if they (the bullets) were meant for me I'd be dead right now," said Kaigler, who doesn't let the continuing calls and letters bother her as much after all these years. "But the detective who I've talked to said to take everything seriously."



Marie Kaigler

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