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THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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Latino Voices

Journalism By and About Latinos

Essays About 'The Elements of Journalism'

"…to promote and elevate the standards of journalism"

—Agnes Wahl Nieman, the benefactor of the Nieman Foundation.

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Latino Voices: Journalism By and About Latinos

Cover photo, "La Loca Y Sweetie," by Delilah Montoya.©

Fairness in Journalism is Rewarded

By spotlighting examples, we learn how fairness is perceived.

By Bob Giles

"Honest and fair dealing will win in the long run."

Charles H. Taylor, founder of The Boston Globe, laid down this journalistic cornerstone in 1873. He meant it to apply to coverage of elections, but as time passed it became part of the newspaper's creed. The words are carved in stone in the lobby of the Globe building. Through five generations during which the Taylor family published the Globe, the founder's words were printed on the editorial page.

More than a century later, this idea of "fair dealing"—what we now call fairness—is a concept that journalists and news organizations recognize as a core value of their enterprise. When what a newspaper publishes is perceived by the public to be fair, then its coverage will be regarded as credible. These two values walk hand in hand.

Late in 1999, William O. Taylor, chairman emeritus of The Boston Globe, and some of his associates from the newspaper, including Tom Winship, its former editor, and David Nyhan, a long-time columnist, began talking about an idea that Nyhan had put forward. He urged the Taylor family to consider establishing a prize for journalism that demonstrates a commitment to fairness and responsibility. [See the article about fairness by David Nyhan on page 79.]

From those discussions, the Taylor Family Award for Fairness emerged. To Bill Taylor and his family, it is an opportunity to focus public attention on an exemplary example of journalism that meets the highest standards of fairness. "The First Amendment guarantees a free press. But a free press also must be a responsible press, and a responsible press is one that tries to be fair, both to individuals and institutions in the news," Taylor says. "As journalists carry out their first obligation to seek the truth, they must do so in a spirit of fairness."

Bill Taylor has raised more than $450,000 from members of his family to endow an annual prize of $10,000. The first Taylor Fairness Award will be given in 2002, based on work published in daily newspapers during 2001. Deadline for submissions is February 2, 2002.

When he was Nieman Curator, Bill Kovach joined in talks about this award for fairness and agreed that the Nieman Foundation would be an appropriate home for the administration of the award. In fact, it is an ideal home given that the Nieman Foundation's mission is "…to promote and elevate the standards of journalism."

Members of the Taylor family have been firm in their insistence that no member of the family and no present or former journalist at the Globe should participate in the process of selecting a winner. The winner will be selected by a Fairness Award jury which will consider nominations from a panel of 31 journalists. The nominating panel is a diverse group and includes many who have written about fairness and credibility or have participated in news industry examinations of these topics. [The nominators are listed in Nieman Notes on page 95.]

Nominators will recommend efforts that in their judgment meet the highest standards of fairness. The award jury will then consider all aspects of the journalistic process in selecting the winner: reporting, writing, editing, headlines, photographs, illustrations and presentation. Nominators may recommend a single story or editorial or commentary, a series of stories or editorials or commentaries, or a body of work by an individual journalist. The award can go to an individual journalist or to a newspaper or wire service. We recognize that when all aspects of the journalistic process are evaluated, including editing, headline writing and presentation, many members of a news staff will have been involved. Once work is nominated, a newspaper will be asked to identify each of the journalists who made significant contributions to the story or stories.

There is no definition of fairness in the guidelines for Taylor Fairness Award nominations. This is deliberate. The standards for fairness in journalism are complex and diverse and not easily defined for this kind of journalism competition. In fact, we anticipate there will be many ways to define work that can be held up as exemplary examples of fairness.

The nominators will apply their own standards of fairness in newspaper work and provide a rationale for these standards on the nominating form. Over time, we expect to build a valuable base of knowledge about how fairness is perceived by leading journalists. And we will work to distribute this collection as a resource to help both journalists and members of the public understand the broad and serious attention dedicated to fairness in newspaper journalism. Our Web site (www.nieman.harvard.edu) will become an interactive center in sharing what we learn from those who nominate work because of its fairness. We will post leading entries for the award and invite reaction and comment from journalists and the public.

At a time when the public questions the fairness of the press, this award will not only shine a spotlight on exemplary efforts of fair coverage but will also provide a window through which all of us can witness how this core value of journalism is practiced and perceived. ■

Latino Voices: Journalism By and About Latinos

To viewers of "CNN Headline News" or readers of Internet news sites, the story might sound or look like this:

"Census Bureau Reports Huge Rise in Hispanic Population"
"Hispanic Population Increases Faster Than Experts Predicted"
"Hispanics Challenge African Americans as the Nation's Largest Minority Group"

A few facts later, as these bites of news are digested, more bullets of information rush to replace them. Yet, for reporters and editors, these nuggets of news aren't the end of the story. Instead, they signal the beginning of an essential journey of discovery as journalists engage in the job they're obliged to do—to help citizens understand changes taking place in their communities and country and provide information needed to make decisions about civic life.

How is this rapid increase in Hispanic American population affecting communities? What are the economic, social, cultural and educational benefits and hardships brought about by this significant demographic shift? Will the numbers and force of Hispanic voters alter the nation's political landscape? The questions to be raised and stories to be told vary as greatly as do people portrayed by the word "Hispanic." Such exploration and coverage is vital to our nation's well-being as citizens grapple with finding ways to live and work in a country whose complexion and composition is changing so rapidly.

In this issue of Nieman Reports, we explore what this reporting journey into Hispanic America looks like from the perspective of journalists already on it. And for the first time in our 54-year history, Nieman Reports will publish a special edition in Spanish that will include all of this issue's stories about Latinos and journalism. This Spanish-language edition (along with the Summer 2001 issue) will be given to those attending this year's conference of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ). What makes this dual effort possible is the editorial and linguistic assistance of Urban Latino Managing Editor, Juleyka Lantigua, and the translating skill of Amanda Cruz. We are grateful for their willingness to share their time and expertise with us.

Cecilia Alvear, a producer at NBC News, currently serving as NAHJ president, begins our coverage with an article that assesses what has been for Latino journalists and what can be when Latinos become integral members of newsrooms. **Marie Arana**, editor of The Washington Post's Book World, and **Rosa María Santana**, a reporter at The (Cleveland, Ohio) Plain Dealer, share what they wrote and edited for NAHJ's "Latinos in the United States: A Resource Guide for Journalists," providing an historic overview of Latino migration and a glossary of words used—and misused—by journalists.

Cindy Rodríguez, a Boston Globe reporter, describes the pressures of being the first or only Latino reporter in a newsroom. Freelance writer **Antonio López** finds it difficult to report on the complexity of Latino culture when editors already know "the story" they want to publish. **Oscar Garza**, editor of the Los Angeles Times daily Calendar section, describes the double-edged sword of expectations on which Latino journalists reside. Urban Latino magazine's Managing Editor, **Juleyka Lantigua**, urges her peers to "seek out the good and the bad [in Latino communities]. And…be willing to own up to both." For **Carolina González**, education reporter at the (New York) Daily News, her ability to speak Spanish helps, but it's her fluency in the "language of cultural subtext" that allows her tell stories with accuracy and fairness.

Photographer **Delilah Montoya** focuses her camera on a cultural icon of her Chicano heritage and invites community members to create new images with it. **Ray Suárez**, senior correspondent for The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, observes potential and paradox in the plight of Latino journalists. And **Pilar Marrero**, political editor for La Opinión, the nation's largest Spanish-language newspaper, observes the thin line on which Latino reporters walk as they move between espousing a community's perspective and covering political issues. Veteran journalist **Evelyn Hernández**, opinion page editor at el diario/La Prensa in New York City, describes why she decided to switch from an English-language newspaper to a Spanish-language one. "I don't have to explain why it's a story," she writes. And journalist **Antonio Mejías-Rentas,** who has always worked in Spanish-language media, explains the difficulties of reporting in a language that many sources don't speak.

María Elena Salinas, co-anchor of Univision's nightly newscast, writes about her 20-year career in Spanish-language television. "We're no longer considered low power, low budget, and low quality stations that nobody watches," she says. CNN Urban Affairs correspondent **María Hinojosa** spoke with Juleyka Lantigua about her work for National Public Radio's "Latino USA" and at CNN. She focuses on storytelling about the Latino experience. "Those are not Latino stories," she observes. "They're American stories."

Frank del Olmo, an associate editor at the Los Angeles Times, describes the paper's "Latino Initiative," how it is reshaping coverage of that region's Latino communities, and why these stories are published only in English. From Miami, the reader representative of The Miami Herald/El Nuevo Herald, **Bárbara Gutiérrez**, explains why The Miami Herald has a sister paper, published in Spanish, which covers and targets Latinos as a reading audience. And the Chicago Tribune's associate managing editor for foreign and national news, **George de Lama**, urges Latino journalists to think strategically about their career choices. "We Latinos also owe it to ourselves and to our mission as journalists to look beyond that niche [of reporting on Latino issues] and expand our professional possibilities. …we need more Latino journalists in leadership positions."

At the Evansville Courier & Press, the influx of Hispanic workers led the newspaper to assign reporter **Rich Davis** and photographer **Denny Simmons** to inform readers about the changes occurring in their region. They share their experiences from work on a six-day series titled "Hola, Amigos."

We also feature the work of photographers **Joseph Elizer Cordero**, **Pablo Figueroa**, **Chris Johnson**, **Vanessa López**, and **Alejandra Villa**. ■

Latinos Bring More Than Diversity to the Newsroom

In the new millennium, there is cause for celebration and reason for concern.

By Cecilia Alvear

This is an historic issue of Nieman Reports, the first one written by and about Latino journalists. Some might say it took too long for this to happen, but as one who believes that, unfortunately, when it comes to diversity in American journalism we are witnessing an evolution not a revolution, I welcome this opportunity.

I am proud both as a Latina journalist and as a Nieman Fellow that these writers are being showcased here. This is just a small sample of the vitality, talent and creativity of my fellow Hispanic journalists. It is hard to believe that until a few decades ago, these voices were not part of the American print or broadcast media because of the de facto "apartheid" that existed in the nation's newsrooms.

"Apartheid" might sound harsh, but consider this: Not too long ago I had a conversation with Félix Gutiérrez, a senior vice president of the Freedom Forum. He told me the poignant story of his father, Félix J. Gutiérrez, whose love of journalism and concerns about media portrayals of Hispanics led him, in the late 1930's, to start a publication for Latino youth in the Southwest. During the 1940's, after graduating from the University of California at Los Angeles, Gutiérrez was not able to pursue his dream of working for a mainstream publication. This was not for lack of trying. After his father died, Félix found in his files carefully kept records of his father's attempts to secure a position with several Los Angeles area newspapers. He was never hired, and he decided to become an educator. The message then was unspoken, but understood nonetheless: "No person of color need apply."

Unfortunately, this was not an isolated case. In subsequent years Latino journalists continued to be negligible in number, both in print and broadcast. That is why the case of Rubén Salazar is so remarkable. In the 1960's, after working for papers in Texas and California, Salazar broke through the barriers and became first a reporter, then a foreign correspondent, and finally a columnist for the Los Angeles Times. A topnotch investigative reporter and an excellent writer, Salazar could and did cover any mainstream story, but on top of that he also brought a different perspective to reporting.

Salazar wrote with understanding about and respect for Mexican Americans and the Chicano movement. In doing so, he expanded and improved the quality of journalism as then practiced. His untimely death in 1970 while covering anti-war protests in East Los Angeles left a tremendous void. He also left a lasting legacy. To this day, young Latino reporters and editors point to him as the role model who inspired them to pursue journalism as a career.

The turmoil of the 1960's opened some opportunity for journalists of color. I remember the late Nieman Curator Howard Simons telling us how in 1968, while still at The Washington Post, he "deputized" the African-American couriers to cover the aftermath of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, because there were no minority journalists at the Post at the time.

The picture was no better in broadcasting, but in 1969 the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) determined that it would not serve the public interest to grant licenses to broadcasters who engaged in discriminatory practices. The commission therefore prohibited licensees to discriminate in employment on the basis of race or sex and required them to establish Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) programs. In the words of former FCC Chairman William A. Kennard, "It is no mere coincidence that the adoption of the EEO rules in 1969 was followed by a steady and very substantial increase among broadcasters in the percentage of jobs held by minorities and women."

I know so, because in response to those regulations I was hired in 1971 by KNBC, the local NBC station in the Los Angeles area. I was the only Latina among a small group of young women selected for entry level positions in their public affairs and news departments, which at that time were mostly staffed by white males, who were not exactly welcoming. We had to put up with condescension and, in some cases, with outright hostility. We learned the hard way how to prove ourselves and, in the end, for those of us who prevailed, it was a great life lesson.

In those days there were so few Hispanics in local TV and newspapers in Los Angeles that even though we worked for competing outlets we formed a group: The California Chicano News Media Association. Here we found support. We got together socially. We started a scholarship fund. We advocated for an increased presence in the local newsrooms and for better coverage of our communities.

By the 1980's we were more visible. Organizations like the National Association of Black Journalists, founded in 1975, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, started in 1984, the Asian-American Journalists Association and the Native-American Journalists Associations, were raising their voices. And fueled in part by the still existing FCC regulations, broadcast organizations sent recruiters to our conventions and hired some journalists of color.

On the print side there was also some movement. The American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) in 1978 started tracking the number of minorities in their newsrooms and set a goal: By the year 2000 they hoped to be able to match the percentage of

minorities in the general population with those in their newsrooms. It was a worthy goal, but one that has proved elusive. In 1998 ASNE announced they were pushing the deadline to 2025. An even more troubling development came this year, when ASNE's figures showed a slight decline in the number of minorities working in print, rather than progress toward meeting the diversity goal.

And what has happened in broadcasting? According to the Radio Television News Directors Association's annual newsroom employment survey, in the year 2000 Latinos made up only four percent of all news directors and newsroom employees working at local English-language television stations. Spanish-speaking stations accounted for another three percent of Latinos in the overall broadcasting employment picture. Yet this year the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. threw out the FCC hiring guidelines, finding them "unconstitutional." Those are the rules that opened the door for people like me.

Photo by Alejandra Villa.

But there is more bad news. This year, as media companies feel the pressure from their corporate owners to maintain high profits in a weakening economy, a wave of downsizing and cutbacks is further reducing employment opportunities and threatening to undermine the modest level of diversity achieved so far.

Contrast this with the recently released census figures. Latinos, if you include the population of Puerto Rico, are at 39.3 million, the largest minority group in the United States. From the standpoint of journalism, this news means that media organizations should be gearing up to accurately cover this significant segment of the American population. With the new reality of the role that business considerations seem to have these days in focusing editorial content, there is a case to be made in that regard as well. The Latino market—with a combined purchasing power of more than $350 billion dollars—is a dream for advertisers. It should be obvious to media companies that whoever delivers this group will profit greatly. However, there is no magic potion, no quick fix for grabbing the Latino market; it is not going to be accomplished in time for the next quarterly earnings report or the next ratings "sweeps."

Media companies have to develop a well thought out, long-term strategy for courting the mushrooming Latino market. As part of that strategy, enlightened self-interest would dictate the recruiting of people who are part of and familiar with the Latino community. Hire the right people, nurture them, retain them. Cover Latino issues well, report on stories Latinos are interested in, and they will respond. Case in point: While circulation of most major U.S. newspapers remained flat or declined slightly this year, the Spanish-language Los Angeles newspaper La Opinión, now reaching 600,000 readers daily, increased circulation eight percent. Sunday circulation shot up by an even more impressive 11 percent. In Los Angeles and New York, Spanish-language newscasts regularly beat their English counterparts in the ratings. The same is true for radio programs during the coveted morning drive hours. While I'm on a positive note, I should add that in the recent Pulitzer Prizes, Latino journalists figured prominently in The Miami Herald's winning coverage of Elián González, and on The New York Times team that won for its coverage of racial experience and attitudes across America.

But overall, the diversity picture in American journalism is nothing to celebrate. How can news organizations pretend to hold up an accurate mirror to American society if their newsrooms fail to mirror the faces of America in the year 2001? As Gilbert Bailón, the executive editor of The Dallas Morning News once stated, "Is diversity just a polite concept that crosses our lips but evades our heart?"

I await the day when people who run the nation's newsrooms realize that diversity is not only good for the heart and soul of their organizations but also beneficial to their bottom line. And I urge them now to do the right thing. The time for studies and surveys is long past. It is time for action. With that, I invite you to enjoy the talented Latino writers who have contributed to this issue of Nieman Reports. May the outlets for their wonderful talents multiply in the new millennium. ■

Cecilia Alvear, a 1989 Nieman Fellow, is a producer for NBC News based in Los Angeles. She is also president of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists.

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The Elusive Hispanic / Latino Identity

By Marie Arana

This article is excerpted from a resource guide for journalists put together by the National Association of Hispanic Journalists.

Every person has a theme. We are each a new narrative, a different drama in the American experience. Sometimes we have to work to identify it, going back over our family histories in order to understand the logic of who we are. Our story may be obvious, thrust upon us by circumstance: We may be here because of exile, war, hunger, disaster. More often the theme is more subtle, harder to pin down, clouded by time, diluted by passing generations, so that we can hardly see what it is that ties us back to another world.

More than 39 million Americans identify themselves as Hispanic. We call ourselves by that name, check that box. Why do we feel that kinship? Why do we believe we share a theme? We are not a seamlessly uniform people. We do not necessarily share a culture or a common history. We are South Americans, Central Americans, Mexicans, Caribbeans, scrambled and sliced in different ways. We are jungle people, mountain people, coastal people, desert people, island people, urban people. We have—even as Latinos—a melting pot all of our own.

Some of us have been here for a very long time. The presumption that America is a nation entirely populated by immigrants is plainly not true: There are those of us who can trace our heritage to an ancient people with a birthright to this land. When the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed on February 2, 1848, marking the end of the Mexican-American War and transferring more than half of Mexico's territory to the United States, the document was meant to protect the rights of those of us who had populated that land for centuries. We had not arrived on American shores starry-eyed, yearning to be free. We had crossed no borders. We had settled those lands long before pilgrims ever set foot on Plymouth Rock. The border, more accurately, had crossed us.

Some of us, like so many Americans throughout history, rode in on a wave of migration, driven by war or revolution or famine. Some—the Puerto Ricans, for instance—were simply appropriated. At the end of the Spanish-American War a little more than a century ago, U.S. troops raised the colors over San Juan, and Puerto Rico passed from control by Madrid to control by Washington, D.C. And so, naturally, Puerto Ricans eventually trickled north to New York, Miami and Chicago.

The Mexican Revolution, a bloody upheaval that killed one out of eight Mexicans between 1910 and 1920, brought the first wave of Mexican "immigrants," spilling north to California, Texas, Colorado, Arizona—the very land that had been theirs two generations before. Decades later, during the Second World War, as American boys were shipped off to war and their places in U.S. offices and factories were vacated, educated South and Central American men were lured north by eager employers, and they surged in to fill the chairs. In the late 1950's, the Cuban Revolution spurred a new influx, this time to Florida or points along the Eastern seaboard. And then, of course, there was the 1960's revolution in the Dominican Republic, the 1970's revolution in Nicaragua, the 1980 Cuban boatlift, the subsequent civil wars in Guatemala and El Salvador, the Shining Path terror in Peru, and the 1990's cocaine madness in Colombia. All these, as well as the ever alluring American dream, fueled a steady stream of Latinos to these shores.

Such are the ways we Latinos or Hispanics find ourselves here, travelers on diverse paths, with different histories trailing us. Put an Argentine, a Bolivian and a Chicano in one room and what have you got? A universe of difference. We do, however, have one important thing in common. We are, overwhelmingly, speakers of Spanish, and we can be as marked and molded by that language as anyone can be by the color of their skin or the history of their people. You may not be able to peg us by race. We are sometimes Asians (Former President Fujimori of Peru is 100 percent Japanese). We can be black (according to the current census, Cuba's population is 58 percent black). We can be Indians, indigenous Native Americans, as many of us are. We can, as the word Hispanic implies, trace our heritage to Spain. We might be Italians from Genoa, Middle Easterners from Lebanon, or Jews from the Eastern European borderlands, people who came to the New World to start afresh. We can be any combination of these, criollos, mestizos, in whom all these worlds ally to create something new. But the Spanish language and its attendant culture are what hold us together.

Hispanics. We are the only large minority group in America classified by our tongue, even when we don't speak it very well anymore. Imagine an African American, a Native American, and an Arab American all defining themselves as the same ethnic group because they grew up speaking English. Imagine them calling themselves "Anglos." That gives you a bit of an idea of the stretch many "Hispanics" have to make when they take on the label. And yet it's precisely what we do.

Language holds us together. At the same time, our language (or even the vaguest vestiges of it) may be the only thing that holds us together. We are so various, so diverse in our own right, that our life themes can be universes apart. The Puerto Rican story is not the

Peruvian story is not the Mexican story is not the…. You get the idea. We each represent a different fragment of the Hispanic mosaic. But we still see each other as compadres. There are words we can say to one another, there is language, and we can, even at the most basic level, communicate. It's useful, perhaps, to think of ourselves in light of the Chinese example, in which an enormous country with many ethnic differences (the Han story is not the Hakka story is not the Szechuan story…) and many mutually incomprehensible dialects are bound together by a writing system. Chinese people who cannot talk to one another can, if they are literate, write and be understood. The ideographs hold them together. And it holds them together in the way that Spanish is our communal bond.

Of course, if we widen the label from Hispanic to Latino in order to include Portuguese speakers (and we do), we describe ourselves as people whose ancestors can be traced to indigenous America, Africa and the whole of the Iberian peninsula. The melting pot becomes that much larger. As my mother liked to call casseroles that contain a multitude of unidentified sea creatures: We are "una sinfonia."

The purpose of this reporters resource guide is to make some sense of that sinfonia. In the process of defining ourselves and understanding the glorious amalgamation of people we represent, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists [NAHJ] has gathered together material that may help to explain some basic things about us. What are our various histories? How wide are our racial, social and religious diversities? What sensitivities should we bring to the task of reporting on our communities? What are the pitfalls? What organizations can we look to for help?

This is a difficult enterprise, but a worthy one. Adelante. There is so much we can do together. ■

Marie Arana is editor of The Washington Post Book World. She is the author of a memoir, "American Chica: Two Worlds, One Childhood."

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Caution: Words Have Meaning

The following glossary items are adapted from a list prepared by Rosa María Santana for inclusion in the NAHJ publication, "Latinos in the United States: A Resource Guide for Journalists." To see the full listings, refer to the NAHJ resource guide—the creation of which Knight Ridder funded—and the association's Web site (www.nahj.org).

Aztlán: Refers to mythical land occupied by Aztecs. Chicano activists in the 1960's and 1970's referred to Aztlán as the land Mexico lost to the United States during their war, which now encompasses the U.S. Southwest.

Balsero: Spanish term for Caribbean immigrants who arrive in the United States via rafts. Most often applied to Cubans, but also applies to Dominicans who cross to Puerto Rico.

Barrio: The term could stereotype predominantly Latino neighborhoods, so whenever possible, use the name of the neighborhood in news reports to be more precise and specific. Use with caution, unless quoting directly.

Bodega/Colmado: Corner grocery stores in the Northeast, usually owned by Puerto Ricans or Dominicans.

Bracero Program: In 1942, in the midst of World War II, the United States and Mexico adopted the "Bracero Program." It allowed thousands of Mexicans to enter the United States to labor as temporary workers in the agricultural industry. The program ended in 1964. Many Chicano activists in the 1960's objected to this program because, they said, Mexicans were brought into the United States to toil in manual backbreaking work, but were not given opportunities to better their standard of living.

Chicano/Chicana: A term for Mexican Americans popularized by activists during the 1960's and '70's civil rights movement. It was meant to reflect Mexican Americans' dual heritage and mixed culture, their presence for centuries in the United States, and their right to be American citizens.

Coyote: Person paid to convey undocumented immigrants across the U.S./Mexico border. [There are regional usages that might vary from this definition.]

Hispanic: A catch-all ethnic label describing people in the United States who are either themselves from a Spanish-speaking country or whose ancestors were from a Spanish-speaking country. "Hispanic" is controversial among Latinos who view it as a government-imposed label. The U.S. federal government created the term and first used it in the 1980 Census to ensure a more accurate count of individuals in the United States who are of either Latin American or Spanish heritage. The term "Hispanic" is an ethnic label, not a race of people. While reporting, be mindful that some ethnically identify themselves as "Hispanic," while others prefer the term "Latino," or choose to be ethnically identified by their country of origin, e.g., of Colombian descent. In reporting, it is best to ask the person or group how it wants to be identified.

Hispanic Heritage Month: Observed in the United States from September 15 to October 15.

Illegal alien: Avoid. Alternative terms are "undocumented worker" or "undocumented immigrant." The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) uses this term for individuals who do not have documents to show they can legally visit, work or live here. Many find the term offensive and dehumanizing because it criminalizes the person rather than the act of illegally entering or residing in the United States. The term does not give an accurate description of a person's conditional

U.S. status, but rather demeans individuals by describing them as "aliens."

Illegal immigrant: Avoid. Alternative terms are "undocumented immigrant" or "undocumented worker."

Illegal(s): Avoid. Alternative terms are "undocumented immigrant" or "undocumented worker."

Immigration: When reporting migratory trends of immigration, avoid inflammatory words like deluge, flood or invasion. Best to use neutral terms, e.g., arrival.

Immigrant: Similar to reporting about a person's race, mentioning that a person is a first-generation immigrant could be used to provide readers or viewers with background information, but the relevancy of using the term should be made apparent in the story. Also, the status of undocumented workers should be discussed between source, reporter and editors because of the risk of deportation.

La Frontera: Spanish for the border between the United States and Mexico.

La Migra: Slang Spanish term for Immigration and Naturalization Service agents and the INS in general. Used by several Latino groups.

Latino/Latina: An umbrella ethnic term describing people in the United States who are either themselves from a Spanish-speaking country or whose ancestors were from a Spanish-speaking country. The U.S. Census Bureau first used the term "Latino" in the 2000 Census and applied the terms "Latino" and "Hispanic" interchangeably, though "Hispanic" is a controversial term among some Latinos who view it as a government-imposed label. Also, the term "Latino" is an ethnic label, not a race of people. In Spanish, Latin America is referred to as "Latinoamerica." Subsequently, the term "Latino" is used in Spanish to describe the people of Latin America. "Latino" applies to men, boys and mixed gender groups (i.e., the Latino community); "Latina" applies to women and girls. While reporting, be mindful that some prefer to identify themselves as "Hispanic," while others call themselves "Latino" or choose to be identified by their country of origin, e.g., Cuban American. In reporting, it is best to ask the person or group how they want to be identified.

La Violencia: English translation is "the violence," and it refers to the Colombian civil war resulting in the deaths of more than 200,000 Colombians. "La Violencia" was exacerbated by the April 9, 1948 murder of charismatic Liberal Party leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, who championed the cause of urban and rural workers. "La Violencia" occurred between 1946 and 1966.

Maquiladora: Assembly factory, using low-cost foreign labor, located in the Caribbean and across the Mexico-U.S. border.

Marielito: Refers to a Cuban refugee who arrived in a massive migration in 1980 when Castro allowed thousands of Cubans to leave the island from the port of Mariel.

Mexican American: U.S. citizen of Mexican descent. No hyphen. (In English, hyphenate if use as adjective.)

Naturalization: Act making a person a U.S. citizen who was not born with that status. An application toward U.S. citizenship is an application for naturalization.

Permanent resident: The status of a person who, after qualifying, is registered by the Immigration Service. This status allows a person to live permanently in the United States, to work, and to accumulate time toward U.S. citizenship. Permanent residents have an identification card commonly called a "green card."

Quinceañera: A long-standing Christian custom in Latin American countries and among Latino families in the United States celebrating a girl's 15th birthday. The event has the religious symbolism of a Jewish bat mitzvah, as well as the splendor of a debutante ball. The name is from two Spanish words: "quince," 15, and "años," years.

Santería: Santería is an old religion with much symbolism. It originated among the Yoruba people of Africa and was introduced to Cuba during the slave trade of the 1500's. The worship customs of the enslaved African Yorubas fusing with the Spanish colonial Catholicism of Cuba led to the birth of Santería. The African religion underwent severe transformations in Cuba in order to survive. Santería has images of saints similar to Catholicism and is prevalent throughout the Caribbean Islands. It is still practiced today by people from all walks of life.

Santero/Santera: Respectively, a priest and priestess in the religion of Santería.

Spic: Avoid. Derogatory word used for all Latinos. Highly pejorative, offensive term. The word is a racial slur.

Tejano/Tejana: Person of Mexican descent from Texas.

Undocumented immigrant: Preferred term to "illegal immigrant," "illegal(s)" and "illegal alien." This term describes the immigration status of people who do not have the federal documentation to show they are legally entitled to work, visit or live here.

Undocumented worker: Preferred term to "illegal alien," "illegal immigrant," or "illegal(s)." This term describes the immigration status of people who do not have the federal documentation to show they are legally entitled to work, visit or live here.

Wetback: Avoid. Derogatory word referring to individuals of Mexican descent and is derived from the crossing of the Rio Bravo/Rio Grande into the United States. Highly pejorative, offensive term. It is considered among the worst of racial epithets. ■

The Only or the Lonely

Latino journalists speak up about coverage, but doing so takes its toll.

By Cindy Rodríguez

I remember my first real job interview. The editor, a debonair man in his late 40's, pulled off his glasses and looked me in the eye. "Cindy, we normally don't hire straight out of college, but…."

He had to do something. Latino leaders, small in number but vocal in their demands, were seething mad. For months, they had complained that the only time, it seemed, a Latino appeared in the paper, he was in handcuffs. So after publicizing for weeks an upcoming education forum, these community leaders assumed the Syracuse Herald-Journal would send a reporter to cover it.

The all-day Latino education forum drew people from throughout the city. There were sessions on combating truancy, about bilingual education, and on how students could move from getting mediocre grades to getting all A's. But the next day, all that appeared in the paper was a photograph of two Puerto Rican teenagers dancing salsa.

Ensuing letters and phone calls spurred editor Timothy Bunn to do something drastic: hire a Latino.

Thus, in May of 1990, I became the first Latino reporter hired at the Syracuse Herald-Journal. That first year was a tough one for a girl raised in Harlem, who was used to big-city surroundings and a diverse array of cultures, living on her own in a city where the word "minority" meant you could practically fit all the city's Latinos in a couple of high school gymnasiums.

In the newsroom, I was the only and the lonely. My mentors were white. They could help me blossom as a reporter and writer, but when it came to balancing the objectiveness that journalism aspires to with my innate need to see multi-dimensional Latinos portrayed in the paper, I was on my own.

At first, when Latinos complained to me about the barrage of negative stories they saw, I defended the paper. Members of the media don't create crime in their community; "We just report it," I'd say. Stories about successful Latinos weren't as interesting, I explained. "We don't want to write puff pieces."

Photo by Alejandra Villa.

But, in time, I began to see a pattern: For small city newspapers, where local news is everything, defining what's *important* news came from the top. The problem was that the top people knew hardly anything about Latino culture, nor did they have any meaningful contact with Latinos (aside from the occasional obligatory meetings with leaders).

So I came to the scary realization that if the newspaper was going to make inroads in the community, the responsibility was pretty much on my shoulders.

When I was growing up, I created family newspapers on sheets of loose-leaf paper. All I dreamt of was becoming a gritty newspaper reporter. I wanted to be like Jimmy Breslin, like Pete Hamill. But now that I was a reporter, I realized I couldn't just focus on becoming a better writer. Instead, in trying to mesh who I was with the job I needed to do, I was about to be labeled by people on polar-opposite sides.

When I wrote hard-hitting stories exposing a problem in the Latino community, members of that community considered me disloyal, while editors praised me. When I wrote profiles about successful Latinos, colleagues said I was not being objective, but Latinos applauded. If I complained about the lack of other Latinos in the newsroom, I was a malcontent. Of course, I also had to prove myself more than other reporters for it was assumed that because I am Latina I was therefore: a) a token, and b) incompetent.

I came into journalism during a time when newspapers hired reporters of color in an attempt to have their staff mirror the communities they covered,

when newspapers spent money on "diversity training," when retention of journalists of color sometimes meant promoting someone earlier than might otherwise be the case. Those noble efforts have died. With some notable exceptions, newspapers just got tired of the effort. I've visited many big-city newsrooms to see friends, so I know what I'm talking about when I say many have a bare minimum of minorities. But among all minorities, Latinos usually number the fewest, even in cities where there are sizeable Latino communities.

Photo by Alejandra Villa.

My own newsroom is testament to that. At The Boston Globe, I am the only Latino reporter on a metro desk of about 50. There are no Latinos on the business desk. No Latino feature or entertainment writers. No Latino editorial writers or columnists. No Latino page designers. No Latinos on the news copydesk. None in upper management. Our highest-ranking Latino is assistant city editor—a first in that job. We have a Latina education editor, a Latino reporter covering New Hampshire, a Latino photographer, sportswriter, graphics artist, and a Latino on the sports copy desk. Our Latin America correspondent is Latino.

I can count all of us on two hands, and that's in a newsroom with more than 400 people. We account for less than three percent of the staff in a city that is 14.4 percent Latino and within a county that is 15.5 percent Latino.

If I complained about the lack of other Latinos in the newsroom, I was a malcontent.

It's troubling to me and to some of the other Latino staffers. But if we speak up—or dare write about it in a publication such as this one—we're considered traitors.

Latino journalists, like other minorities and women, have long debated the question: Should I focus on work and not worry about this? For the most part, we do. But for minorities who see problems that arise from not having a diverse staff—chiefly the lack of meaningful coverage to take readers beyond coverage of crime and Latino baseball stars—it's clear that problems ignored continue to gnaw at us.

So we speak up at times. We offer the name of a qualified candidate, suggest stories to other sections of the paper. But it's tiring. We field calls from politicians, artists, promoters, Spanish-language media, all hoping that because they called a Latino reporter they can get their news in the paper. But since we're limited in time and in what we can do on our beats, worthy stories end up getting no ink.

Little by little, we withdraw. After all, it's hard to feel invested in a newspaper, a radio station, a television news program that doesn't invest time and resources in understanding your community and conveying news from it.

Most marketing experts would just rather ignore us as readers, listeners and viewers. The reasoning is that the median household income of Latinos is too low to serve as an attraction for most big advertisers. What this bit of information overlooks, of course, is that to arrive at the median, wealthy and middle-class professionals are put together with newly arrived, poorer immigrants, bringing the average down to a lower figure.

If the patterns of the past few decades don't change at media outlets, the revolving door of Latino journalists in American newsrooms will continue, guaranteeing that we'll have the minimum number of Latino staffers and minimum coverage of Latino issues, culture, arts and music. And all over the country, there will be plenty of Latino journalists just like me: either the only or the lonely. ■

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The Borderlands of Journalism

Typical story assignments underscore the difficulty of defeating stereotypes.

By Antonio López

As many African-American or Native-American journalists discover, some editors think we are the sole representatives of our ethnic groups. Latinos pose a particularly difficult problem because most of us are multicultural and belong to many worlds simultaneously. And, in our work as journalists, we are often asked to gloss over the very thing that would actually make us "experts" on our culture: knowing and communicating the subtleties and differences among people within our community. Mixed-blood "coyotes" like me don't really belong anywhere, so I often find myself in conflict with editors who want me to write what I regard as standard cultural fluff pieces.

In arts coverage, which is my specialty, I struggle to explore the gray areas, diverging from predictable black-and-white patterns. A while back an editor from New Mexico Magazine called to ask if I would write an article on Latin music in New Mexico. The assignment seemed a bit broad, and it was clear from our conversation that this editor didn't understand that this is an incredibly dense and complex topic. Nonetheless, we negotiated a fee, and I set out to do my reporting.

At the time I was also moonlighting as a Salsa DJ and had developed a theory about the diversity of tastes of Latin music fans: Anglos preferred Afro-Cuban, whereas Mexicans liked cumbia and merengue. Although this simplifies my theory, it hints at a greater complexity involved with Latin culture and those who consume it. I worried such subtleties were beyond the scope of this assignment. Nor did I believe they were included among my editor's preconceived ideas about the story of Latin music in New Mexico.

Although I did my best to hash out the intricacy and nuance of the subject, New Mexico Magazine went on to botch its presentation. The entire article was laid out in the so-called "fajita" style menu font. I find this an annoying stereotype of Latino culture, conjuring up an image of free-flowing, loose, hot, red-body-gloved salsa dancers. Despite my laboring over ideas and words, the layout transformed the story into a cartoon of all that I'd painstakingly investigated.

Months later this same editor called to ask if I would write about Spanish Market, an annual summer fair held on Santa Fe's central plaza devoted to Spanish colonial arts of New Mexico and southern Colorado. For Latino journalists in New Mexico, this is our Black History Month, the time of year when regional magazines remember us and offer us assignments. For the sake of diversity, we provide the Latino byline that gives their coverage credibility.

I complained to the editor that I was opposed to Spanish Market. I had already written bitterly in a local arts journal that Spanish Market stifles and inhibits innovation, forcing artisans to work within confining, outdated notions of culture. Furthermore, I explained, I was against designating such a separation between traditional and contemporary artists. A scathing critique of the Market's practices won't fly, he told me, but we agreed on a compromise: I was to write about mixed-blood descendents who show their work in an adjacent contemporary market. My idea was to write about "coyote" artists. (In New Mexican vernacular, a coyote is half-Anglo, half-Hispano, as I am.) I focused deliberately on artists who have non-Spanish surnames.

Thankfully, the results of this piece were more satisfying. Each artist I was able to interview blew the lid off local stereotypes and drew attention to the fact that many born since World War II are the result of mixed marriages. The story forced readers to ask themselves what Hispanic culture is. Sadly, an editor for any of the regional publications would never think of doing a story such as this, in part because very few editors are Hispano.* Consequently, with each new assignment I must do a lot of heavy lobbying to push controversial ideas through.

But to gain the trust of editors, I have to first cover what I think of as safe Anglo-run institutions. For example, after I wrote a piece for a Santa Fe-based contemporary arts magazine about a local arts institution that caters to upper-class Anglo patrons, I was permitted to write a piece closer to my heart. That story concerned the prejudice of Spanish Market rules and how they limit and define regional Latino identity based on romantic beliefs in the Spanish "other."

Though this magazine published my essay, the publisher was displeased. He felt that a discussion of regional culture had no place in local arts coverage. And when I received letters from artists thanking me for exposing the Spanish Market bias, the editor refused to run them. He did not want the magazine to be a forum for these concerns, even though the publication is ostensibly about presenting dissenting or edgy views of the local arts scene. The impression I have is that the publisher did not get the point of my story, which was to describe how ethnicity always gets relegated to the realm of folk art.

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* The writer uses the term "Hispano" for several reasons. More progressive Latinos view Hispanic as a term invented by the U.S. government, and it's an adjective. And traditional descendents of Spanish colonists in New Mexico believe terms such as Latino and Chicano are derogatory. For López, "Hispano" is a compromise and a term he is more comfortable using.

Among my stronger arguments was the one about our need to view Latino artists as contemporary first. However, the net result was that the magazine considered my article to be too "cultural." For me, this reinforced the view of many academicians that modernist art movements are the realm of the white elite, and those struggling with identity and politics belong in the barrios with the rap artists and gang members who spray-paint walls.

Who I am makes an incredible difference in how the story is communicated….

In an effort to escape the Black History Month syndrome, I've tried to crack a few local magazines to get on their A-lists. I want to be one of the first writers an editor calls with a story idea, regardless of cultural content. When the new editor for the monthly Santa Fean came to town, a memo was issued to all potential freelancers. She was looking to a create a publication brimming with "local voices." Prior to this editor's arrival, I had written a few articles for the magazine, so there was no question about whether I could deliver the story. Yet, since her arrival, I've pitched dozens of stories focusing on Santa Fe's cultural diversity. Most of my ideas are aimed at contradicting Latino stereotypes. So far I've seen lots of Anglos write about Hispanic culture, but my phone remains silent.

When I was a staff arts writer for the local daily newspaper, The Santa Fe New Mexican, I found a more open-minded attitude. I suspect it's because at least half the paper's reporting staff is Hispano. Still, more than 90 percent of the editors are Anglo, and the publisher lives on the East Coast. And there was a long period when I was the only Latino writer on staff for the weekly arts and entertainment supplement. Often I was relegated to coverage of community (read poor Hispanic) subjects. I didn't mind, figuring better me than an outsider; also, I find that local Hispanos are traditionally suspicious of the press and feel more comfortable talking with me. Who I am makes an incredible difference in how the story is communicated and translated. In the end, I believe my role as a reporter is more that of a translator of people's experiences than that of a documentarian.

The arts editors I've worked under at The Santa Fe New Mexican (I was on staff for three years and continue to freelance there) tend to be more welcoming of diversity in their coverage. However, there was a time when an editor called me to write a story about the history of mariachi music in Santa Fe. Again, I felt the idea smacked of tokenism, not to mention it being an unimaginative story assignment. A more compelling story: Why do local Hispanics discriminate against Mexicans, but then appropriate products of their culture, such as mariachi music, as their own?

Currently, my editor at The Santa Fe New Mexican is a Latina from the region. She has been very open to new stories that move past stereotypes. In particular, she is tired of covering the standard Chicano artist who does La Virgen de Guadalupe or Frida Kahlo for the 10 millionth time. We've collaborated on fun pieces that break down iconographic stereotypes. I don't want to say that it requires one of "us" being in charge to change the coverage; I give the publisher—who is not a Latino—credit for hiring diverse reporters. But it puzzles me why non-Latino editors can't (or don't) make the effort to go beyond their own belief systems and be more open to hearing what writers of different cultural backgrounds have to say regarding story ideas and themes. Moreover, why aren't more Hispanics, or Native Americans for that matter, in the decision-making rank of editor?

For financial and professional reasons, I've also written for publications outside New Mexico. In particular, I've attempted to enter the expanding genre of Latino magazines, many of which are based in New York City. I've had limited success. Urban Latino is the only publication so far willing to report on events outside the Big Apple. Frontera in Los Angeles is also receptive. More mainstream publications like Latina and Estylo have been unresponsive, and I notice in their pages a bias against rural or regional coverage. Here in Santa Fe, I wonder if I'm a country bumpkin. Many New York publications seem satisfied to work within an urbanized inner circle. Moreover, broadly speaking, there tends to be a big difference between east and west coast Latinos. Those of us in the Southwest generally feel shut out by the dominance of New York- and Miami-centric coverage.

As a freelancer, I haven't yet encountered my ideal publication. What is of interest to me tends to be considered too "alternative" or "ghetto" for regional magazines. Their coverage tends to romanticize the Southwest and depict Latinos as cute decorative accessories. Despite some limited success with more progressive magazines, I've had some problems getting attention for stories covering innovative Latino artists beyond the scope of Ricky Martin or Selena.

I live in this country's border region; I also inhabit a metaphorical border in my writing. On this edge, resident trends move beyond tight cultural definitions. This can make it difficult for editors to grasp the ideas behind stories I want to write. When conversations with editors take on that familiar pattern of stereotypic assignment colliding with my interest in pushing the boundaries, I wonder if I am condemned forever to keep fighting my way out of the Black History Month barrio. ■

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It's Not Easy Escaping Ethnic Labels and Expectations

In cultural journalism, Latino critics confront a double-edged sword.

By Oscar Garza

Many of my fellow Latino journalists would surely agree that this dual identity—being a journalist and being Latino—is a double-edged sword. And many of us, seeking to establish independence from ethnic identification, use a common defense to create a boundary: I'm not a Latino journalist, I'm a journalist who happens to be Latino.

Oh, that it could be so.

In my 14 years as a print journalist (and, several years prior, working in broadcast journalism), it has been impossible to separate my ethnicity from my profession. Some of this forced coupling comes from a journalistic community that is eager to find reporters and editors who can provide insight into the nation's fastest-growing ethnic group. Some of it comes from an ethnic community—historically underserved by mainstream media—that expects those who are Latino to use their position to advance its agenda.

Photo by Alejandra Villa.

But I have learned not to fret about this duality and to accept that it comes with the territory of my chosen profession. And the fact is, if you're a good enough journalist you can control the situation, and the double-edged sword can be used to your advantage. It's happened this way for me.

In 1987, I was heading a nonprofit media arts center in my hometown of San Antonio, Texas. The arts editor at the Hearst-owned San Antonio Light newspaper called to ask if I'd be interested in doing freelance writing. He wanted me to focus on Latino theater and literature. Much to his surprise I turned him down, letting him know that I did not want to be pigeonholed. He asked what would interest me, and I suggested writing a wide-ranging, weekly arts column. He accepted.

Because I was working in a city in which at least half the population was Mexican American, the column was naturally inclusive of that (dare I say, my) community. And yet I retained the freedom to write about subjects where ethnicity or race did not play a role.

It was in this job that I first felt nicks of the double-edged sword: I was initially embraced by a Chicano arts community that had never enjoyed a critical voice representing its interests in the newspaper, and I was criticized by white readers—who comprised the majority of the paper's subscribers—for seemingly being an ethnic apologist. Attitudes changed when I wrote columns that were critical of some Chicano arts institutions and leaders. Then it was *my* community's turn to wonder whose "side" I was on.

The freelance column led to a staff job as an arts/entertainment reporter, from which I was promoted to arts editor. In 1989, I was hired as arts editor of the Los Angeles Times edition in San Diego. I didn't write a column in San Diego, but I reviewed both the visual and performing arts events. One review in particular exemplifies the duality of being an ethnic journalist: An African-American husband/wife team of theater artists brought their show to town. They were talented, seasoned performers, but I found some of their material predictable and unoriginal. I wrote this in my review.

Some months later, I had a conversation with an acquaintance who worked at a government arts agency. He told me that my review had caused some rumblings. Chuckling, he said something to the effect of, "Man, you were tough on them." The implication was that it was rare, if not unheard of, for a journalist of color to be critical of artists of color. That kind of response to my review simply speaks to the paucity of ethnic journalists who are cultural critics. (More on that later.) Look at it this way: When was the last time a white critic was told, "Man, you were tough on those white artists?"

In the spring of 1990, I came to Los Angeles as an assistant editor in Calen-

dar—the Times's arts and entertainment section. Here, all these issues related to being a Latino journalist have crystallized. While not my home, this city feels familiar. In many ways Los Angeles is San Antonio writ large—very large. Both have huge Mexican-American populations whose history dates to the founding and development of the cities. The Latino communities in both cities include a massive underclass that is plagued by social and economic problems. But both communities have made significant political strides: Los Angeles is just now on the verge of electing its first Mexican-American mayor in modern times—20 years after Henry Cisneros was first elected mayor of San Antonio.

Like San Antonio, Los Angeles has a large and talented community of creative Latinos working in the arts and entertainment fields. As in San Antonio, Latinos here had been largely unaccustomed to having one of their own working in the newspaper section devoted to cultural coverage.

Just after my arrival here, one of those arts organizations hosted a reception to introduce me to its largely minority constituency. While I was originally uncomfortable at accepting the invitation, I decided it was an opportunity to meet a lot of people in one setting. In my comments that day, I employed the traditional defense: "I'm not a Latino journalist; I'm a journalist who happens to be…."

…*Yada, yada, yada.* At least that's what it seemed the audience heard, because I was soon receiving calls from reception attendees who had expected to receive preferential treatment from me. And it continues to occur to this day. It's unsettling when another person of color plays the intercultural equivalent of the race card. But, as I've gently but firmly explained the facts of journalism, I've also come to understand the debilitating power of underrepresentation.

It's a stark condition that came to light during the charged debates about multiculturalism during the 1990's. Working in the cultural arena, I came to view multiculturalism as communities of color seeking empowerment to define themselves and the terms under which their creative work would be critically encountered. That, of course, flew in the face of the Eurocentric values that have defined cultural criticism in this country.

This has, on occasion, become a contentious issue at the Times which, as far as I know, has never employed a staff critic who wasn't white. (And very few of them have been women.) A few years ago, I almost resigned over a review of a Chicano art show written by a freelance critic who had filed what I thought was an uninformed, inflammatory piece of criticism. My threat wasn't idle, but I decided to stay after my supervisor ordered a rewrite that had to meet my approval. Again, this incident speaks to the small number of journalists of color who choose cultural journalism as a career path. In a city like Los Angeles—home to large and growing Latino, black and Asian communities—this is a situation that can't continue indefinitely. I would never argue that work by artists of color can only be reviewed by critics who share a common ethnicity. But at the Times, critics are in the position of approaching culturally specific work as outsiders. A different approach would be healthy and refreshing.

My 12-year tenure at the Times has been spent in Calendar, where I am now editor of the five-days-a-week section. (Other editors oversee the Sunday and Thursday/Weekend Calendar sections.) I also help supervise the department's reporters who were hired as part of the Times's Latino Initiative, launched in 1998 to increase and improve the newspaper's coverage of Latino issues and communities.

Originally, the three reporters we hired were responsible for beats including television, radio, film, pop music, and fine arts. Not surprisingly, each of them has encountered the double-edged sword of being a Latino journalist. But each has persevered and earned the respect of the Latino community by being fair and evenhanded. And while they are all primarily beat reporters, we have encouraged their efforts to write occasional commentaries and opinion pieces that use their ethnic backgrounds as a filter. It's a small but significant step in this paper's progress towards repairing an historically adversarial relationship with the Latino community. ■

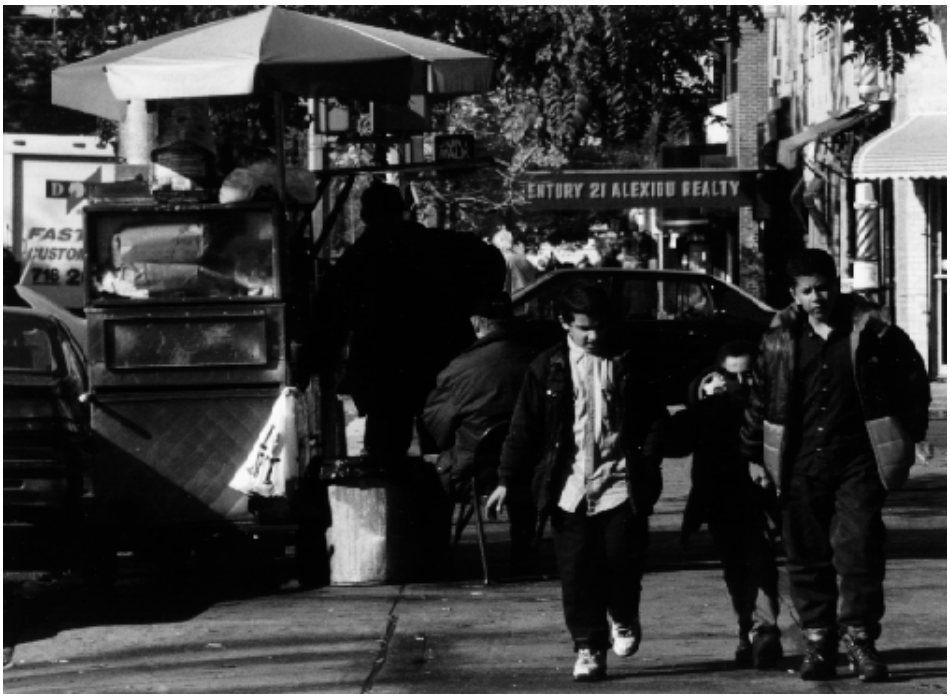

Photo by Vanessa López.

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Daring to Write Our Secrets

Latino journalists don't serve their communities by failing to probe for stories.

By Juleyka Lantigua

As an editor at a magazine written for, and mostly by, Latinos living in the United States, my sense of duty towards our readers is often accompanied by nagging second thoughts about how much information is too much information.

Some issues ago I pushed this magazine, Urban Latino, to run an article on the tension-ridden relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. At first, the editorial team was excited about igniting a debate on an issue that has been getting a lot of attention in the world press. As I began working with the writer, I started having second thoughts: What would fellow Dominicans think? Would I be airing *our* secrets? Did other Latinos *need* to know about this? I could have pulled the story, but decided to run it since any reaction—and I fully expected there to be plenty—would be a step in the right direction. (A couple of letters did reach our offices.)

As an editor and as a writer, I feel I have an obligation to pierce the veil of nostalgia through which many of us remember and imagine our native lands. Sun-swept beaches. Rhythm-endowed mulatas. Colorful ethnic prints. These are part of a stained memory that keeps many of us from embracing and engaging Latin American and Caribbean countries as they truly are. I also take very seriously the task of reminding readers that many of us have become comfortable—some to the point of complacency—with the notion that the umbrella term "Latino" *means* we're a monolithic group. When we speak amongst ourselves, no one debates that Chicanos, Cubanos, Dominicanos and Argentinos are quite different from one another. But as soon as conversations open to include "mainstream" participants or references, we obediently form a cultural chorus line that dances to a forced tune.

This seemingly natural response often misleads non-Latinos into thinking that we are in fact monolithic and that any one of us, or any group, can speak for all. There is no real benefit for us in this reaction: We simply do it as a defense mechanism to protect what very little space we have in this society.

At Urban Latino, perhaps it is the brazenness of our youth that propels us to seek out stories that other Latino publications don't. For example, we have dared our readers to learn about slums in Nicaragua, where girls are forced into prostitution from age 10. We have also reminded those who point fingers at foreign perpetrators that many of the 50,000 Colombian women prostituting themselves throughout the world have their families' blessings. And we have celebrated the rich African legacy of Honduras's Garifuna people and their struggle for land and social recognition.

Photo by Joseph Elizer Cordero.

Journalists have an obligation to the truth. We are expected to record events we witness or gather from sources. In many ways, reporters are present-day historians, creating a record of humanity as it happens. However, do some reporters—because of who they are, what they look like, or where they come from—have an intrinsic responsibility to report another kind of truth, a responsibility that can allow them to take sides on certain issues? In light of the blatant prejudice that often passes for news and information, should Latino journalists always report on their communities in order to ensure more balanced and accurate coverage?

"No." Let me say it again: "No." We also shouldn't bear a special burden to educate mainstream America about us. Instead, the responsibility is to arm ourselves with knowledge to combat the deluge of ignorance that floods magazines, daily papers, and the Internet. We must seek out the good and the bad. And we must be willing to own up to both.

For instance, it's fitting to discuss how some of our cultural beliefs, practices and attitudes—and the misinformation they often lead to—affect our sexual health. In a recent article, Urban

Latino wrote of a woman in Chicago who adamantly refused to believe that her husband had given her a sexually transmitted disease. She was convinced of his faithfulness. In the meantime, the attending counselor got him to admit that he had ventured from the marital bed. In another story, we explored how our elderly, as a matter of personal choice or necessity, frequent healers, spiritualists and clairvoyants when they should be examined by medical doctors.

Without undermining the critical role such practices play in our lives, reporters should feel that part of their professional responsibility involves exposing how they might be hurting us. As Latino journalists, we should not be made to feel as though we're airing family secrets.

Last year, following New York's National Puerto Rican Day Parade, during which several young women were attacked, Urban Latino published a conversation we had with two prominent leaders. We entitled this exchange "Breaking Our Code." It was our way of reporting on this story. When these attacks were first seen in snippets of homemade video, we had asked ourselves what we should do about it. Do we make a public statement? Do we seek out some of the people involved? Do we examine the mainstream media's coverage? We knew we had to do *something,* but at first we couldn't figure out exactly what.

Then we started listening very carefully and realized that *we* were afraid to speak openly and truthfully even to each other. (I suspect it was because of heightened cultural sensitivity since among our editing staff one of us is Colombian, one Puerto Rican, and I am Dominican.) That's when the only course of action became glaringly clear: We had to talk to respected individuals who could spark a dialogue with and among our readers.

The reaction was astonishing. Our interviewees, CNN correspondent María Hinojosa and former Young Lord Richie Pérez, were so forthcoming and honest it was a painful task to edit their comments to meet length requirements. Our readers were so grateful—women especially. They congratulated us for broaching the subject in a critical way. We were pleased to have set this precedent for ourselves. We continue to seek similar opportunities to initiate this kind of open-ended dialogue.

It is liberating to focus on writing about and editing for Latinos. I seldom wonder about what the mainstream will think if they browse our pages. Instead, I concentrate on thinking critically while reporting objectively. ■

Photos by Pablo Figueroa.

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Speaking the Language of Understanding

Spanish helps in reporting Latino stories, but it isn't enough.

By Carolina González

"Oh, you're the one who speaks Spanish." I was at a farewell party for a coworker at the (New York) Daily News and had just been introduced to one of our investigative reporters. These were the first words he spoke to me.

My beat at the Daily News, the fourth largest metropolitan daily in the country, is covering Brooklyn schools. In my four years at the paper, I also have covered changes wrought by the 1996 immigration law, economic development in various commercial strips of Brooklyn, hurricanes and earthquakes, plebiscite votes in the Caribbean and Central America, as well as my share of crime, politics and the usual neighborhood complaints.

I thought amassing such a variety of clips was enough to establish my credentials as an average and sometimes, I hoped, above average reporter. But once again this chance meeting with another reporter reminded me that even if there was no malice involved in the assumption, colleagues still thought the main—maybe the only—asset I bring to the paper is my language skills. It turned out that this reporter was looking for help on a story on sweatshops. "A lot of the workers only speak Spanish, and I'm just not getting the depth of detail I could if I were interviewing them in Spanish," he told me.

I nodded, waiting for the part where I would be told that my knowledge of communities such as Sunset Park and Corona, where there are a lot of fly-by-night, windowless assembly factories, would be an important contribution I could make to this project. Instead, I was told about how a Chinese-speaking library aide had already been drafted to help with interviews, but there was no Spanish-speaking equivalent.

I politely declined, citing a heavy workload in my beat, and instead suggested using community-based organizations that work with sweatshop workers both as translators and as go-betweens. "It might help you not just with the language issue, but with the trust issue," I said. "To be honest with you, if I was a possibly undocumented worker I wouldn't be able to tell the difference between you and an INS agent, and I might not be the most forthcoming."

Photo by Alejandra Villa.

Some of my friends inside and outside the paper later suggested that I should have become involved with the project and injected concerns and issues that the main reporter might have overlooked. For example, I'd want to explore how Korean or Israeli managers communicate with Spanish-speaking or Chinese-speaking workers.

The punchy, old-time tabloid style of the Daily News affects not only the way we write, but also the way we interview people. For most man-on-the street interviews, or the average interview with a victim's family, commonsense politeness and language skills acquired in a first-year Spanish college class usually suffice.

But there are qualities other than language skills that influence how well stories can be reported. For example, my own schooling, both in private school in the Caribbean and in public school in New York, informs my reporting about education more deeply than if I simply understood the words of Spanish-speaking parents. I know that for immigrant Latino parents, uniforms are a fact, not an issue worth debating. I recognize that for many recent arrivals, teachers and principals still retain the aura these positions hold in many of our home cities, towns and rural communities, where they are among the most educated professionals, and are therefore respected and unquestioned.

For many immigrant parents, a school system that encourages—almost requires—them to assume an aggressive, at times confrontational, position toward the people in charge of their

children's education is a foreign concept. This discomfort contributes often to their lack of involvement in parents' associations. I also know from my experiences, those of my siblings, and those of my immigrant friends that attitudes toward bilingual education are not necessarily shaped by a parent's thorough knowledge of the historical conditions and civil rights struggle that created the programs that are under attack.

Despite having plenty of education stories to report, I am still asked to "pitch in" on breaking stories on Latinos and on Latin America—especially natural disasters and elections. While this sometimes challenges my time management skills, I am happy to do it. I would not for anything trade the two nights I spent last May jetting between the upper Manhattan headquarters of two of the three major Dominican parties during presidential elections on the island. Livery cab drivers, stylists in beauty parlors, and corner store owners were so wired following the vote that that other presidential election in November paled in comparison.

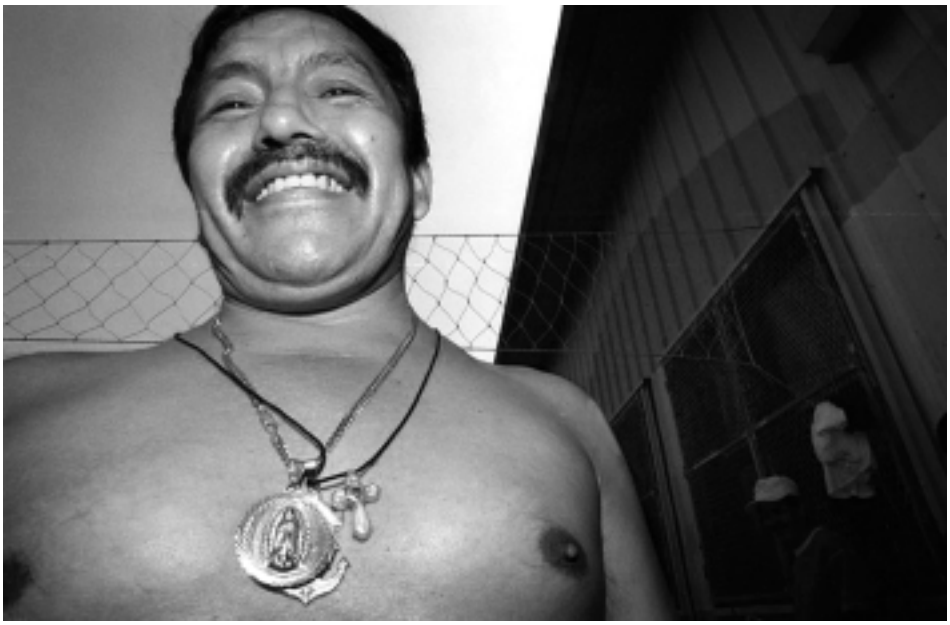

Photo by Alejandra Villa.

As one of only six Latino staffers—three reporters, two columnists, and one editor—on the news side, I am accustomed to getting calls from editors and fellow reporters asking for help. Often, I am asked for sources and for guidance on topics such as the changing demographics of Jackson Heights, a Queens neighborhood that is among the most diverse in the city. Or a reporter might want to know the ingredients in a Colombian arepa, or why merengue singer Fernandito Villalona might receive a standing ovation in an after-game concert on Dominican Day at Shea Stadium.

I know also that editors working on deadline might not always have time to ask me or another Latino staffer to fact-check details on every story involving Latinos. So between meeting my own deadlines, I try to keep tabs on major Latino-related stories and put in quick calls to correct minor but important mistakes in spelling, geography or cultural details. I know that other Latinos on staff take on similar unofficial copyediting duties, because even if our bylines are not on those stories, we know that Spanish speakers will often scan the paper for our names and call us when they are unhappy with any story in the paper.

My familiarity with the cultures, socioeconomic factors, and histories of Latino communities in the city and country gave me an edge over other staffers on two big stories in particular. One story came as a Saturday morning call from an editor that sounded like the setup to a joke in very poor taste. As I rubbed sleep out of my eyes, all I could pick out were the words "55 deaf-mute Mexicans in slavery in Queens," and I was off. The men, women and children crammed into two small houses in Corona had been recruited at deaf schools in Mexico, smuggled into the United States, and put to work selling key rings on the subway.

Ironically, my language skills were useless in speaking with these immigrants, who could only communicate in sign language. However, familiarity with smuggling routes and being able to quickly figure out which places the sellers might frequent was invaluable in the first hours of the story. I was not the only reporter on the story—all our Latino troops were deployed on it, some for weeks at a time—but I was more familiar than most with immigration from Mexico, a relatively recent phenomenon in New York City.

Having that knowledge was a major reason I was asked to work with the paper's immigration reporter on a series on the Mexican community in New York, one of the more enjoyable experiences I have had here. We spent two months pounding the pavement, documenting the burgeoning Mexican presence in all boroughs and the ways their settlement and community-forming processes were similar to and different from those of other Latino immigrant groups. In effect, we introduced our readers to the restaurant workers, house cleaners, and flower sellers everyone could see but did not know.

I speak Spanish better than many reporters, but the language in which I have greatest fluency is the language of cultural subtext and background. It is this language, not Spanish, that allows me to better tell the stories of Latino lives, and telling better stories is what we are all trying to do. ■

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Using a Cultural Icon to Explore a People's Heart

A photographer invites community members to help create new images.

By Delilah Montoya

My photographic essay, "Sagrado Corazón/Sacred Heart," is an exploration of a cultural icon that reveals the syncretic aspects of my Chicano heritage. The Baroque Sacred Heart in the Americas is an icon that resulted from an encounter between the Spanish and indigenous peoples. It is traditionally positioned in conjunction with a portrait of Jesus or Mary.

To bring this collection of photographic images together, I created portraits of Chicanos posed in constructed environments. To find an environment to represent our cultural perspective, I invited aerosol artists from our community to spray paint the walls. I then used this environment as a backdrop for the series, and these different spaces were installed in my studio to give an atmosphere for each sitter to enter. Each sitter then contributed by illustrating a facet of the Sacred Heart and by bringing artwork or objects that were placed in the installations. The environments constructed in my studio, combined with the sitters' particular additions, reveal a collective interpretation of the Sagrado Corazón.

"Jesus's Carburetor Repair." *Photo by Delilah Montoya.*

The Sacred Heart's significance as a cultural icon lies in its expression of syncretism found at the intersection of the American Indian and Spanish European cultures. Expressing the European concept of passion as well as the Nahua [Aztec] understanding of the soul, it is simultaneously the Nahua sacrificial heart and Mary's heart, in turn reflecting the heart of Christ. The Sagrado Corazón expresses a vision shared between two cultures.

Within the Chicano community, the Sacred Heart functions as a religious icon as well as a pop reproduction. The heart is tattooed on the arms of working class youth, often next to an idealized woman, or it is drawn on brilliant white cotton T-shirts. It is transformed into holograms on plastic clocks. Or the Sacred Heart can be painted on glass jars containing candles that burn on an altar constructed, perhaps, by an anxious mother waiting for her child's safe return from war.

The Sagrado Corazón is generally represented within the context of a portrait and used to express the heart as a cultural icon. Because of this, I wanted the community that venerates this icon to be a part of its portrayal. In my photographic portraits, this happens. In the same manner that the Sacred Heart of Mary and Jesus expresses an aspect of the Sagrado Corazón, each community member reveals in this portrait a life-defining interest.

In one photograph, I wanted to create an image featuring an auto part that looked like a heart. So I invited Apolinar "Polo" García, my trusted mechanic and a respected resident of the San Jose barrio, to sit for a portrait. Initially I wanted to photograph him holding this metallic auto part as though revealing his heart. In explaining the concept to Polo, I presented the heart-shaped part and commented on the resemblance of one of the pipes to an aorta.

He simply raised his eyes and said, "No, Delilah, that is not the heart of the engine." He grabbed from his workbench a carburetor and lifting it to my face asserted, "This is the heart of an engine." Corrected, I proceeded to reorganize the shoot. Ultimately, I called his portrait "Jesus's Carburetor Repair," for I believe this image operates as a

metaphor for Jesus repairing hearts.

Culture shapes reality, and this helps us to acknowledge that the reality being addressed is filtered through the photographer's way of seeing. Yet there remains a question of paramount importance: How is the community's reality being represented?

As a photographic printmaker, my approach in representing the Sagrado Corazón as a cultural icon was through collaboration with members of my community. This alliance brought out our creative and energetic interdependence. This made it easy for me to sign not only my name on the images, but to also have the artists—the sitters—who contributed to the project do so as well. Of greater interest to me, however, was the collective awareness of how this project validated the Sagrado Corazón as an intricate part of our conscience. ■

Delilah Montoya is a photographic printmaker whose work has appeared in the journal Nueva Luz, the exhibition "Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985," and the magazine ArtNexus. The work resides in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Smithsonian Institute, and Stanford University Libraries collections. Currently, she lives and works in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and has completed visiting artist positions at Smith and Hampshire Colleges in Massachusetts.

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"Curanderisma."

"Los Jovenes."

"El Matachin/Moro."

"God's Gift."

"La Genizara."

"The Sagrado Corazón is generally represented within the context of a portrait and used to express the heart as a cultural icon. Because of this, I wanted the community that venerates this icon to be a part of its portrayal. In my photographic portraits, this happens. In the same manner that the Sacred Heart of Mary and Jesus expresses an aspect of the Sagrado Corazón, each community member reveals in this portrait a life-defining interest."

—Delilah Montoya

Photos by Delilah Montoya.©

Observations on the Potential and Paradox of Latinos in Journalism

Progress provides seats at morning story meetings, but doesn't lessen the challenges.

By Ray Suárez

When I was growing up in New York in the 1960's, the only Latinos I routinely saw on television were getting arrested, or Ricky Ricardo. While my hometown was home to more than a million other Latinos, their bylines did not appear in the paper, their names were not heard on the all-news radio stations, and their faces, for the most part, were not on television news.

Things got a little better by the time I started working in entry level editorial jobs in various newsrooms in the mid-70's. My own duties were largely carried out in seas of white men in white shirts named Dick and Bob. I didn't know that what I was looking at, as I made coffee, changed wire machine ribbons, and answered the phone, was the end of an era. Through lawsuits and community pressure, occasionally even out of a desire to do the right thing, the doors of local and national newsrooms were slowly being pried open.

But now that we were there—what were we there for?

Latino journalists are caught between organizational demands that they represent their operation in the community and the community's demand that they represent Latino interests in the newsroom.

We could not, in our small numbers, storm the citadels of prejudice and condescension. We could not immediately turn the stick figures representing Latino life we saw in our newsroom output into three-dimensional flesh and blood people. Not yet, anyway.

Now I look back over my shoulder at 25 years in the news business. I have watched affirmative action, one way or another, shape newsrooms. People are hired because of it, in spite of it, and in reaction to its existence. Newsroom managers are either very clear about why it's important to hire and promote Latino editorial employees, or see it as part of the cost involved in being left alone to do their jobs.

A vast array of organizations—television and radio stations, magazines and daily newspapers, wire services and online publishers—plot across a broad continuum in their motivations and their commitment to a diverse workforce. This makes it impossible to make broad generalizations about the state of play. But here are some observations:

- It takes a long time to move from hiring Latino staff to allowing their presence to actually affect the evolution of your editorial output. The first impulse is to do "Latino stories." Only later, when it's realized that there is no such thing as a Latino electric bill, a Latino tax return, or a Latino mass transit system, is full personhood granted, otherness removed.
- Latino journalists are caught between organizational demands that they represent their operation in the community and the community's demand that they represent Latino interests in the newsroom. Latino journalists must navigate these twin pressures everywhere, from small-market weeklies to national television networks. Often enough, the Latino community and the news operation want a feel-good result to emerge from these efforts, not one that forces all involved to examine difficult truths.
- Until other editorial employees develop a nuanced understanding of Latino life in their market, Latino reporters can expect to be assigned a long list of stereotype-driven stories that follow a couple of main roads: *they're poor…they're violent…they're defined by their needs…* and, oddly enough, *they're just like you and me.*
- Both your newsroom *and* many community interests want Latino reporters to be publicists, anthropologists, ambassadors and symbols, sometimes more than they want them to be journalists.
- Unless journalists work in a small handful of markets where news stories concerning Latinos are mainstream stories, reporters must straddle their career goals and their zeal for revealing a truer portrait. Reporters will rarely make the top of the show or the front of the book on the "taco beat." We didn't sign on to work in a news ghetto, and we've got to be very careful that we don't end up stuck there.

Confused? It's understandable. Many Latino reporters I've spoken with find the cross-impulses a troubling, built-in part of their work. The stories are legion. There are the ones about assignment editors who send the same reporter to the barrio day after day, until one day a big story breaks there and here comes the Big Foot. Then there are the news organizations that fly a

Latino editorial staffer like a banner in front of community organizations, only to keep that same employee permanently below the fold in the paper. And, to make the situation tougher, there are the community organizations and leaders who don't understand why reporters can't soft-pedal bad news or splash little bits of good news onto the front pages.

Once Latino journalists start to make a little money, they can expect to have their "authenticity" questioned back in the barrios. And, if reporters are constantly trooping out to those same barrios for another feature on quinceañeras, they can expect to be underestimated by their bosses—until they try to break out of the ghetto, at which point their status as "team players" becomes suspect.

The paradoxes don't end there. For years, we have accepted the notion inside la familia that we have to work harder, be smarter, and make fewer errors than other reporters just to stay even. At the same time as that remains true in many newsrooms, it is also true that Latinos will now also be given the questionable privilege to be mediocre that our Anglo brothers and sisters have long enjoyed. The discomfort comes from trying to figure out whether this really means we've "arrived."

As Jennifer Lopez, Ricky Martin, Benicio del Toro et al. wink out at us from a hundred magazine covers, the news business will engage in catching up to the world of entertainment. Journalists will be located, recruited, hired and overpromoted. They will, on occasion, rise farther and faster than their skills would normally carry them. They will also fail spectacularly from time to time, like Icarus, with no one to watch their backs, no mentor to warn of the nearness of the sun.

This follows a long era in America in which abundantly talented people saw their own career ambitions throttled, derailed and limited by prejudice. A sense of la lucha, the struggle, was a spur to excellence for many. At the same time, the equality that comes with the privilege of mediocrity must be recognized and held at arm's length.

My advice to today's young Latino reporters is simple: Be clear about the needs and desires of those who employ you and those outside who see you as helpful to their interests. The difficult part of all this is being clear about who is using whom without surrendering to cynicism and without betraying your fidelity to the standards of your craft. You have the luxury of trying to sort all this out while being the flavor of the decade. You also have the good luck of trying to settle questions of balance, accuracy, portrayal and diversity from inside the morning meeting, instead of from outside on the street with a protest sign in your hand. Don't underestimate how much has already been accomplished, or how much the people who run the places where we work still have to learn. ■

Photo by Joseph Elizer Cordero.

Ray Suárez is a senior correspondent for "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer." He was the host of National Public Radio's "Talk of the Nation" from 1993 to 1999, and is the author of "The Old Neighborhood: What We Lost in the Great Suburban Migration" (Free Press).

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A Journalist Struggles With Objectivity vs. Obligation

With a Latino readership, is coverage of certain issues likely to be biased?

By Pilar Marrero

Last year, while covering the U.S. presidential election, I definitely entered territory that was unfamiliar to me as a journalist. As a worker in the news business, I am accustomed to asking questions, to seeking information, and to making stories out of what happens to others. Recently, however, I've seen some of my colleagues in the Spanish-language media become the story. And it's happened to me, too. I've seen them be interviewed and called for information, just as I have been sought out and questioned by others in the media.

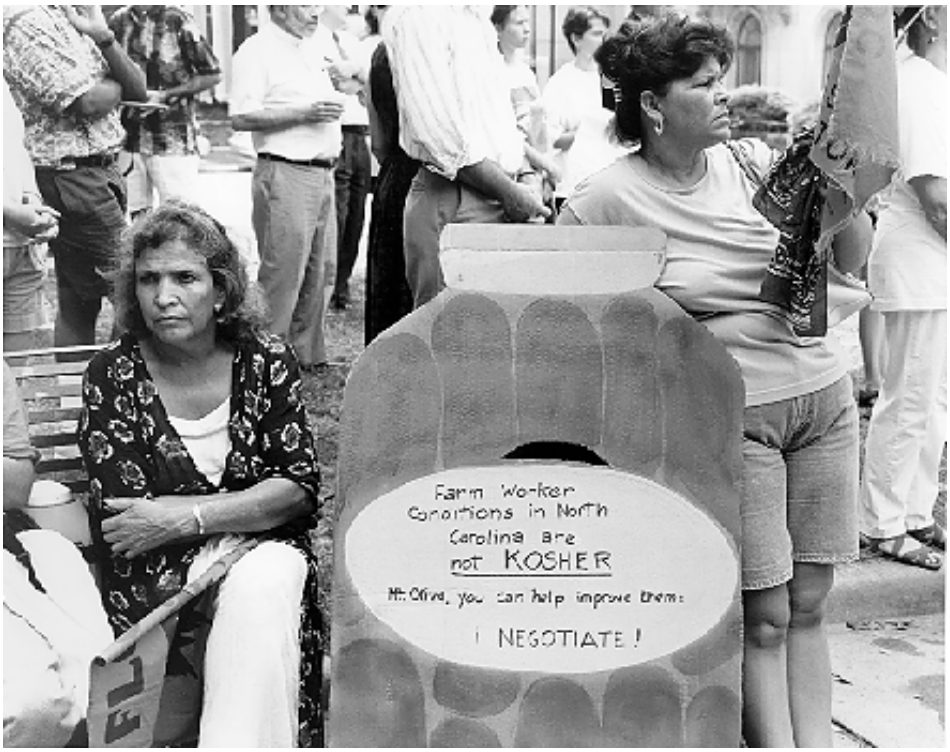
Why have *we* become a *story*? It's because we are caught in the long overdue awakening of the sleeping giant, the slow but certain social and political empowerment of the Latino people living in the United States. As journalists, we are sometimes regarded as people who can speak for all Latinos who, despite being so vast and varied—many with roots planted in this land for generations—have yet to emerge as central participants in the nation's political arena. Being thrust into this role is difficult and uncomfortable for many journalists, especially those schooled in the traditions of U.S. journalism in which objectivity is considered paramount, and we work to keep distance from our stories.

Journalists are not supposed to be activists. But at times some of us walk a very thin line, particularly when we engage in our craft with some measure of civic and social responsibility.

As an immigrant from Venezuela and a journalist working for La Opinión, a Spanish-language newspaper, I confront very different dilemmas than those of my Latino counterparts who work in mainstream media. I write in Spanish for a readership comprised mostly of immigrants who are not totally proficient either in the language, the culture, or the politics or civic organization of the country in which they now reside. Beyond their need for news about their homelands, our readers often look to us for help in navigating the troubled waters of assimilation and, sometimes, for assistance in defending themselves from difficulties they find along the way.

Back when this "awakening of the sleeping giant" started a few years ago in California, I was covering the immigration beat. At one point, this beat was considered the most important subject for our newspaper. Almost every day I wrote about issues of immigration laws and policies and how they impacted many in the Latino community. I became such an expert in the intricacies of those laws that colleagues joked with me about opening up one of those paralegal services where I could make a better living. My office phone would ring constantly with calls from readers seeking my advice on immigration matters. I often spent much of my time at work trying to steer people away from fraud schemes that offer "amnesty" for a few thousand dollars. I would tell people that there was no such program. This exchange of information with readers became as much a part of my job as reporting and writing.

Instead of feeling conflicted by this role, I often felt great satisfaction at being able to serve people in a way that was a lot more tangible than just writing a story and going home. Sometimes I was pleased to learn that what I did or said make a difference in somebody's life. Readers would call me with the good news that they had gotten their green card or their citizenship or that they were able to legally bring their spouse and children to this country. That is the best feeling I've ever experienced in my few years as a



Photos by Chris Johnson.©

journalist. And these conversations also refreshed my list of story ideas, constantly giving me new angles to report on for the paper.

Something similar happened when Proposition 187 [an initiative to take away the right of undocumented immigrants to attend public schools and receive basic medical care] came along in 1994, and a whole wave of anti-immigrant hysteria emerged out of the political opportunism of California's then-Governor Pete Wilson. Surrounding this proposition were issues even more divisive than the basic rights that were at risk; the very visible and emotional statewide campaign brought fear to the surface of the debate which revolved around the tremendous population growth of the immigrant community—the so-called "browning" of the state. This initiative passed overwhelmingly in the middle of a recession, but then it failed when it was taken into the courts.

La Opinión, along with other Spanish-language media, took sides in this campaign, and not only on its editorial pages. It was quite clear that we could not be just a passive recorder of information but that we had an obligation to stand on the side of our readership. Most Latinos, including those who were born in this country, understood the racism involved in this political proposition and voted against it.

As a journalist covering the controversy from beginning to end, I always tried to be as fair and objective as I could. But as a reporter for a newspaper that was read by people whose lives would be adversely affected by this inhumane law, I often felt as though I was being pulled and tugged by competing forces in my coverage of this story.

I recall attending a press conference in 1996 after the large wave of new Latino voters reacted to Proposition 187 by helping to put Republicans in the minority of the legislature, and the mainstream media had started to portray Pete Wilson as the main culprit of this political turnaround. I questioned Governor Wilson about his responsibility in having his party now be labeled as anti-immigrant. My question upset him so much that he pointed his finger toward me and said that it was the Spanish-language media that were to blame for the rise in this sentiment.

"You are responsible for spreading false information that I am anti-immigrant. I am only against illegal immigration," Wilson said. I have to confess that I never felt better about having a politician accuse me of bias. I was biased on this point: I thought Wilson's electoral strategy was beyond contempt, and I was delighted that he thought of us as having made a difference in letting it be known.

Now a new chapter of Latino empowerment is being written about each day in our newspaper. Millions of immigrants who before were ineligible or unwilling to become naturalized citizens have done so and become registered voters. Presidential candidates—and now a president—are speaking Spanish and want to give interviews to Spanish media. This was unheard of just a few years ago. When I started covering Los Angeles city hall in the early 1990's, it was hard for me to get most politicians to return my calls, except the very few Latino elected officials. Most mainstream candidates didn't think it was important to talk to La Opinión or Univision. They figured they couldn't get very many votes from an interview because our influence reached only to those who spoke Spanish. The conventional wisdom was, "Why bother?" since Spanish-speaking people didn't or couldn't vote.

Now that change is occurring so rapidly, the relevance of our newspaper—and of my own work as a journalist—seems directly proportional to the empowerment of the Latino community. Now that the Latino vote is worth fighting for, Latino journalists who work in the Spanish-language media are able to get their questions answered by the very people who, a few years ago, used to ignore us.

I am asked often why I don't try to find work in the English-language media. I am, after all, proficient in the language and a trained journalist with experience in covering many news areas. The answer is very clear to me: Working where I do, I can make a difference for a community I care about—my own. Yes, the line separating what I do from who I am is sometimes very thin. But that's an indication to me that I am doing something that matters. And that's why I became a journalist in the first place. ■

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Being a Latina Journalist at a Spanish-Language Newspaper

'I don't have to explain why it's a story.'

By Evelyn Hernández

At the start of this year I accepted a position as opinion page editor and editorial writer at el diario/La Prensa, a daily Spanish-language newspaper in New York City. Its readership is located primarily in the tri-state area: New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, but stretches as far north as Boston, Massachusetts.

I have been a journalist for 20 years and a Latina all my life, but this is the first time I've worked at a Spanish-language news organization. I joined el diario full time after serving last year as consulting editor of its Census 2000 coverage. The paper's publisher, Rossana Rosado, and editor, Gerson Borrero, convinced me to come work for them. They want an opinion page that is strong and reflects the issues and concerns that are important to people who come from the many Latin American nations but are now living in the United States, as well as Latinos who have been here for many generations. And they want to return to the paper's practice, abandoned a few years earlier, of regularly running editorials in Spanish *and* English.

During my years at various English-language newspapers, I heard negative stories about working at Spanish-language media. That it's the "bush leagues," with substandard reporting, writing and editing. That all reporters are on the take. That it's all about blind advocacy at the expense of journalistic integrity.

What I have found is that there is no mystery or mystique about working in Spanish-language media. We do have journalism standards. We are competitive. We prefer to run stories that no one else has. We are a cross between a major mainstream daily and a community newspaper, with the community we serve being Latinos, those here in the states and also those in the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central and South America. We have the responsibilities of a major daily and the budget, salaries and resources of a community paper.

The staff at el diario includes veteran journalists and young reporters just starting out in their careers. We have skilled reporters, intelligent writers, eloquent columnists, and astute editors. The writing, at times, is more literary than we are used to in mainstream English-language journalism, but most of the time the prose can be fixed with a little editing. Sometimes reporters editorialize in their stories. We try to catch that before it gets into the newspaper—just as we do at English-language publications.

A friend of mine recently asked me what I like about working at el diario. I responded that now, when pitching a story about Latinos, "I don't have to explain why it's a story." For the first time in my life, I don't have to justify wanting to write about Latinos, because that is what we do at el diario. Period. It's not until you don't have that burden anymore that you realize what a heavy load it really is, a time-consuming and energy-consuming part of being a Latina journalist in mainstream media.

Spanish-language media has been around a long time in this country. Founded 88 years ago, el diario is one of the oldest Spanish language newspapers in the country. Advocacy for the Latino community is part of the job here. Indeed, the paper's motto is "El campeon de los hispanos" (The champion for Hispanics). The paper's Nuestros Países section provides daily stories from home from every Latin American nation as a way for people to keep up with the latest news in their home country. In sports, arts, business and community news, we report the news but also highlight the accomplishments of Latinos.

At mainstream newspapers journalists have convinced themselves that they are not advocates: They are simply vessels of information. Yet anyone who has taken a critical look at a newspaper or newsmagazine, a television or radio broadcast, or a news Web site, knows that these news organizations are not objective. Objectivity is an ideal, not a reality. Most of us strive to be fair and accurate, but the news is written for the people we perceive to be reading or watching it. All good journalism involves advocacy: We advocate for fairness and justice, for telling the truth and, yes, for giving voice to the voiceless. In Spanish-language media, the mission is to do that for the Latino community.

In New York, el diario started championing the cause of livery cab drivers who were getting killed on the job long before the mainstream media caught on to the story. At the beginning of a string of deaths more than a year ago, the paper began writing about the killings and has continued to produce stories not only about the crimes but about controversies surrounding possible remedies, including who should pay for the installation of bulletproof partitions and other safety measures. Livery cab drivers are mostly immigrants who operate their cabs in poor, black and Hispanic neighborhoods where historically the city's yellow cabs have not gone.

Another recent example of a story championed by el diario, and not reported anywhere else, was the case of

a young Dominican man in New York who had developed a blood disease and died before his wife and son could secure a humanitarian visa to leave the Dominican Republic and come see him one last time. Our reporting revealed that, despite a mountain of medical documents and letters from doctors and politicians in New York, the visa request was lost in bureaucratic red tape at the U.S. Consulate in the Dominican Republic. Our investigation also showed that this is routine for many immigrants seeking visas in similar emergencies. Our stories and an editorial calling for a 24-hour turnaround time for humanitarian visas brought this problem to the attention of Governor Pataki, who has joined state politicians and supporters in calling for this to happen.

As for the ambience at el diario, it is a professional office, a workplace, but it is also a little bit like home. When I walk into the newsroom in the mornings, there is Latin music playing on a radio or CD player at someone's desk. In the afternoons, soon after the people on the night desk start drifting in, the rich fragrance of freshly brewed café espresso wafts through the office. They make it in a small cafetera (coffee pot) in the employee kitchen, which is called "La bodeguita del medio" (The little grocery store in the middle). And, of course, at el diario, there is no issue about speaking Spanish in the workplace. Aquí se habla español, con orgullo. Here we speak Spanish, with pride. ■

Evelyn Hernández is the opinion page editor at el diario/ La Prensa. She began her journalism career in 1980 as a reporter at the Fort Worth (Texas) Star-Telegram, then worked at The Miami Herald and New York Newsday.

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TRINIDAD Y RUIZ DISCUTEN RAÍCES BORICUAS

'Guerra' verbal

el diario

El campeón de los hispanos

LA PRENSA

PUERTO RICO P. 13

Collazo, factor de discordia

AL FRENTE P. 2

Premian a mujeres pacifistas

NUEVA JERSEY P. 3

Reportan grave problema de seguridad escolar

Dominicano en sus últimos días espera ver a su familia

Visa o muerte


Dominicano quiere ver a sus familiares antes de morir

Sólo pide un último deseo

El diario was the only newspaper to report the case of a young Dominican man who died before his wife and son could get a humanitarian visa to leave the Dominican Republic to see him. Its stories and an editorial calling for a 24-hour turnaround time for such visas brought action by the governor and other state politicians to bring about this change.

Language Can Create Barriers for Young Journalists

One news director considered a reporter's Spanish 'not Mexican enough.'

By Antonio Mejías-Rentas

During my newsroom years, I've never felt any discrimination for being Latino. I don't recall that my ethnic background was ever taken into consideration when being assigned a beat or a story.

Like hundreds of journalists working in Spanish-language media in the United States, I never had to deal with being a minority—one of only a handful of Latinos on staff. All of my peers and most of my managers—even at the upper level—were Latinos, too.

I've been fortunate to work at some of the top Spanish-language news outlets in the country. My very first journalism job fresh out of college was as a news writer at KMEX, the Los Angeles affiliate of the number one Spanish-language network, Univision. Years later I enjoyed an 11-year stint as an editor at the country's largest Spanish-language daily newspaper, Los Angeles's La Opinión.

While Latino journalists are usually the majority at Spanish-language newsrooms across the country, there are still specific barriers they confront. Surprisingly, a lot of these have to do with the very language in which we make our living. It isn't enough that we have to master the language of our viewers or readers. But, as any reporter knows, most of the sources available to journalists in the United States—from medical and academic experts to politicians, civil servants and community activists—speak English.

Even when interviewees do their best to hablar español for a 30-second sound bite, the reading, research and real interviewing is usually conducted in English. That means that Spanish-language journalists have to be perfectly bilingual—a skill not required of most English-language journalists. And they must do a lot of translation to get their stories broadcast or published. Despite needing to possess this additional skill, journalists who work in Spanish-language media still earn much less, on average, than colleagues with the same assignments in English-language media. In many cases, it turns out to be a great deal less money for much more work.

Mastering Spanish can be a tricky proposition. Young journalists who were born in the United States, usually as members of a second or third generation of Latino immigrant families,

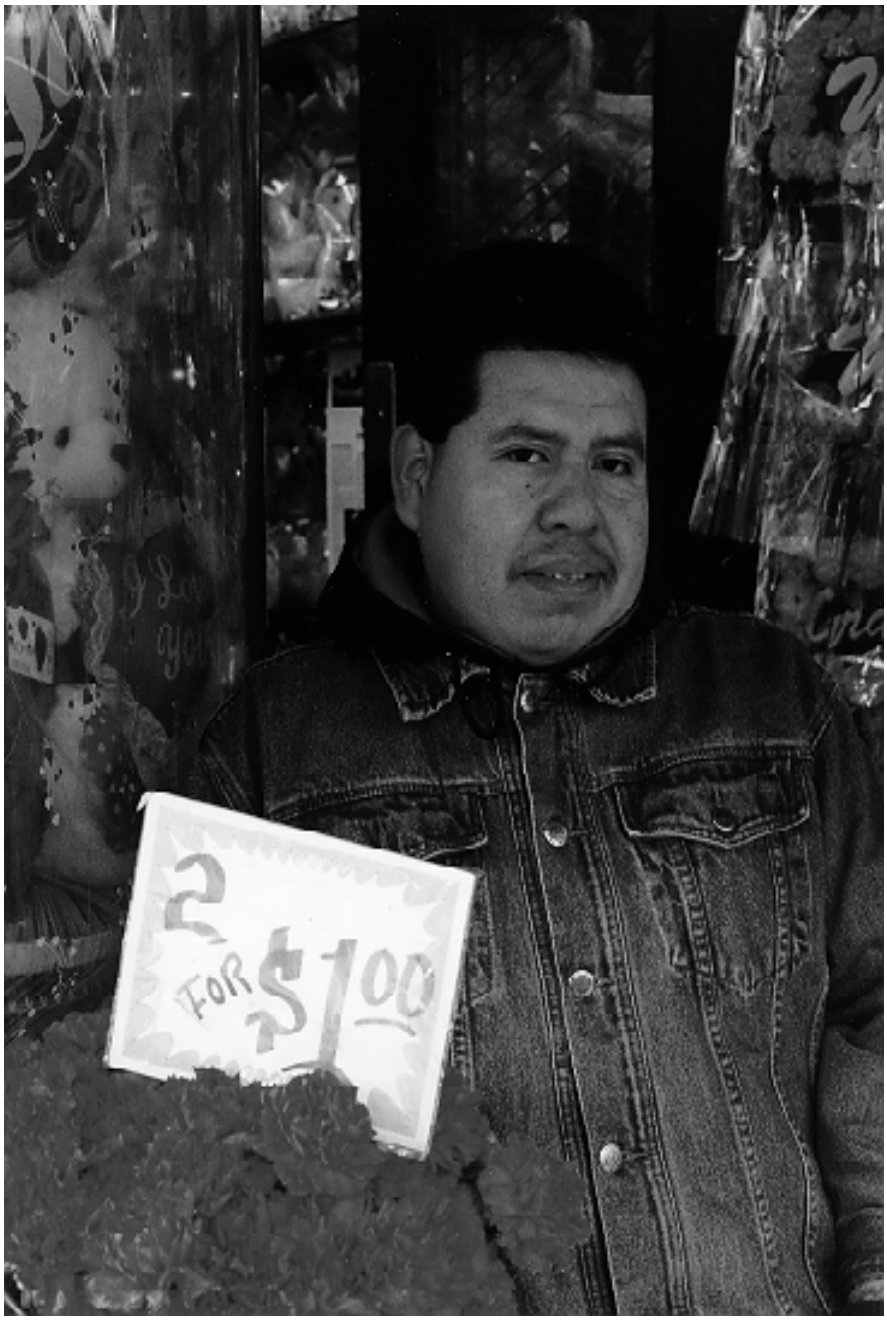

Photo by Vanessa López.

have been attracted in recent years by the huge explosion of Spanish-language media in this country, especially TV news. While they see career opportunities, a chance to stay in touch with their cultural roots, and even the possibility of doing something for their struggling communities, the job itself can be very demanding.

This is especially the case when these young journalists go to work for older, Spanish-speaking, foreign-born editors who constantly challenge their abilities to perform in the sacred linguistic tradition of the most revered of Spanish novelists, Miguel de Cervantes, the author of "Don Quixote." Rather than being encouraged or being helped with their Spanish, I've seen young journalists shot down for being too Pocho (Mexican American) or Nuyorican (New York Puerto Rican)—part of that hard to define, in-between group that is neither completely American nor Latino. Similar conflicts arise when the young reporter is trained in the United States and the editor's primary experience has been in Latin America. In those countries, involvement in advocacy journalism and various conflicts of interest might not have been regarded as seriously as they are in the U.S. journalistic tradition.

At La Opinión, I was the entertainment editor through 1999. At first, I was horrified by some of the stories I heard. Older colleagues who worked in Latin America saw nothing wrong with moonlighting in entertainment public relations. An older columnist I know still fancies himself a songwriter and relishes the opportunity to meet and interview singers—and offer them a ditty or two on the side. (Happily, much has changed in Latin American journalism during the past 20 years, and the most serious newspapers there now strive for unbiased reporting.)

Most national Spanish-language news programs and magazines have adopted a type of "universal" Spanish with "neutral" pronunciation believed to be understood by everyone. This is a policy similar to that of the major networks, where anchors are not allowed to have a particularly heavy twang or accent. Language is an altogether different issue for local newscasts and publications; there, some editors mandate that only a certain type of regional Spanish is acceptable.

Photo by Pablo Figueroa.

In the simplest of terms, this means that a Puerto Rican version of Spanish is called for in the Northeast, Cuban in South Florida, and Mexican in the Southwest. When metropolitan centers are no longer dominated by a single immigrant group, and when language—like everything else—suffers the effects of globalization, this seems a detrimental practice. It's also detrimental for journalists looking for mobility. A Puerto Rican friend once told me that she could never work in Los Angeles TV news because news directors there considered her Spanish to be "not Mexican enough."

Language issues are compounded by the fact that few of the major Spanish-language outlets have taken the time to compile and publish an internal stylebook. Nor has a universal Spanish stylebook been adopted by the industry. I am hopeful these barriers impeding Spanish-language journalists from doing the best job they can will be lifted with the same speed that Spanish-language media are expanding throughout the United States.

Recent efforts by organizations such as the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, which recently held a one-day Spanish-language conference in Los Angeles, are helping us to move in the right direction. But the onus rests with the outlets themselves, especially those networks and local stations that lead in the ratings, and newspapers and magazines that are increasing their circulation. They should invest the time and resources needed to make certain their journalists have the skills and tools that are required to compete in today's aggressive and mobile news environment.

Of course, it would be nice, too, if those Latinos who report and edit the news were better compensated. That would really make Cervantes proud. ■

Antonio Mejías-Rentas is a Los Angeles-based writer and arts and entertainment columnist with Hispanic Link Weekly Report, a national newsweekly focusing on U.S. Latino issues.

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The Evening News en Español

Univisión's anchor connects the network's mission with journalism.

By María Elena Salinas

Can you imagine a newsroom in the United States in which being a journalist of Hispanic origin is an asset? Where being bilingual is a requirement? Where covering Latin America along with the rest of the world is a must? Where you don't have to lobby your producer or editor to do stories that are relevant to the Hispanic community? Where newsmakers have last names like Chávez and Martínez in addition to Bush and Powell?

Welcome to the evening news en Español.

There was a time when Spanish-language media attracted two types of journalists: those whose English-language skills where limited and those who saw it as a steppingstone for better things to come. After all, back then you hadn't made it unless you worked for mainstream media. I remember those times. It was 1981, and I was just beginning my television career at KMEX-TV (Channel 34) in my home city of Los Angeles. I was young and inexperienced, but so was Spanish-language TV. I had just been hired from a radio station where I was a disc jockey spinning romantic Mexican boleros and reading wire copy on the air. My bilingual skills attracted KMEX management. I spoke enough English to cover news in an American city, and enough Spanish to translate, write and present those stories on the air.

KMEX was the largest station owned and operated by SIN (Spanish International Network), now known as Univisión. It was a network with many missing links. Affiliates in Los Angeles, San Antonio, Miami and New York were strung together by Mexican soap operas and the news program "24 Horas," also imported from Mexico. Our stations were low budget, low power outlets considered by many to be low quality stations. Very few people took us seriously. To ask for a Spanish-speaking spokesperson while covering a news event, particularly a political campaign, was considered a joke. On more than one occasion a janitor was brought out to translate.

A couple of years into my career, I considered a crossover to an English-language network affiliate in Los Angeles. After taping an audition, I was turned down for the job. I later found out the station manager thought my accent would be "insulting to the general audience." Ironically, one of the station's anchors at the time had a British accent. I never understood why a British accent was considered acceptable but not a Spanish one.

I'm glad things turned out the way they did, not only because I've been lucky enough to travel the world covering historic events, but because there is a very important job to be done in Spanish-language media. I learned that lesson early on in my career. In Los Angeles, Latinos were about 25 percent of the population yet we had no political representation. There were no Latinos on the city council, the board of supervisors, or even the board of education.

I'll never forget the time when redistricting opened up the possibility of electing a Latino to the City Council. On the day of the special election I went to the neighborhood of Lincoln Heights to cover the story. I conducted an informal person-on-the-street poll asking for whom people would vote and what they thought about the prospect of having the first Latino in city hall. To my surprise, 14 of the 15 people interviewed had no idea an election was taking place, and most were not even registered to vote. When I got back to the newsroom I told my news director, Pete Moraga, that I could not do the story.

How could I do a story about an election no one knew about, cared about, or was participating in? Pete was quick to point out that my story was right in front of my nose: An important election was about to take place and the majority of Hispanics did not even know about it. That's when I realized that my job as a reporter, and later on as an anchor, would be different from my English-media colleagues. I not only had a responsibility to cover news, I also had to help enlighten and empower an entire population of people who felt disenfranchised from mainstream American society. Throughout the years, it's a responsibility I have taken very seriously.

Every journalist has challenges. Every newsroom in the world has a goal to meet. But when you are catering to millions of viewers who are in a country that is not their own and whose first language is different, those challenges and goals change. In addition to getting the daily world headlines of news that might affect and interest all of us, Hispanic viewers in the United States have specific issues that interest them. First and foremost they are interested in news from their countries of origin, but they also care about what is going on in their newly adopted country. Hispanics care about changes in immigration laws, and they need to understand how the social services, health and educational systems function in this country. They also need to know how they can make a difference by knowing their rights and participating politically in their communities.

One of the biggest challenges in catering to a Spanish-speaking audience is that, even though they are united by one language, dialects and expressions vary from country to country. And, of course, there are strong political differences. A Cuban who fled communism, for example, might see the world differently than a Guatemalan who fled civil war, a Mexican who fled

poverty, or a Colombian who fled drug violence.

It is a misconception that most Latinos in the United States are undocumented recent arrivals who don't speak English. Out of nearly 36 million Hispanics living in the continental United States, about 10 million are believed to be undocumented. That means some 26 million are either citizens or are living in the country legally. Research shows that about 25 percent of them are Spanish dominant, 20 percent speak mostly English, and the rest are bilingual. They have the choice of getting their news from either Spanish- or English-language media. The tremendous growth of Spanish media outlets—be they television, radio, magazines or newspapers—only shows that Spanish is the preferred language of most Hispanics, particularly when the news that is presented is relevant to them.

One example is the 2001 presidential election. Univisión's coverage was comparable to that of other broadcast networks. However, in addition to giving results on the balance of power between Democrats and Republicans, we focused on how Hispanic congressional candidates were doing in their races. We also placed heavy emphasis on election results from states that have large Hispanic populations. I had an opportunity to interview former Vice President Al Gore and now President George W. Bush while on the campaign trail. In both cases, I spoke to them with a different focus than the other networks. My questions were about amnesty for undocumented workers, the naming of Hispanics to the cabinet, the high-school dropout rate for Latino students, military aid to Colombia, the expansion of the Free Trade Agreement, and a possible change of U.S. policy toward Cuba.

Probably the most interesting thing about interviewing the presidential candidates is that they both spoke Spanish, albeit grade level Spanish, but the effort says a lot more than their words about how important the Hispanic vote was to their campaigns. Finding a Spanish spokesperson is no longer an ordeal, since most campaigns in which the Hispanic vote is a factor have full staffs to deal with the Hispanic media.

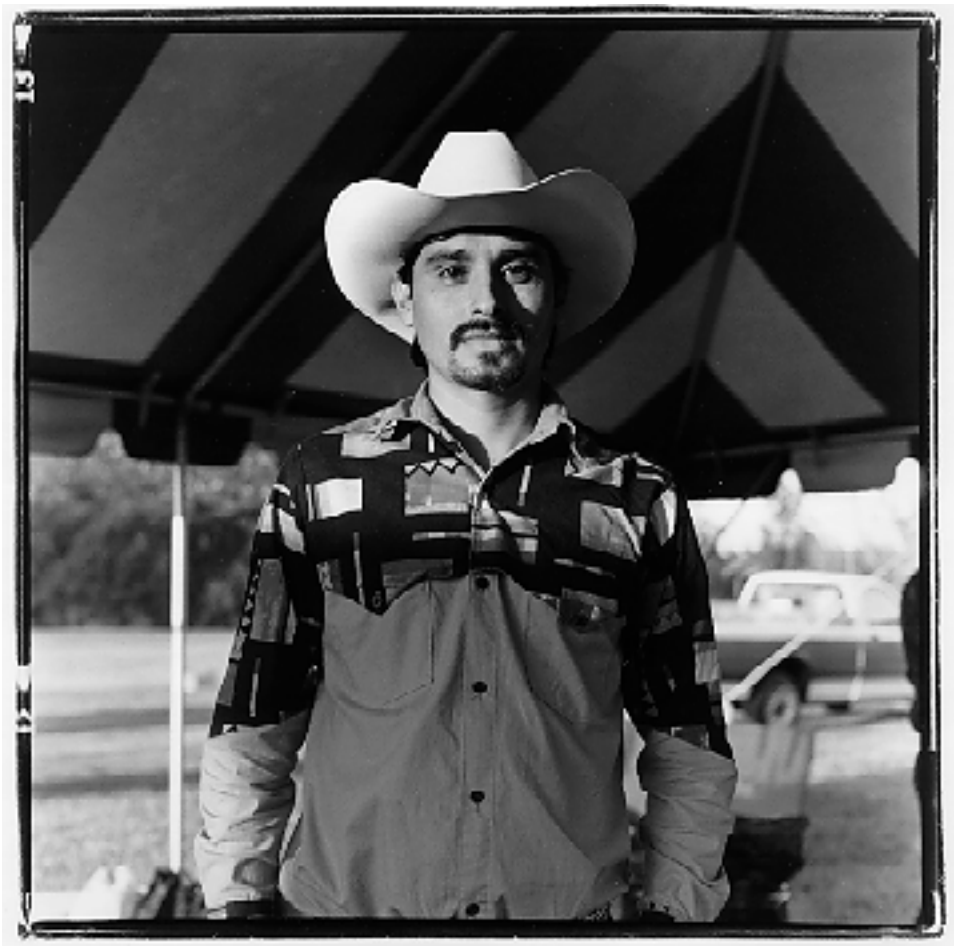

Photo by Chris Johnson.©

My, how things have changed in the past 20 years. These days some journalists are switching from English-language media to Spanish. My coworkers include former staffers who left NBC, ABC, CBS and CNN for better jobs at Univision. We're no longer considered low power, low budget, and low quality stations that nobody watches. And even though we still attract some journalists with limited English skills, our newsrooms are no longer seen as just steppingstones for those who want to make it in mainstream media.

It's possible that those who thought there was no future in Spanish-language TV because Hispanics would "assimilate" figured assimilation meant leaving behind our language and our culture. Now I realize how wrong "they" were. Hispanics are now the fastest growing ethnic minority; our numbers have more than doubled in the past 20 years. And that is not the only thing that has more than doubled: so have our ratings. Univisión's network newscast now competes with ABC, CBS and NBC, many times beating them in major markets like Los Angeles, New York, Houston and Miami.

We are informing and empowering the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population, giving them news that is relevant to their lives in the language they feel most comfortable in. And now when we show up on the scene of a story no one brings out the janitor to translate. ■

María Elena Salinas is the co-anchor of Univisión's nightly newscast, where this year she celebrated her 20th anniversary with Univisión Network. She also cohosts the weekly prime-time newsmagazine "Aquí y Ahora," and does a daily radio commentary on Radio Única, a nationwide Spanish-language radio network.

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Coverage of Latino Life Is an American Story

Resistance comes from older managers. Acceptance comes from younger viewers.

As CNN's urban affairs correspondent and the host of National Public Radio's "Latino USA," veteran journalist María Hinojosa reports on a myriad of topics, including issues that affect Latinos. She spoke to Urban Latino magazine's Managing Editor, Juleyka Lantigua, about the lack of understanding that a lot of journalists have about coverage of Latinos, the impossibility of seeing stories solely from a Latina perspective, and the broadening of the definition of what "American stories" are.

Juleyka Lantigua: Tell me about working for NPR's "Latino USA." How has it been since you also work in the "mainstream" media?

María Hinojosa: Historically, my career as a journalist has always been very closely tied to the Latino community, the Spanish language, my roots as a Latina, but also my understanding that I'm based as a journalist in this country.

The mission of "Latino USA" is not only to inform the broad spectrum of public radio audiences about Latinos, but also to inform the multi-ethnic groups within the Latino community about what's happening in their communities. Ideally, Salvadorans in Los Angeles learn what Cubans are doing in Miami, and Cubans in Miami find out what Mexicans in New York are doing, and Mexicans in New York hear about what Puerto Ricans in Chicago are doing. That creates a sense of a national community.

There is no set audience for our program. To us, it is the broadest possible audience. We know that we're not only speaking to Latinos. Therefore, I don't keep anything particular in mind when reporting for "Latino USA." Perhaps we use more Spanish. That's purposeful so that we engage listeners; we want them to hear how we speak. We work on an assumption that the listeners of "Latino USA" are knowledgeable; that we don't necessarily have to explain who Gabriel Garcia Marquez is. We don't have to explain what an undocumented immigrant is. We assume people already understand such things and that it's part of why they listen to "Latino USA."

JL: When you report [on Latino issues or as the urban affairs correspondent] for CNN, do all those things fly out the window?

Hinojosa: When I report for CNN, there is a sense of speaking to so-called middle America. I believe that audience is often—across the board, not only at CNN—"dumbed down" to. That concerns me gravely.

I don't have a problem with explaining things. For example, I worked on a script, and I wrote that Latinos were becoming the "majority minority." I profoundly dislike the term "minority." I try never to use it in my reporting, but given the context of that particular story it was almost necessary. When I wrote "majority minority" my editor said, "What is that?" It's a term that I'd been hearing and using; I figured people could figure that out but there seemed to be an understanding that, "No, no, no. People in middle America won't get it." So we ended up saying, "They will become the largest minority in the country, the so-called majority minority."

I can live with that because at least the editor said, "Let's keep it in so we're educating but let's explain it."

My life as a New York Latina journalist includes caring about my subjects and assuming that people are up to snuff on the cultural reality of America. I just got back from northwest Arkansas, an area that is rapidly changing. Can you imagine that for four days all we ate was Mexican food? We were at a 7:30 a.m. rehearsal of a multicultural high-school rap group where you had white kids and Latino kids and one or two African-American kids. They were doing bilingual rap together in this high school. Those kids get it, they understand. Do their parents get it? Maybe not. Do their parents resist it? Probably so, and some may not. But I tend to operate in a world that says people know this stuff, they understand it. And let's talk to them as if they do understand it and can operate within it. Most editors seem to think people don't understand it, and we have to explain it. That's in the best circumstance. In the worst circumstance they say, "No, they don't know. They don't understand, and therefore we're not going to do the story."

Photo by Joseph Elizer Cordero.

JL: Do you encounter this every time you pitch a story? Or does it only happen when you pitch Latino stories?

Hinojosa: The mainstream media suffers from a profound lack of under-

standing of how widespread and mainstream the Latino community is in this country. The new census figures make what's happening clear. It's only then that people say, "Oh my God! We've got to do something. Quick, go out, do some stories." Whereas for my entire career I've been saying, "Don't tell me that the fact that I pitch Latino stories is ghettoizing or pigeonholing. I'm pitching American stories. Period. Those are not Latino stories. Those are not 'those people's' stories. They're American stories. They are United States stories. Period."

Overall, is there a total acceptance and willingness and wanting to continue to report on the Latino community? I would say, "No." There are moments when we can move forward. But the desire is not there. Do I see that changing? I think the only way that's going to change is when you get another generation of leadership in management positions in journalism. And that's not going to happen any time soon because older people who are in positions of power don't want to give up that power, and those same people most often don't live in the diverse cultural reality that perhaps a younger generation does. Just like they don't "get" hip-hop, they often don't "get" Latinos.

JL: Do any themes surface in what CNN wants to portray via their cultural sieve?

Hinojosa: No. At CNN there has not been a critical mass of reporting on the Latino community. I can't say that they've been interested in covering that population. To their credit, CNN has brought together the only Latina correspondent/Latina producer team that I know of that reports national news: me and my producer, Rose Arce, a Peruvian American. What we have done is to consistently bring in our stories, and management has been accepting of that. But, of course, they have not been as open as I would like them to be.

JL: Talk to me about being out in the field. What's going through your mind? Do you think about how *you* want to tell the story or are you concerned about how you can do it so it gets past your editor?

Hinojosa: When I approach a story I try to combine two things: 1. What does it mean to me? I take into account my own personal experience as a Latina but also as an immigrant, as a woman, as a New Yorker. I don't only see things from a "Latina" perspective. That would be impossible. 2. How can I broaden the perspective of this mainstream audience? For example, when we were asked to come up with a series on Latinos following the release of the census figures, I said, "Let's do a three-part series where we look at a new immigrant family, we look at a middle-class family, and we look at a wealthy Latino family, because that's the range. We're not just one thing or another."

JL: When you're interviewing someone, do you take into consideration things like the unwilling promotion of stereotypes that people might have?

Hinojosa: I am profoundly aware of breaking any possible stereotypes, from how I look on camera to the faces that I put on television. For example, in the series "Latinos in the Heartland," we interviewed a relatively new immigrant family in northwest Arkansas. When we saw them, we saw them in all of their humanity. Yes, they are working very hard in chicken-processing plants, but what motivates them is their desire to stay together as a family and have their children educated. They might be poor, but their house is immaculate.

I suggested that CNN report on a community that was left behind in the economic boom when we were doing an economic special. I reported on a community organization in Bushwick, Brooklyn called Se Hace el Camino al Andar/You Make the Road by Walking. What did I want to show there? I showed the reality. The reality is that you have these people who are organizing garment workers, construction workers, undocumented immigrants who face the worst conditions but still want to come together as a community organization and fight for their rights.

JL: So, you're getting at the universal through the specific?

Hinojosa: Yes. I consistently try to bring out my subjects' humanity so that whoever the viewers or listeners are, they can find commonality. I think that's the very first tiny step to understanding who they are, who we all are.

The best possible condition for me to work in as a journalist would be where I am let go entirely, where everything that I see that I think is important enough to be a story would be met by my editors saying, "Yes, we're right on board with you." The only way I can change that is to become the senior executive producer. But I'm not going to become management. Instead, I would like to see the top people in management live my life for a month. I think they would understand that what Latinos do and how Latinos live our lives and the way we experience the world is at once unique and also part of this society. If they could experience that then they would understand that wanting to see stories about our communities is not that exotic. Whether or not they know it, their children are experiencing this in some way or another; they're watching "Dora the Explorer" or "Taína" and listening to Elmo on "Sesame Street" speak Spanish.

I think the resistance comes from total ignorance on the part of the people who are in the really powerful positions in the media. As a result of those limited perspectives, we are all being denied good journalism. We should not only get fabulous in-depth stories about the Latino community in Latino publications. We should be able to get them on a regular basis when we turn on CNN, when we turn on the networks' evening news. We should see them all the time, not solely on special occasions. They should simply be integrated into every day's report. We are far, far away from that point. ■

María Hinojosa is the author of "Raising Raul: Adventures Raising Myself and My Son" (Viking Press, hc.; Penguin Press, pb.) and "Crews: Gang Members Talk with María Hinojosa" (Harcourt Brace).

The 'Latino Initiative' Reshapes the Los Angeles Times's Coverage

Its goal is to spread awareness of Latino news throughout the newsroom.

By Frank del Olmo

For two years, I've been overseeing the Los Angeles Times's Latino Initiative, a newsroom-wide project that assigns bilingual reporters (not all of whom are Latino) to beats in which we expect news and feature stories about the region's many Latino communities to emerge.

During this time, I've had many opportunities to explain this initiative to many audiences, mostly community groups in Los Angeles's Latino barrios and meetings of newspaper industry associations. I find it interesting, but not surprising, that the question newspaper colleagues ask most frequently is rarely raised by Latinos: Why are we doing it in English?

In other words, why isn't a big, prosperous newspaper like the Times making an effort to penetrate the large Latino market in our circulation area—40 percent of the population in the five-county Los Angeles region, and getting bigger—by publishing the fine journalism we do in Spanish, the primary language spoken from Tijuana to Tierra del Fuego? Publishing in Spanish is, after all, the strategy being pursued by our two sister newspapers in Tribune Co. who also have large Latino immigrant communities in their cities. Newsday, in New York, publishes a Spanish-language daily called Hoy. And the Chicago Tribune publishes a weekly called Exito. At the Times we opted to not go the Spanish-language route for three reasons:

1. We tried it once, and it didn't work out very well. We published a Spanish-language weekly called Nuestro Tiempo (Our Times) for two years in the early 1990's and, while it was a journalistic success, breaking some stories even before the Times did, it never made a profit.
2. We are fortunate to now have a solid partnership with a quality Spanish-language daily in Los Angeles. The same family has published La Opinión for almost 75 years and is well-known and trusted in the local Latino community. One of the smartest investments the late Times Mirror Co. made was buying a 50 percent interest in La Opinión in the early '90's, at the same time we were experimenting with Nuestro Tiempo. That partnership is now in the hands of Tribune Co., which is making a greater effort to realize its full potential.
3. Most importantly, marketing research by business-side colleagues indicated there was greater untapped potential for a newspaper like the Times in the English-language segment of the Latino market than in the Spanish-dominant segment. Martha Tapias-Mansfield, who had come to the Times from the Spanish-language Univision TV network to be the business manager for Nuestro Tiempo, helped us a lot in making this decision.

Also key to the Latino Initiative's beginnings were former Times publisher Mark Willes and former editor Michael Parks. Both were very supportive when Tapias-Mansfield and I made a pivotal presentation to the newspaper's senior management team in 1997. We argued that the newspaper needed to look past the conventional wisdom promulgated by Univision and its rival Spanish-language TV network Telemundo. Executives at these two networks would have media executives (and, not insignificantly, advertisers) believe that all Latinos want their news and entertainment in Spanish and prefer broadcast media to print.

In fact, the Latino market for news is much more complicated than that and getting more complicated with each passing day. That is because young Latinos being raised in immigrant families are rapidly assimilating to U.S. life. Among other things, that means they are as comfortable with English as they are with Spanish. Additionally, Tapias-Mansfield's market research indicated that these young, bilingual Latinos are better educated than their parents, earn higher salaries, and are likely to remain in the United States their entire lives rather than returning to their ancestral Latin American homelands.

They are, in short, a new, emerging middle class for cities such as Los Angeles. And that new middle class should be a welcoming audience for a quality newspaper like the Times. This requires that we, of course, make an effort to reach them with news and features they find interesting and engaging and accurately reflecting life as they live it.

This is really what the Latino Initiative is all about. We took a dozen of our best young journalists, all of them bilingual and knowledgeable about the local Latino community, and assigned them to new beats where we expected they would find stories of interest to Latino readers or that would educate non-Latino readers about their Latino neighbors. The beats we focused on were neither new nor innovative—religion, entertainment, sports, small business, labor—but putting a fresh and different emphasis on them enhanced our coverage of the local community.

Here are a few examples of the coverage that has emerged:

- Los Angeles does not have an NFL football team, but soccer matches at the Rose Bowl and Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum often draw crowds

in excess of 80,000 fans. Yet the Times never had a full-time soccer writer until the Latino Initiative.

- We also assigned a music writer to focus solely on Latin pop, and thus were the first major national publication to have a story about a then just-emerging star named Ricky Martin on our front page.
- We assigned a reporter to focus on workplace issues facing the Latino immigrants who are the backbone of Los Angeles's blue-collar work force. Within a year, stories she broke had the national press writing about how a once moribund labor movement had been revitalized by union-organizing drives among Los Angeles's janitors, hotel and restaurant workers, and dry wallers.

We tried to build flexibility into the Latino Initiative. We emphasized to the staff that it was always going to be a work in progress and that beat assignments were not cast in stone. I am working even now with the Times's new editor, John Carroll, and our new managing editor, Dean Baquet, to revise and refine the Latino beats further. For instance, our initial focus on popular culture will shift to include more coverage of the evolution of serious culture—theater, literature, the fine arts—in the Latino community. A final point we stressed when we launched the Latino Initiative—and which Carroll has agreed is fundamental to the endeavor—is that its goal is to work its way out of existence.

We hoped, initially, and continue to believe, that by coming up with interesting stories and features with a Latino angle, the initiative team will convince their newsroom colleagues to also be on the lookout for Latino-focused stories on their beats. And that appears to be happening. Of the roughly 150 Latino-themed stories published by the Times since the start of this year, staffers not assigned to the Latino Initiative beats wrote about a third of them.

I hope that, eventually, it will be as natural for our reporters to look for the Latino angle to a big story as it is to look for the California angle to a national story. Given how the demographics are shaping up in Los Angeles—46 percent of the city's population is Latino, according to the 2000 Census—that might be the only way the Times will continue to prosper and practice the kind of high-quality journalism in which we take justifiable pride. ■

Frank del Olmo, a 1988 Nieman Fellow, is associate editor of the Los Angeles Times. He was a member of a team of Times reporters awarded a Pulitzer Prize Gold Medal in 1984 for a series of articles about southern California's Latino community.

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El Nuevo Herald Provides a Latin American Take On the News

At its sister newspaper, The Miami Herald, news judgments are different.

By Bárbara Gutiérrez

"Júbilo en Miami"—Joy in Miami—read a front-page headline in El Nuevo Herald during the height of the Elián González saga. That day, El Nuevo Herald, the premier Spanish-language paper in Miami, chose to focus on the relief felt by many because the little boy remained in the United States, although his Miami relatives had defied a court order to return him to authorities.

That same day, The Miami Herald, El Nuevo Herald's sister paper, ran a much more somber, straight-laced headline: "Family Defies Order."

Which newspaper was right? Each one thought it had it right, and probably did—for its target audience.

For most of its existence, El Nuevo Herald was only a supplement to the


el Nuevo Herald

JUBILO EN MIAMI

Una multitud de pueblo y celebridades


The Miami Herald

FAMILY DEFIES ORDER

In a show of solidarity, VIPs flock to visit boy

Reno: U.S. will explore all peaceful solutions

Judge throws out drug-test rule

Court gives noncitizens time to change criminal plea

Herald, often publishing translations of the stories from the larger English-language broadsheet. Though it informed its community, it seemed to do so as a Herald wannabe. Moreover, those readers who preferred to read in Spanish were often resentful that they were forced to purchase an English-language paper to read the Spanish-language one.

Independence came in 1998 when The Miami Herald publisher Alberto Ibargüen convinced then-publisher David Lawrence, Jr. to separate both papers and brought in Carlos Castañeda, a well-known Cuban-born journalist who had turned around Puerto Rico's El Nuevo Dia. Almost overnight El Nuevo Herald—the largest Spanish-language daily in this county of 2.2 million people, 57 percent of whom are Hispanic—became a paper with its own style and personality designed to suit its potential readers. The newspaper was transformed into a colorful broadsheet with the soul of a tabloid. Stories were shorter. Pictures were bigger, and although there were no full editorials, short unsigned commentaries appeared on page three.

Top stories about local news, Cuba and Latin America mixed in the front page with stories about the latest Latino pop music star or the hottest soap opera star. El Nuevo Herald editors who were accustomed to diligently reading the news budgets of the Herald before news meetings to select articles for their paper did something quite different: they began discarding these story ideas and replacing them with staff-produced reports or Spanish-language wire stories.

Today, both newspapers make their editorial decisions independently. At first, many bilingual readers who were used to reading both papers (and these kind of readers make up 63 percent of El Nuevo Herald subscribers) were a bit startled when they found a story was played one way in one paper and quite differently in the other. Some readers questioned whether El Nuevo Herald had abandoned American-style journalism for a more partisan one.

Castañeda says he was given the liberty to create a paper that could not be confused with the Herald. And, indeed, he's done just that. "The paper [El Nuevo Herald] is conceived differently," Ibargüen said. "It is frankly and unapologetically of the community in all its hemispheric diversity. It has a Latin sense of humor and taste and with a pan-Latin sense that the more Miami-oriented Herald doesn't have."

Armed federal agents enter the bedroom of Lazaro González in Miami's Little Havana early Saturday morning, April 22, 2000. *Photo by Alan Diaz/The Associated Press.*

The Elián crisis brought the difference between both papers under the spotlight. During the six-month ordeal each newspaper seemed to be covering a different world. El Nuevo Herald, with its 60 percent Cuban-American readership, took a more aggressively anti-Castro approach in its coverage. In a special section, which appeared at mid-day on the day Elián was taken from his Miami home, the headline read: "¡Que Vergüenza!" (How Shameful!), accompanied by the photograph of the federal agent pointing a gun at the boy and his rescuer, Donato Dalrymple.

This type of opinionated headline was popular among many in the Cuban-American community, and 17,000 copies of that special edition were sold that afternoon. But some observers in the Herald newsroom were appalled at its brazen editorial tone. They also questioned why El Nuevo Herald chose not to run columns by those who wanted the child to be returned to his father.

Castañeda makes no excuses for his paper's coverage and says that El Nuevo Herald covers the Latin community through its own "eyes and culture." He cites circulation numbers to document the paper's success. Since 1998, circulation has climbed to 90,543 daily and 97,705 on Sundays, a six and 14 percent increase, respectively. Ad revenues have also shot up by 17.6 percent.

But in Miami, perhaps the most bilingual city in the United States, the Herald still has the larger number of Hispanic readers. During any given week, 235,000 Hispanics read the Herald. By now, most bilingual readers have accepted El Nuevo Herald's independence and recognize that each pa-

per is a separate journalistic entity, even though both staffs work under the umbrella of The Miami Herald Publishing Company.

Despite being housed in the same large building at One Herald Plaza, reporters from both newsrooms tend to keep to their turf. The El Nuevo Herald newsroom has a newsroom staff of 90; The Herald has a newsroom almost five times as large. But El Nuevo Herald, with 14 Latin American nationalities represented on its staff, considers itself a competitor to its larger sibling. And reporters there are encouraged to practice "guerilla journalism," filling the voids their giant sibling might leave behind. Indeed, at times El Nuevo Herald has beaten the Herald in its coverage of Cuba.

One example was the El Nuevo Herald story that ran on March 7 about the Varela project—a call for a referendum on issues of basic human rights signed by 119 dissident groups in Cuba. The Herald did not run any articles on the project but did run a short editorial praising the effort. Susana Barciela, a Cuban-born editorial writer who reads El Nuevo Herald daily, wrote the editorial. She not only gets ideas for editorials from that paper but she often translates and publishes op-ed pieces that run in it.

Mark Seibel, the Herald's assistant managing editor for news, has seen the changes between the two newsrooms evolve from collaboration to competition, so that Herald news editors ponder whether to put certain stories on their news budgets for fear that the other newsroom might steal the idea.

"I see them [El Nuevo Herald] absolutely as competitors," Seibel said. He often uses El Nuevo Herald's extensive sports coverage of soccer as an example of what the Herald should be doing. "But I guess it's a process," he added. "We are still bound by what most American-style newspapers do. We read The New York Times's budgets and The Associated Press. Sometimes the stories we want may not be readily available in English."

Aminda Marques, Herald deputy metro editor, who supervises reporters during the day, peruses El Nuevo Herald's news budgets during the morning and relies on El Nuevo Herald's reporters and photographers to cover "very Hispanic" events that she might not have staff to deploy. But her reporters do cover the Hispanic community at large (again, the majority population in this area), and though no one particular reporter is assigned to any particular Latino population group, stories with Hispanics bubble to the top anyway.

Other cross-pollination goes on between the papers. Herald writer Andrés Oppenheimer, a popular Argentinean-born columnist, writes a weekly column about Latin America that is a staple in both papers. The two papers also tend to rely on each other's photographers when there is an excessive amount of assignments. And last April, El Nuevo Herald's reporter Pablo Alfonso covered the United Nation Commission on Human Rights Conference in Geneva. His story on the vote condemning Cuba's lack of human rights was translated and appeared on each paper's front page. The difference: The English version also included news about how China and Israel fared before the same commission.

Martin Baron, the Herald's executive editor, who is bilingual, likes to point out The Miami Herald has a much larger mission than El Nuevo Herald. His paper has to satisfy the needs of non-Hispanic whites, African Americans, a large Jewish population, as well as an increasing bilingual population of Hispanics. "It's a different world that they cover," Baron says. "A lot of El Nuevo Herald's readers are recently arrived and struggle with English. The Herald's challenge is larger." Baron would like his copyediting staff to include more bilingual editors so they are able to monitor El Nuevo Herald's news budgets more closely. And he admits that a front-page El Nuevo Herald story on an influx of Argentineans to Miami Beach is something that "the Herald should have had."

The Herald's investigative reporters sometimes fume when their sister paper ignores their reports. For example, the Herald's report on the presidential ballot reviews, which counted 64,000 undervotes throughout Florida's 67 counties, was front-page news in the Herald but relegated to a short article on page two of El Nuevo Herald. Editors at that paper cite space and time restraints (their paper goes to the press earlier than the Herald does) as impediments to including certain relevant Herald articles in their pages.

But, as Castañeda explains, the differences lie in how each paper exercises its news judgment. And with different audiences to engage, that judgment is tested—and evaluated by Miami's readers—each day these two newspapers appear. ■

'It is frankly and unapologetically of the community in all its hemispheric diversity. It has a Latin sense of humor and taste and with a pan-Latin sense that the more Miami-oriented Herald doesn't have.'—*Alberto Ibargüen, Miami Herald publisher.*

Bárbara Gutiérrez, a 1993 Nieman Fellow, is the reader representative of The Miami Herald/El Nuevo Herald. At the time she was appointed reader representative, she was executive editor of El Nuevo Herald. Born in Cuba, Bárbara came to the United States in 1964 with her parents and younger brother.

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There's a Need at the Top for Latino Journalists

The road there can be filled with tough choices and difficult tradeoffs.

By George de Lama

I awoke to the rich possibilities of a life in journalism on a June day 23 years ago, the last day of my first week as a summer intern at the Chicago Tribune. For all its hallowed history, my hometown paper was much like most other papers across the country then: Its staff was almost entirely white, largely male, and oblivious that either fact might make a difference. The day I walked in the door as an intern, I was the second Latino ever to work as a reporter there. Naturally enough, they gave me a desk next to the first, a young veteran named Roberto Suro.

I had read with admiration Roberto's work in the Chicago Sun-Times about Latino street gangs in Chicago's Humboldt Park neighborhood, his stories about the trials of Mexican immigrants in the Pilsen area, and his account of his journey to Fidel Castro's Cuba. Roberto single-handedly had forged a new genre in Chicago's rough-and-tumble journalism with his coverage of the city's previously invisible Hispanic communities. Unable to compete with him, Tribune editors decided to hire him away from the competition to cover this strange new world that was growing so quickly just past the downtown skyline, beyond their line of vision.

Soon Roberto's work gained attention beyond Chicago and, not surprisingly, job offers began to come in. On this Friday, he had just informed our editors that he'd decided to accept an offer from Time magazine that looked like it could lead to an assignment covering the Middle East. This was an opportunity he couldn't pass up, I recall him saying, a chance to lift his sights beyond Chicago and see the world as a foreign correspondent, covering a serious story and putting his career on an entirely different track.

But now Roberto was back from one editor's office, his eyes glazed and a dazed half-smile of shock on his face. He had offered to put off starting this new job for three or four months in order to give the paper time to hire a replacement. The response: No need to wait, was the gist of it. The Tribune didn't want anyone who didn't want to be at the Tribune. So there was Roberto, asked to leave the building immediately, cleaning out his desk.

The only person more stunned than Roberto that day was me. In an instant, at age 21, I went from being the second Latino to ever work at the Tribune to being the only Latino at the paper, a situation that would remain unchanged for more than a year. I didn't know it then, but this boost to Roberto's career—however pained he was that morning—would help jump-start my own. And the lessons I learned from that experience have guided me to this day, as a correspondent for 14 years and as an editor for the last nine.

To be sure, the Tribune is a vastly different place than it was then. Today we would never let someone we valued as much as Roberto leave without trying our damndest to keep him. We want to attract more Roberto Suros to our paper and our business, not lose them, and it is up to us, as news managers, to provide them with rewarding challenges that will help them want to make their home among us. Like the Tribune, the news business has moved on since those days, too, and so has the country, even if none of us have moved far enough.

But therein lies a breathtaking opportunity. Today young Latino journalists have an unprecedented opportunity to create a unique niche for themselves and fill a real need. The need is visible across the country; the rise of Latino influence on American politics, popular culture and society is exploding onto the nation's consciousness before most news organizations are ready to handle it. Today no serious newspaper can pretend to serve its community without sophisticated reporting about Hispanic affairs.

The 2000 Census figures trumpet growth in the Latino population, spreading in significant numbers for the first time to rural hamlets from North Carolina to Nebraska, where Spanish rarely has been heard. For Latino journalists, especially, but also for other Spanish-speaking reporters, this dramatic demographic shift is a chance to cover the fundamental story of our times, the rapidly shifting dynamics of race and ethnicity and identity in America. The changing nature of race relations will affect every aspect of national life as we move beyond issues of black and white to an emerging kaleidoscope of colors that are defining the new American experience. As Latinos, many of us with a foot firmly planted in two cultures, we can apply our language skills and experiences as the children of immigrants to provide readers with understanding and deeper meaning of these changes sweeping the nation.

But as I realized, watching Roberto clean out his desk, we Latinos also owe it to ourselves and to our mission as journalists to look beyond that niche and expand our professional possibilities. After leaving the Tribune, Roberto went on to a distinguished career as a foreign and national correspondent for Time, The New York Times, and The Washington Post. He has been posted in Beirut, Rome, Houston, New York, and Washington, D.C., where he has been equally at home at the Justice Department covering immigration issues and the Monica Lewinsky scandal as he has been at covering the Pentagon writing about national security.

Journalism could use more Roberto Suros. Yet few news organizations have done well at promoting Latinos to positions of real leadership. Nor have we assigned nearly enough Latino report-

ers to cover prestigious news beats. These remain largely the province of white men: the White House and politics and national security, to say nothing of the increasingly important areas of business and science and technology. These are high-profile jobs, and high-stakes hires, where experience and a proven track record count heavily.

As an editor, I have felt profound frustration and disappointment that the pool of minority journalists experienced in covering America's political and financial establishment is not larger. There are many reasons for this, none of them good enough. For all the public emphasis on diversity in most of our big media companies, the people who run them are by and large white, and most of them are the children of privilege, just like most of their counterparts elsewhere atop corporate America. Some of this is because media executives, like most people, tend to feel most comfortable with people whose outlooks and experience and temperament parallel their own. Still, this is something to be guarded against, and the best newsroom managers value real diversity—diversity of thought and experience and outlook—especially in an enterprise as creative as producing strong journalism.

But for real progress to occur, for the diversity that we see in our communities and in our potential audiences to take root in our newsrooms and strengthen our industry, we need more Latino journalists in leadership positions. The same goes for African Americans, Asian Americans, women and other people whose life experiences differ from the people who run our companies. Yet the central fact remains that people atop our news organizations are most likely to entrust newsroom leadership positions of broad responsibility and authority to journalists with the broadest possible professional experience.

Thus the vicious cycle: How do Latinos and other minority journalists get the broader experience we need to become leaders and managers? How do we expand our professional horizons when key jobs appear reserved for those who already have the most experience? And how do we reconcile two conflicting desires? The first is our desire to grow and reach out to the larger world and greater career opportunities. The second is the mission many of us have undertaken: to report in depth on Latino issues of vital importance to the larger society in which we form such an important part.

This is a difficult balancing act for many Latinos in journalism. There is no one right answer. Many prominent Latino journalists have made their mark with a strong focus on Hispanic issues—Frank del Olmo of the Los Angeles Times, Juan González of the (New York) Daily News, and former Latina magazine editor Sandra Gúzman are three distinguished examples who immediately come to mind. They do important work and serve vital roles in our industry. But Frank and Juan and Sandra are also well-rounded professionals, with the depth of experience to make an impact in other areas.

Many others have toiled in those same fields and then forged other paths to success. Among them are PBS correspondent Ray Suárez; veteran Newsweek correspondent Joe Contreras, whose postings have included the Middle East and Africa; NBC News producer Cecilia Alvear; ABC News correspondent John Quiñones; Miami Herald foreign editor Juan Vazquez and correspondent Juan Tamayo; The Dallas Morning News Editor Gilbert Bailón and his colleague, former Time foreign correspondent and diplomatic correspondent Ricardo Chavira, now the paper's associate managing editor for foreign and national news.

We need—and our industry desperately needs—to provide greater opportunities that will help develop more of these Latino journalists who can do anything, including lead our newsrooms. In my own case, I've been lucky enough to have received a succession of opportunities at the Tribune, where I've had 11 jobs in 23 years. For three years after Roberto Suro left the paper I worked on our metro staff, learning the nuts and bolts of our craft by covering stories as a rookie reporter. I also tried to create a need for myself at the paper by focusing on a subject no one else was writing about, the spectrum of issues that could loosely be grouped under the heading of Latino affairs.

To my surprise and delight, the Tribune was happy to run stories you usually didn't see in the paper, stories about why kids from broken homes found a sense of family in street gangs, accounts of the growing influence of Latinos in city school politics, tales of love overcoming the cultural clash in a Puerto Rican-Mexican marriage. This was fun and fulfilling and rewarding work, and I will always think that our newspaper and our readers were better off for it.

But I always kept Roberto Suro in mind, too, as someone whose footsteps I wanted to follow. To my eternal good fortune, the Tribune allowed me to roam the world, literally, for nearly 15 years, sending me twice to Latin America and on separate stints as the paper's White House and diplomatic correspondent, covering the end of the cold war, German reunification, and the Persian Gulf War and its aftermath. The paper supported me in seeking a Nieman Fellowship, and then I was sent to roam California and the West as our Los Angeles bureau chief. All in all, it has been a dream of a ride, and I am unspeakably grateful.

But I had to want it, too, and consciously decide to reach beyond what was familiar and comfortable. For me that was the right choice. For young Latino journalists today, whatever your choice, learn from the experience of others, then make your mark by breaking your own new ground. Whichever way you go, whatever you decide to pursue, remember that fresh approaches to stories and new insights in reporting and writing are at the heart of excellent journalism, the kind that best serves our readers—and that provides the greatest possible career opportunities. ■

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Hispanic Workers Bring Changes to Midwestern Communities

An Indiana newspaper decides to look at what these changes are.

By Rich Davis

Photos by Denny Simmons.

For years, growth and change came slowly to our pocket of southwest Indiana. The area was influenced by the thrifty Germans who settled here in Evansville, Indiana, and by a Southern way of life, only a short drive across the Ohio River into Henderson, Kentucky. And until recently the word "ethnic" had just one meaning: German festivals staged each summer on our side of the river.

But the booming economy during the 1990's changed us a lot. The Indiana legislature approved riverboat gambling, and Evansville was awarded the first boat. Then came a new Toyota manufacturing plant just up U.S. 41 and, with it, the arrival of highly educated Japanese families. Soon Japanese was taught in some of our schools. But as these much talked about events transpired, another change was quietly underway. An Hispanic workforce was being attracted to the area by plentiful jobs and a small-town environment; for some, it meant being away from the prying eyes of immigration officials.

At first, a few hundred Hispanic men worked either at an Indiana turkey processing plant or in Kentucky tobacco and vegetable fields. But by the late 1990's, there were many more Hispanic workers *and* family members. Still, the number was small, less than two percent of Evansville's 125,000 residents, compared with a greater presence in major nearby cities such as Nashville, Louisville, and Indianapolis. But in communities like ours, where more than 90 percent of the population is white and English-speaking, their arrival began to draw attention.

Last summer, editors at the Evansville Courier & Press, the largest newspaper (104,000 circulation Sunday, 70,000 daily) in this mostly rural region where Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky meet, decided it was time to explore in depth this small but growing Hispanic community. A highly publicized drive-by shooting of a Mexican immigrant by a Salvadoran prompted this interest, but the editors were curious about the long-term nature of relations between Anglos and Hispanics and also among the diverse Hispanic populations. Of interest, too, was figuring out how Evansville's experience with Hispanic migration fit into the national picture.

Six months of reporting and writing became a six-day series titled "Hola, Amigos" (Hello, Friends). In March, our coverage spread across news and features sections of the newspaper. We decided to wait to publish our series until the 2000 Census figures were released. Those figures showed that more than 10,000 Hispanics live in our 20-county region, a 150 percent increase since 1990.

"Hola, Amigos" was more of a challenge than previous reporting projects for a variety of reasons, but one stands out. I don't speak Spanish, and the series' photographer, Denny Simmons, speaks only a little. (We relied on people we met to help us with translating.) Many Hispanics, especially poorer Mexican adults with relatively little education, spoke no English, so this made some of our reporting difficult. Also, unlike Indianapolis and Nashville, Evansville has neither a Latino Chamber of Commerce nor clearly defined Hispanic neighborhoods, so it was hard to know exactly how and where to begin.

As I set out to report, I didn't know what to expect. I did know that I wanted to avoid carrying preconceived ideas with me. So, unlike on other assign-

ments, I briefly delayed reading books and searching our newspaper's library for information about Hispanics. And I waited two months before trying to set up interviews with people at the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). I wanted to have a clearer picture of our region's Hispanic population before I talked with people at the INS.

Although most of the time Denny and I worked separately on the project, we began our journey together by taking an easy one-day trip east on Interstate 64 to Dubois and Spencer counties. Dubois has tidy towns, home-based industry producing furniture components and cabinets, and strong banks. Spencer is where Abraham Lincoln grew up on a homestead. These counties are also where German roots are deepest and where Hispanics first began living when they moved into jobs here a decade ago. In hilltop monasteries and archabbeys, nuns and priests are still being trained.

Dubois's unemployment rate is so low—at one to two percent—that factory employers recruited Hispanic workers through ads in out-of-town newspapers and by working with an organization that helps Hispanics move out of migrant farm work. Our initial contacts in Dubois included a Mexican store owner and "Padre Gene," who with other Catholic priests and nuns used his missionary background in South America to quietly reach out to recently arrived Hispanics. Management at the turkey processing plant told us of efforts by local companies to fund an Hispanic Outreach Center.

We worked on the series a day or two at a time, creating a list of leads and names but frequently just stumbling upon people and stories when we left the office. By the time the series ran I'd conducted 80 interviews, more than half with immigrants from Cuba, Mexico, Peru, El Salvador, Colombia and other Latin American countries. Along the way, we befriended people who became our willing interpreters. Every trip or phone interview produced revelations about how schools, hospitals, churches, employers and law enforcement were adapting to language and cultural differences. As we found out, aspects of Latin American culture are seeping into everyday life. At one processing plant, supervisors are learning Spanish. There are signs in Spanish everywhere, and two new soccer fields provide recreation for employees.

We discovered, not surprisingly, that there are problems, too. We found some evidence of racial profiling and a lack of understanding across the cultures. At times, when landlords realized that Hispanics often have an open-door policy of inviting friends and family to stay with them, they'd raise rents or avoid renting to them. One bank was reluctant to display copies of the area's Hispanic newspaper in its lobby because the paper usually carried a picture of a sexy young woman. (After the bank complained, the next issue featured a picture of Padre Gene.) But the problems did not seem as great as I might have anticipated. For the most part, a region desperately in need of workers appears to be welcoming Hispanics. Our schools in Evansville were the first in Indiana with an International Newcomers Academy where Hispanic and other immigrant children are taught English as a second language.

In our reporting, we attended services in Spanish at Catholic churches as well as at Hispanic missions within other denominations, including Southern Baptist. We stood among mostly Mexican workers in Kentucky fields where farmers, unable to get Americans to pick crops, described their Hispanic workers as their "salvation." Farm workers we met rarely complained, telling us that the work was no harder than back in Mexico and that many of them had grown up doing migrant farm work. By contrast, some of the factory workers admitted that their jobs were "dirty" or "hard," but they liked receiving their paychecks. We met an Evansville attorney, a transplant from Los Angeles, who created a program to help low income Hispanics deal with legal and immigration issues. We heard tales of "coyotes" who were paid upwards of $1,000 to smuggle illegal immigrants across the border in what is a sometimes dangerous flight.

We met a sympathetic, cell phone carrying nun who apologized for feeling frustrated dealing with the same problems that Hispanics brought to her attention day after day. Often they needed help deciphering utility bills or figuring out how to seek medical attention. She was always there for them, including hospital delivery rooms, not caring whether the person was undocumented. "I close my eyes to that because I know the desperate situations so many are in," she said. "They will put their lives in danger to come to America."

"Señora Irene," a Mexican American

whose husband brought her to Indiana in the 1950's, took us into Hispanic homes and introduced us to families. We wrote about 11 Mexican family members and friends living in a tiny trailer so they could send most of their paychecks back home. We also introduced our readers to Hispanics who had purchased homes and were advancing up the economic ladder—living the so-called American dream. We met a factory worker from Mexico who had just started a Latino newspaper and a Salvadoran couple who gave up their home and careers in engineering and nursing to come to America. They helped us to let readers know what it really means to leave one's homeland "for the children."

What we tried to do for our readers was put faces on the word "immigration" and convey the human experience behind changes we are all observing in our region. The highlight for me came one October evening when, amid pealing church bells, Narda Marmolejo walked down the aisle of a cathedral. It was her 15th birthday party, or quinceañera, and she looked like Cinderella at her ball, an event that amazed her Anglo friends. Narda's parents toil in factory jobs to give their children opportunities they didn't have. Her uncles and others helped her parents pay for the food, gown and mariachi band at the party after the religious service was over. We described how Narda's parents cooked the meal in a copper kettle in the backyard and how her mother cleaned a sheep killed for her by a local farmer.

Reaction to our series was overwhelmingly favorable. Both Anglos and Hispanics said it presented an accurate picture and fostered understanding about such problems as the need for affordable housing and alcohol abuse among young Hispanic males. While our paper hasn't carved out an Hispanic beat, we are certainly more aware of life within Hispanic communities and of the issues they confront. As for the questions that launched us on this journey, we've educated ourselves and our readers.

Yes, there are divisions and some animosity among Hispanics from different countries, but some of the tension stems from how our government regards their status in this country. And though Hispanic immigration in our area has been small when compared with many urban centers and other regions, we certainly discovered that we share a common experience in figuring out how to adapt when people of differing cultures, language and social perspectives become coworkers and neighbors. ■

Photos by Denny Simmons.

Rich Davis, a native of West Frankfort, Illinois, is a feature writer and occasional columnist at the Evansville (Indiana) Courier & Press, where he has worked since 1971. Denny Simmons has been a photographer at the same paper since 1999.

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Reporter Rich Davis and photographer Denny Simmons were invited into the homes of Hispanic families who often shared living space so they could send most of their paychecks back home.

The newspaper's series let readers know what "it really means to leave one's homeland 'for the children.'" Here Hispanic workers use a pay phone to call family they've left behind.

Photos by Denny Simmons.

'The Elements of Journalism'

Four years ago, 25 of this nation's most influential journalists came together at Harvard University with a shared sense that something was seriously wrong with their profession.

"They barely recognized what they considered journalism in much of the work of their colleagues. Instead of serving a larger public interest, they feared, their profession was damaging it," write former Nieman Curator **Bill Kovach** and **Tom Rosenstiel**, director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism in the introductory chapter of their book, "The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect."

By day's end, the group had a plan. Soon, they'd have a name. The plan: "to engage journalists and the public in a careful examination of what journalism was supposed to be." The name: The Committee of Concerned Journalists. During the next two years, the committee organized "the most sustained, systematic, and comprehensive examination ever conducted by journalists of news gathering and its responsibilities." In 21 public forums, 3,000 people attended and more than 300 testified. In-depth interviews were also conducted asking journalists about their values. Surveys were done and content studies of news reporting undertaken.

"The Elements of Journalism," published this spring by Crown Publishers, is the "fruit of that examination," and in it the authors set forth the nine principles to emerge from this intensive analysis. In this issue of Nieman Reports, we are highlighting these nine principles because we think there is great value to be gained by conversing about them. We asked journalists from the United States and other countries to address a specific principle through the prism of their experiences. After an introductory article by **Michael Getler**, The Washington Post's ombudsman, each principle will be articulated in the authors' words (excerpted with permission), then reflected upon in two essays written by journalists.

Following the book's publication, Kovach and Rosenstiel began speaking about these nine principles with journalists, civic groups, and educators, igniting essential dialogue about journalism's future course. As Kovach noted recently, "We've got to make sure that as the public dissatisfaction grows, it doesn't grow the wrong way, towards censorship that says, 'Stop this. Stop that.' We want a public that is more aware about what quality journalism means to them and their lives and what they've got a right to expect and how to recognize it."

A curriculum based on the book has also been developed and is now being used by news organizations in workplace settings. "A number of news organizations have invited us to talk with new staff members," Kovach said. "The young kids I'm seeing out there are on fire. They almost mob us when we go in and start talking about these things. They're so hungry to talk about this kind of journalism. They didn't get this in journalism school nor in newsrooms because newsrooms don't mentor their young anymore…. And part of what we're telling editors with whom we talk is that they have an obligation to talk with groups in their community about who they are, what they are, why they do it, so they also become part of the teaching corps." ■

'The News Has Become the News'

Influential voices spotlight failures and remedies for today's journalists.

By Michael Getler

Like the good journalists they are, Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel have that proverbial nose for news. So, too, does Nieman Reports exhibit a good sense of timing by focusing its summer 2001 edition on the new book by these two keen observers of the nation's press. "The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect" arrives at an opportune time. The news has become the news.

On one hand, the spring season is awards time for the country's newspapers and magazines, and that has a restorative effect on many of us. It reminds us of the range and depth of good journalism being practiced by many journalists and news organizations, large and small, around the country. Experienced editors and writers who sit on scores of competition juries often remark upon how extraordinary the entries are, how hard it is to pick winners out of dozens of submissions. Along with that comes a sense of well-being about the state of this craft.

But this spring also has brought about a very public combination of challenges—some new, some old with a new head of steam—to producing serious journalism.

A slowing economy has meant cutbacks in staff and space at many news organizations, two commodities that have proven tough to restore once they are lost. Dramatic first-quarter reversals in the stock market wounded a number of new dot-coms and even killed a few. Newspaper-owned Web sites, although benefiting from the removal of advertising revenue competitors through the demise of some Internet rivals, now face the challenge of maintaining operations—that, in some cases, lose tens of millions of dollars annually—in a down market rather than in the midst of a 10-year boom.

The latest circulation statistics show fractional gains for some of the top 20 newspapers, but the overall decline of the past several years continues.

Editorial standards are under pressure. They are challenged by the increase in tabloid-style revelations that have unfolded in the past few years, the growing usage of previously unacceptable language on television and in print, and the acceptance by some of what is called attitude and edge in the way stories are presented to readers.

The quality and scope of network TV news seems to continue declining. The U.S. networks—except for CNN—long ago abdicated any claim to seriously covering global news, although arguably it has never been more important for American audiences than in this era of globalization. Unless American troops are in action somewhere, what coverage there is of conflict abroad will usually involve a British reporter on the scene, with pictures by German or Japanese camera crews.

The trend to greater conglomeration in the media, in which more and more journalistic enterprises are no longer owned by companies whose main business is journalism, and whose main commitment is to journalism, continues. The conflicts of interest inherent in reporting on these conglomerates can only become greater.

The demand for higher profits or for maintaining already high short-term earnings by shareholders, corporate managers, boards of directors and Wall Street, shows no sign of abating, nor is it likely to. Spreading in newsrooms is the sense that the obligation to the news-consuming public is being eroded by the primacy of uncompromising financial goals, well beyond the common sense belt-tightening that goes with any economic contraction. There is also the proliferation of non-journalistic talk shows (that viewers often confuse with journalism), an emphasis on "infotainment," a confusing mix of professionally gathered news and ever-increasing outlets for unreliable chatter.

Spreading in newsrooms is the sense that the obligation to the news-consuming public is being eroded by the primacy of uncompromising financial goals, well beyond the common sense belt-tightening that goes with any economic contraction.

Something else happened this spring. Jay Harris, publisher of Knight Ridder's San Jose Mercury News, found himself at odds with the parent company's profit goals and plans for coping with declining advertising revenue, and he resigned. This surprising event brought into sharp focus the combination of factors creating a sense that something is wrong in a way that feels different from what has come before. Addressing the American Society of Newspaper Editors [ASNE] in April, Harris said he now found himself "at the symbolic center of a debate that extends in substance and consequence well beyond the specific circumstances surrounding my resignation.

"The drive for ever-increasing profits is pulling newspa-

pers down," Harris said. "What troubled me," he said of the company's strategic planning meetings, "was that little or no attention was paid to the consequences of achieving 'the number.' There was virtually no discussion of the damage that would be done to the quality and aspirations of the Mercury News as a journalistic endeavor or to its ability to fulfill its responsibilities to the community. As importantly, scant attention was paid to the damage that would be done to our ability to compete and grow the business."

It might seem odd that Harris, a publisher, resigned, rather than a top editor. Yet it might be that Harris's action has greater impact precisely because he combines the credibility of a knowledgeable business executive with journalistic arguments that few editors could better articulate.

My sense of why Harris's resignation and reasoning is so important also extends to the fact that it involves a good newspaper, and newspapers remain at the core of American journalism. They provide the local, national and international reporting and analysis that are central to an informed public and to a sense of community. They drive much of the coverage by other media. People talk about what they read in newspapers. Newsrooms have the trained staffs and resources to cover the news comprehensively, in depth, aggressively, and to stick with stories that matter to citizens. They have the best chance of upholding standards, of sorting out news from hip-shooting opinion or entertainment, of informing in a way that is durable and reliable.

'Newspapers are spoken of as products and stories as content. There is no mention of investments to improve coverage…no mention of how newsrooms are serving readers.'— *Bob Giles, Nieman Curator*

Another important speech this spring fits into the rich collection of refreshing journalistic thought exemplified by the new Kovach and Rosenstiel book and Harris's address to the ASNE. This was an address Nieman Curator Bob Giles made to the Inland Press Association conference in Chicago in March. In that speech, Giles noted that "the plea to redefine financial success" being made by some editorial commentators—asking management and Wall Street to set more reasonable profit goals—"runs against two hard realities: We're still a business, and markets rule." But newspaper executives are themselves blameworthy, Giles reported, since they "have little to say about the value of news when they are making their pitch to the market analysts" on Wall Street. This is a simple yet important point that rarely is made.

Using a transcript of a presentation Gannett executives made to the Credit Suisse First Boston Media Conference in December, Giles pointed out, "the word 'journalism' does not appear. Newspapers are spoken of as products and stories as content. There is no mention of investments to improve coverage…no mention of how newsrooms are serving readers." Yet, as Giles's words remind us, "News is why advertisers find newspapers so attractive. News is what sells newspapers to most buyers. News drives market share."

Giles and two journalism magazines—the American Journalism Review and Editor & Publisher—also noted that at least one publisher—Donald Graham of The Washington Post—did speak to the financial analysts about the relationship between the values of journalism and the business of newspapers. "Our journalism, which I know is not the focus of your interest but is the focus of mine, is better than ever," Graham said.

In "The Elements of Journalism," Kovach and Rosenstiel make a related point about what happens when journalism strays from news and toward infotainment. They focus on local television but their point is applicable to print. "The evidence suggests that attracting audiences by merely engaging will fail as a business strategy for journalism over the long run," they report. Studies show that "of those who do watch local news, more than half those surveyed no longer care which station they watch." Also, they report, "five of the top seven reasons that people are no longer watching local TV news are that it lacks substance." Finally, when news gets turned into entertainment, it plays to the strengths of other media. Although such a strategy might build an audience in the short run, it's an audience whose loyalty is shallow and will easily switch to the next most enticing thing.

So *news* is central. That is the key message. Newspapers, which drive coverage of news, are also central. And strong editors are critical in challenging forces that threaten to weaken the vigorous journalism that has been, and remains, vital to our democracy. Although Jay Harris took a bold step, one that threw a much-needed, high-profile spotlight on the problem, top editors need to stay inside and fight, fairly and responsibly.

Of course, a news organization needs to be profitable to produce good and frequently expensive reporting, hire the best talent, and withstand threats from advertisers or lawsuits. And sometimes the budget has to be trimmed and cuts absorbed.

But right now journalists are working in a new environment. The ascendancy of market forces is more pronounced. Ownership, in too many places, is more diffuse and less committed. And boards of directors and financial managers might need a refresher course about the value of news, the concept of a public trust, and the obligations and role in a democracy of a free and aggressive press.

Top editors must be educators, too. They must remind and educate. And mid-level editors must make sure their bosses assume this role by making sure they know that reporters and desk editors expect them to defend vigorously what they do and why they choose to do it. Today's top editors must also choose the next generation of editors wisely, seeking out those who hold the same commitment to

strong, no-punches-pulled journalism that brought them into the business years ago. As non-journalistic corporations gather more and more control over news outlets, they'll likely strive to place in key editorial positions those who have that conglomerate mentality and allegiance. So hiring decisions made now assume an importance they might not have had in the past.

In today's business climate, demands on executive and managing editors are substantial as they devote more and more of their time to business matters. That is not necessarily bad if that time includes the education of their business colleagues on the value of high-quality news reporting and enterprising journalism. Yet this increased attention to non-news matters can also mean losing control of a newsroom by unintentionally suggesting there are things other than journalism driving it and the news organization. Reporters are trained to sense shifts; they can sense that kind of diffusion as well.

Newspapers seeking to extend their reach onto the Web and television can also alter the quality of news the public receives. Top editors on many newspapers spend a lot of time these days helping to define and develop new outlets for their papers. This is important to the future of the organization because it is a way to reach the young people who are not reading newspapers. But it can also divert the attention of editors and reporters away from the kind of focus on, and pursuit of, both comprehensive daily reporting and the in-depth reporting that grows from strong daily coverage. Adding layers of different media coverage eats into valuable reporting time. And barring big increases in staff size, this has to have an effect on the quality of news that reaches the reader.

As non-journalistic corporations gather more and more control over news outlets, they'll likely strive to place in key editorial positions those who have that conglomerate mentality and allegiance. So hiring decisions made now assume an importance they might not have had in the past.

Allow me a brief detour here to mention what to some has become discredited news, while to others it is just what the doctor ordered for sagging circulation and ratings. These are the big and sensational stories—the O.J. Simpson murder case, the death of Princess Diana, the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, the Elían Gonzáles custody saga, and many others that have a strong tabloid flavor. I am not among those in the press who are critical of this coverage. Although these episodes certainly diminished politics and the press at times, they were all powerful, multi-dimensional stories with enormous reader interest; stories that cannot be covered gently or with one reportorial hand tied willingly behind ones back. For the most part, I thought the major newspapers and networks handled the coverage well. The overwhelming sense of discomfort was the mind-numbing repetition of the most salacious details by 24-hour cable channels.

Newspapers have survived challenges from the telegraph, radio, television and, at least for now, the dot-com invasion. And as Kovach and Rosenstiel remind us, sensationalism, ultimately, has always given way to a national demand for, and understanding of, the need for serious news. "As the immigrants of the 1890's moved into the middle class in the 20th century, the sensationalism of Yellow Journalism gave way to the more sober approach of The New York Times," they write. As the Roaring Twenties gave way to the Great Depression, again gossip and celebrity was swept aside by the public's need for serious news that lasted through the cold war. Big newspapers survived and flourished.

It has always been interesting to me to speculate on what the stature and stock price of The New York Times or The Washington Post would be today if these papers—and their committed publishers—had not pursued the Pentagon Papers and Watergate. In each instance, adherence to their journalistic obligation beat back resistance from some of their top business advisers. Perhaps we can't point to any similar decision-making juncture in recent times. But the kind of slow erosion being experienced today can, over time, make those kinds of bold decisions even harder.

Newspapers have been declining in numbers and in circulation for several years now. As Kovach and Rosenstiel note, "when the newspaper industry in the 1980's began to try to address its readership losses, it emphasized layout, design and color." Prototypes of new sections had designs with boxes that read, "Text will go here. Text will go here. Text will go here."

Maybe what they should have written in those boxes was "News will go here." Perhaps it's not too late to scratch out one word and replace it with another.

Journalism, like all pursuits, needs to evolve and grow with the times. But as Kovach and Rosenstiel's book attests, there are roles and principles that have guided successful journalism since its beginnings, and these retain the power to restore trust with citizens who depend on the press to help them maintain a democratic society. ■

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1 Journalism's first obligation is to tell the truth.

"On this there is absolute unanimity and also utter confusion: Everyone agrees journalists must tell the truth. Yet people are fuddled about what "the truth" means….

This desire that information be truthful is elemental. Since news is the material that people use to learn and think about the world beyond themselves, the most important quality is that it be useable and reliable….

Truth, it seems, is too complicated for us to pursue. Or perhaps it doesn't exist, since we are all subjective individuals. There are interesting arguments, maybe, on some philosophical level, even valid….

So what does a journalist's obligation to the truth mean? …journalists themselves have never been very clear about what they mean by truthfulness. Journalism by nature is reactive and practical rather than philosophical and introspective. The serious literature by journalists thinking through such issues is not rich, and what little there is, most journalists have not read.… Rather than defend our techniques and methods for finding truth, journalists have tended to deny they exist.

Whether it is secrecy or inability, the failure by journalists to articulate what they do leaves citizens all the more suspicious that the press is either deluding itself or hiding something.

This is one reason why the discussion of objectivity has become such a trap. The term has become so misunderstood and battered, it mostly gets the discussion off track. …originally it was not the journalist who was imagined to be objective. It was his method. Today, however, in part because journalists have failed to articulate what they are doing, our contemporary understanding of this idea is mostly a muddle….

[T]his "journalistic truth"… is also more than mere accuracy. It is a sorting-out process that develops between the initial story and the interaction among the public, newsmakers, and journalists over time. This first principle of journalism—its disinterested pursuit of truth—is ultimately what sets it apart from all other forms of communications….

It is actually more helpful, and more realistic, to understand journalistic truth as a process—or continuing journey toward understanding—which begins with the first-day stories and builds over time.… The truth here, in other words, is a complicated and sometimes contradictory phenomenon, but seen as a process over time, journalism can get at it. It attempts to get at the truth in a confused world by stripping information first of any attached misinformation, disinformation, or self-promoting information and then letting the community react, and the sorting-out process ensue. The search for truth becomes a conversation.

Rather than rushing to add context and interpretation, the press needs to concentrate on *synthesis* and *verification*."

Making Truth an Idea That Journalists Can Believe in Again

'Every journalist knows that truth can make nonnegotiable demands.'

By Jack Fuller

Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel accurately call truth the "first and most confusing principle." These days it sometimes seems as though we're embarrassed to be caught talking about the truth, as if doing so were a kind of sentimentality. Our skeptical age has rediscovered that truth just isn't something you can be sure about. Moreover, in the history of the 20th century, too many people who have said they know The Truth have ended up committing barbarities in its name.

Yet journalists intuitively know that they owe their first duty to truth (or at least to reality), and they also know that they have to exercise strict self-discipline to satisfy the obligation. This discipline is so exacting that it can require the sacrifice of financial self-interest, of friendships, even of personal safety. So while the concept of truth may lack clarity, every journalist knows that truth can make nonnegotiable demands.

Objectivity, they say, is a method, a discipline, a habit of mind.

Erosion of confidence in the idea of truth has unfortunate effects on society at large, not the least of which is that it invites people to lie. If the truth is unknowable anyway, what is the difference? At times it seems that everything "depends on what the meaning of 'is' is."

But as unpleasant as these large social consequences might be, the effect on journalism of our lack of confidence in our ability to know the truth is nothing less than disastrous, negating its very reason for being. Journalism not moored with the discipline of truth might look like Pravda. Or it might look like Lewis Carroll.

Something must be done to make truth an idea we journalists can believe in again. How can we ask the public to believe what we say if we are unsure ourselves?

Kovach and Rosenstiel make a real contribution in this difficult area by fundamentally redefining the problem. The difficulty has been that we can't believe that flawed, subjective human beings can know the truth, let alone communicate it. Kurt Gödel has shown that even mathematical logic is imperfect (or at least incomplete), so what chance do emotion-colored perceptions of human beings have? As for communicating to other people, philosophers observe that you cannot even know if the red you see looks the same to you as the red I see looks to me.

Kovach and Rosenstiel turn our attention away from this problematic idea of truth as an outcome and turn it toward the process by which we might approximate the truth. "Objectivity," the word we once used to naively define journalism's aim, is really not best thought of as an attribute of the story at all, still less an attribute of a hopelessly subjective human being who writes it. Objectivity, they say, is a method, a discipline, a habit of mind. They are too modest to appropriate the idea as their own. They point to early work by Walter Lippmann that called for a scientific method of journalism. "In the original concept, in other words," they write, "the method is objective, not the journalist. The key was in the discipline of the craft, not the aim."

Of course, it is impossible for subjective individuals, locked within the prison of their own perceptions, to produce objective accounts of reality. But it is possible for subjective individuals to use rigorous methods, just as subjective scientists do. And it works. We might not be able to say what the truth is, but we can reach deep into space, play billiards with subatomic particles, and manipulate the very helix of life.

Another way of putting it is that, while we might all agree that it is epistemologically naive to think we can know and communicate The Truth, some accounts of reality are closer approximations than are others. Seen this way, what journalists do is to arrive at their judgments in a careful and disciplined way and make their claims confidently but provisionally, subject always to revision.

I would have liked a deeper examination in Kovach and Rosenstiel's book of the alternatives to "balance" or "fairness" as a discipline for journalists. Since the truth we tell can be no more than approximate, modesty alone requires that we properly represent other points of view, even if in the end we explicitly favor one over another. The trouble with truth is not that it has become a sentimental and outmoded notion. We can have knowledge and communicate it. What we cannot have is certainty. Perfection is not possible. But we knew that all along, didn't we?

Remembering this should not make us despair nor free us to throw off all our truth disciplines. It should just keep us humble. ■

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The Pursuit of Truth Can Be Elusive in Africa

Independent journalists are branded unpatriotic and anti-government.

By Gwen Lister

Journalism in Africa has to be engaged in the *pursuit* of truth. I emphasize "pursuit," since we neither attain it always, nor is it always within our grasp.

Truth is a very elusive concept. In the act of pure reportage, the journalist is often simply the carrier of a message. By probing deeper, investigative journalists have more of a chance of uncovering at least some of the truth, but still not necessarily all. The reader, listener or viewer must finally make a judgment about its veracity.

All of us surely know what truth is or what the word aspires to be. Yet it would be unwise to give this most weighty of journalistic principles a simplistic definition. For example, when considered in the African context, journalists contend with a variety of factors that fail to take into account whether a report is truthful. Many people, especially among those who serve in our governments, often don't care if what we publish is true; when we write about opposition parties, we are viewed as "trying to promote the aims of other political parties," and when we pursue our watchdog role, "truth" is characterized as disloyalty if it falls into the category of criticism. Recently, the government imposed on its ministries an advertising ban of my independent newspaper, The Namibian, on the grounds that it is anti-government (i.e., performing its watchdog role).

One might argue that here truth is very much a secondary thing. For many journalists on the African continent, particularly those who are "independents," their struggle is also against forces of intolerance. In an attempt to silence and intimidate reporters, attacks are made on journalists, and our integrity is constantly questioned not only by government officials—including the president—but echoed by rabid elements of the political party.

For many Africans, democracy is a new concept. In nations that have recently emerged from oppressive regimes, some governments guarantee freedom of speech and of the press, in principle. In practice, the situation is much different. Until very recently, most television and radio stations and many newspapers in Africa were government-owned and -controlled. There was little critical, independent reporting. Journalists acted as the transmission belt to convey government's thinking to its people. They were not expected, in turn, to convey the people's thinking back to government.

This is why the emergence of an independent, critical press is so important. That we need to name this entity must seem odd to journalists in older democracies. What on earth is an "independent press?" But in 1991, in a historic conference in Windhoek, Namibia, African journalists adopted the Windhoek Declaration. It said, "the establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation, and for economic development."

The meaning of "independent" was hotly debated. In some ways, the "alternative" press (alternative to mainstream, primarily government-owned media) had transformed itself into the independent press. The Windhoek Declaration defined "independent" as meaning free "from government, political or economic control," but journalists argued that media also must be editorially independent, regardless of ownership.

The adoption of the declaration was a significant step forward for journalism in Africa. It told the world that African journalists were tired of echoing words of political leadership and wanted to actively pursue the truth of what was happening. To a large extent it gave a moral boost to free up journalists to utilize their watchdog role over state and society.

In many African countries, governments paid lip service to the declaration but did little to facilitate the media's transformation. Today, the African independent press remains very fragile and vulnerable. It operates amid varying degrees of hostility, notwithstanding the continent's "winds of democratic change." The winds that blew in constitutional gains (guaranteeing press freedom) represented a change of mind, not of heart.

The independent press continues to pursue the truth. It is a quest with consequences. Many in our governments perceive and accuse the independent press of being the Trojan Horse for the forces of imperialism and capitalism; often, we are portrayed as "the enemy." In Namibia, despite our difficulties, we are better off than many other independent press in Africa which encounter large-scale violations of press freedom, even death for journalists and truthseekers in the vanguard of this struggle for the independent press.

Our democracies are evolving. They remain as vulnerable and fragile as the independent press itself. Perhaps it is too soon to expect the majority of people will support the pursuit for truth in journalism. But while we wait, as independent African journalists we must pursue the truth no matter how unpopular or unpalatable, and at whatever price we are forced to pay. ■

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2 Journalism's first loyalty is to citizens.

"A commitment to citizens is more than professional egoism. It is the implied covenant with the public.... The notion that those who report the news are not obstructed from digging up and telling the truth—even at the expense of the owners' other financial interests—is a prerequisite of telling the news not only accurately but persuasively. It is the basis of why we as citizens believe in a news organization. It is the source of its credibility. It is, in short, the franchise asset of the news company and those who work in it.

Thus people who gather news are not like employees of other companies. They have a social obligation that can actually override their employers' immediate interests at times, and yet this obligation is the source of their employers' financial success.

This allegiance to citizens is the meaning of what we have come to call journalistic independence.... As journalists tried to honor and protect their carefully won independence from party and commercial pressures, they sometimes came to pursue independence for its own sake. Detachment from outside pressure could bleed into disengagement from the community....

A second factor in the growing isolation was a change in journalism's tone. After Vietnam and Watergate and later the advent of 24-hour cable news, journalism became noticeably more subjective and judgmental. More coverage was focused on mediating what public people were saying, rather than simply reporting it....

Rather than selling customers content, newspeople are building a relationship with their audience based on their values, on their judgment, authority, courage, professionalism, and commitment to community. Providing this creates a bond with the public, which the news organization then rents to advertisers.

In short, the business relationship of journalism is different from traditional consumer marketing, and in some ways more complex. It is a triangle. The audience is not the customer buying goods and services. The advertiser is. Yet the customer/advertiser has to be subordinate in that triangle to the third figure, the citizen....

Five key ideas about what we should expect from those who provide the news...[are:]

1. The owner/corporation must be committed to citizens first....
2. Hire business managers who also put citizens first....
3. Set and communicate clear standards....
4. Journalists have final say over news....
5. Communicate clear standards to the public....

To reconnect people with news, and through the news to the larger world, journalism must reestablish the allegiance to citizens that the news industry has mistakenly helped to subvert."

Inviting Viewers to Enter the Newsroom

With its Viewers' Bill of Rights, KGUN9-TV in Arizona broke new ground.

By Forrest Carr

When I first became a television news director I used to get calls from colleagues and media reporters asking me what I am doing to increase ratings. Two years ago, the question became "What are you doing to hang on to viewers?" The reason: Viewers have begun to abandon local TV news.

It's no mystery why. Viewers I've encountered during two decades have not been coy about their feelings. To them, we are arrogant, shallow, career-climbing cretins with no respect for anyone's rights, feelings or human dignity. They're tired of our stupid little ratings ploys. They're fed up with the endless parade of body bags on the evening news, weary of shallow, out-of-touch news anchors and reporters, and sick of misleading, over-hyped teases. Certainly new media and demands of modern life play roles in the audience erosion, but the fact is many viewers have just had it with us.

So two years ago, at KGUN9-TV in Tucson, Arizona, we did something we believe no one else has done. We solicited the public's input for a statement of principles. We weighed that input with our own notions of journalistic duty, then published the Viewers' Bill of Rights. It provides a product guarantee, a warranty, and a return desk. We appointed a viewer ombudsman, one of only two we know of in the United States, and we invited our viewers to keep us honest through regular viewer feedback segments.

Some news professionals find the idea that viewers should be involved in the journalistic process to be profoundly disturbing. We're the pros, not viewers. We know what information is good for the public because we're trained to figure it out. Viewers should trust us to lead them through this complicated and bewildering endeavor called news.

Why do so many of us seem to feel that journalism is the only commercial enterprise with no need to learn from consumers and respond to their demands? In fact, responding isn't nearly enough. As journalists, we should join forces with viewers to ensure the responsiveness of government and business, to bring the public's voice into the process of setting public policy and to hold the powerful accountable, and that includes *us*. In my view, the best TV journalists are viewer advocates who fight with passion and vigor for people's right to be heard. Now I've done it, I've used that "p" word, "passion," a word which journalism's thought-police too often silence. KGUN9 is passionate about its viewers and community, and I have a hard time believing that acting this way is wrong.

These changes have led to improvements in KGUN9's journalism. The station is doing a better job of breaking the kind of stories that often lead to changes in public policy. In 2000, the Project for Excellence in Journalism noticed and gave KGUN9 the highest quality score it has awarded to a half-hour newscast. Coincidentally, the station's share of the news audience has been increasing, and the station now poses a serious threat to the city's long-time market leader.

The reason this works is simple. When an important personal relationship goes south, what do you do? Open a dialogue and talk it out. You might even get a counselor. With its Viewers' Bill of Rights and Viewer Feedback segment, KGUN9 created a dialogue with its community. Now they're talking it out. There's even a counselor in the form of Viewer Representative Heylie Eigen.

…the best TV journalists are viewer advocates who fight with passion and vigor for people's right to be heard.

In the movie "Network," a crazy news anchor incited frustrated audiences to scream, "We're mad as hell, and we're not gonna take it anymore!" His peers promptly judged him insane. But if KGUN9's experience is any guide, inviting audience feedback—even angry feedback—is not a sign of journalistic lunacy. How crazy is it to imagine a world in which every city has at least one TV news outfit willing to state publicly what it stands for and then provide an ongoing mechanism for accountability? The viewer in me hopes news consumers in other markets will rise up as one to demand this. Such accountability might hold the key to our future.

If this concept troubles some journalists, an increasing number find it appealing. Many reporters express support, and some inquire about jobs at KGUN9 specifically because of the station's unique news philosophy. Recently one candidate told me that when he first read the document he was shocked. "I couldn't believe they'd let anyone get away with that," he said. The truth is, I'm a little surprised myself. Now that it's come this far, who knows where it might go? Maybe it's the beginning of a beautiful friendship—or, at very least, the start of a more productive and satisfactory relationship—between journalists and the viewers they serve. ■

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KGUN9 Viewers' Bill of Rights

You Have a Right to Know

KGUN9 will ask the tough questions, conduct the investigations necessary, and give the timely information needed to serve the public interest and protect public safety.

You Have a Right to Ethical Newsgathering

KGUN9 subscribes to the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics, which requires journalists to seek the truth and report it, to minimize harm, to act independently, and to be accountable.

You Have a Right to Privacy

Our journalistic duty and the public's right to know often require us to place people and organizations in the news who don't wish to be there. We will never do so in a cavalier or insensitive fashion and will always carefully consider privacy concerns as we weigh the importance of a story. We will never stalk or hound the innocent victims of crime or tragedy.

You Have a Right to Positive News

Much of the news our journalistic duty requires us to cover is by nature ugly. We will not filter out such stories in any way. However, we will take extra steps to find and report positive or uplifting stories which reflect the true character of life in our community. We will meet regularly with members of our community in order to discover those stories in person.

You Have a Right to Relevant Crime Coverage*

We recognize that an over-emphasis on crime coverage would harm our community through portraying it in a false light of negativism. We will cover crime in such a way as to provide context, meaning, perspective and relevance. Before airing any crime story we will weigh its newsworthiness with the following questions:

- Is there an immediate danger or threat to the public?
- Is immediate action required?
- Is the safety or welfare of children involved?
- Is there a larger issue with public policy implications?
- Does the story touch, or should it touch, hearts in our community?
- Does the story spotlight a new crime trend or issue at the neighborhood level of which residents should be aware?

You Have a Right to Solution-Oriented Journalism

When appropriate we will be "On Your Side" and attempt to find or spotlight solutions to individual and community problems. We will help empower our viewers to better their lives and community.

You Have a Right to Hold Us Accountable

We will invite and respond to public input and feedback on our newsgathering decisions and philosophy. Our KGUN9 Viewer Representative will serve as a viewers' champion within our newsroom. We will present and respond to viewer feedback within our newscasts on a regular basis. We will eagerly and diligently investigate complaints, publicly admit any mistakes, and correct them prominently.

We will update and amend this document as necessary based on changing community needs, issues and values, and on viewer feedback. ■

* The station's crime coverage principles were inspired by the work of the late Carole Kneeland, news director at KVUE-TV in Austin, Texas.

Loving and Cussing: the Family Newspaper

It's a place where community and citizens come before big profits.

By Brandt Ayers

In Alabama patois, for the publisher of a family paper to comment on Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel's principles is like hunting on a baited field. It just ain't fair. Put another way, we'd feel out of place in Tony Ritter's ritzy neighborhood.

We struggle to make a 10 percent profit. But in terms of community leadership and serving our citizens, by and large—given a few dumb mistakes and omissions here and there—The Anniston Star gets it right.

Kovach and Rosenstiel are certainly right that something has been lost in the passing of family newspaper owners. "Benevolent patriarchs," they call us, a title that suggests more deference than we get at the courthouse barber shop. But we have an advantage. We're not Camp Swampy. We're headquarters. The defining qualities of family ownership are rootedness and a passionate commitment to a place and to the people who live there.

The ideas that thoughtful journalists are now underscoring as they think anew about the relationship between news and business are bred in family owners like an instinct. We're committed to citizens first. Our business managers also put citizens first, and clear standards are set and communicated to everyone who works at the paper.

A city founder, Sam Noble, who envisioned Anniston as a model post-Civil War "new town," put it this way: "Instead of dissipating our earnings in dividends, we have concentrated them here…." The bond that links the founding families with the family which has owned The Anniston Star for parts of three centuries is easy to understand. We live here. We want "our town" to grow in beauty and prosperity.

Unfortunately, the family-owned paper is an endangered species. At the end of World War II, families owned almost all daily newspapers. Today, only about one-fifth of the 1,500 dailies are home-owned. What is lost might not be obvious to readers who don't read other papers. Our critics here cuss us hard and often—naming names—for our liberal views, but if we sold to a chain, you can be sure they'd miss us. You can't cuss a distant corporation; it doesn't hear or care.

Here's how we obey the Kovach-Rosenstiel commandments about putting citizens' needs above company profits: Grandfather, father, son and brother-in-law Phil Sanguinetti, we've never let an obsession with profits dictate news or editorial policy. Don't take our word for it. Jim Risser, a double Pulitzer winner, studied us for a book and reported, "Ayers is obviously willing to settle for earnings well below the 20 percent or more expected of papers owned by public companies…." We have more reporters and charge less for ads than papers our size, Risser discovered. Vice President for Operations Ed Fowler, who has been a reporter and editor as well as a business manager, says our commitment to quality rather than just maximizing profit "is one reason I'm here."

And our clear standards about our editorial product are written at the top of the editorial page daily. It quotes my father, Col. H.M. Ayers: "A newspaper must be the attorney for the most defenseless among its subscribers."

The human dynamic between a family paper and a community is unusual. This solitary human being, the publisher—if he's lucky—develops a sense of humor and calluses to cover his tender ego. Equipped with ego-shield, the publisher undertakes his task: cheerleader for and critic of every community enterprise. Those on the receiving end of his judgments are not always grateful for his advice.

On rare occasions, a publisher with guts will stir things up. We did in 1967-68, and voters threw out a mayor and the whole form of city government. Earlier in the 1960's, we ran a front-page crusade that helped capture and convict a white thug for the nightrider murder of a black man. We also ran a series aimed at obstacles to black voters that showed more African Americans were registered in our county than Birmingham or Huntsville.

Not all white readers or advertisers were happy with our coverage during the civil rights movement. We lost some readers and advertisers. We didn't win a Pulitzer Prize, either. We didn't try. In recent years, black political and civil rights leaders have criticized some stories. But even our severest critics would regret our catching the plague of corporate mediocrity that has swept most papers into a pureed and neutered mass. For them, the Kovach-Rosenstiel principles might be too late.

My family, however, hopes we can keep The Anniston Star from being stirred into the pot of homogenized sameness that describes most chain papers. We want to maintain the passionate commitment of an owner to a city. The emotional strings of such a meaningful relationship are tuned more like a cello or violin than, say, a Pete Sampras tennis racquet. The anger, joys and sorrows a publisher and community share are acutely sensitive. It is precisely that sensitivity that gives a family newspaper its unique character.

A family-owned newspaper is less detached than a chain-owned newspaper—more caring: scolding and loving; hurting, being hurt and loving…

Like any slightly dysfunctional family. ■

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3 The essence of journalism is a discipline of verification.

"In the end, the discipline of verification is what separates journalism from entertainment, propaganda, fiction, or art.... Journalism alone is focused first on getting what happened down right....

Perhaps because the discipline of verification is so personal and so haphazardly communicated, it is also part of one of the great confusions of journalism—the concept of objectivity. The original meaning of this idea is now thoroughly misunderstood, and by and large lost. When the concept originally evolved, it was not meant to imply that journalists were free of bias. Quite the contrary.... Objectivity called for journalists to develop a consistent method of testing information—a transparent approach to evidence—precisely so that personal and cultural biases would not undermine the accuracy of their work....

In the original concept, in other words, the method is objective, not the journalist. The key was in the discipline of the craft, not the aim.

The point has some important implications. One is that the impartial voice employed by many news organizations, that familiar, supposedly neutral style of newswriting, is not a fundamental principle of journalism. Rather, it is an often helpful device news organizations use to highlight that they are trying to produce something obtained by objective methods. The second implication is that this neutral voice, without a discipline of verification, creates a veneer covering something hollow. Journalists who select sources to express what is really their own point of view, and then use the neutral voice to make it seem objective, are engaged in a form of deception. This damages the credibility of the whole profession by making it seem unprincipled, dishonest, and biased. This is an important caution in an age when the standards of the press are so in doubt....

A more conscious discipline of verification is the best antidote to the old journalism of verification being overrun by a new journalism of assertion, and it would provide citizens with a basis for relying on journalistic accounts. ...we began to see a core set of concepts that form the foundation of the discipline of verification....

1. Never add anything that was not there.
2. Never deceive the audience.
3. Be transparent about your methods and motives.
4. Rely on your own original reporting.
5. Exercise humility.

The willingness of the journalist to be transparent about what he or she has done is at the heart of establishing that the journalist is concerned with the truth.... Too much journalism fails to say anything about methods, motives, and sources."

Accuracy Must Be Our Journalistic Grail

Editors at The Oregonian make writers pause and verify before publication.

By Michele McLellan

My copy editor colleague was blunt: "I'm going to need proof that these people exist and that this is how they spell their names."

Ouch. Was he questioning my integrity? My work mentioned dozens of people. Did he think I had unlimited time to prove the obvious? I took a deep breath and settled in with this reaction: gratitude. This editor, Jake Arnold, put our readers and our credibility with them first.

Accuracy is our journalistic Grail. At least we say it is. But, as members of the public remind us, we often fail to practice what we preach. In surveys, we learn that people are becoming more skeptical of the accuracy of our reporting, and many think newspapers run a lot of stories without checking them—not because we know they are true—but because other outlets have published the information.

We do fail our readers too often, from typos to oversimplification to factual mistakes to assumptions. When in doubt or in a hurry, we assume it's right. What if we *always* assumed it is wrong?

Journalism demands a deliberate process of reporting, writing and editing which pauses at every step to examine rigorously whether the story is in danger of making a wrong turn. It requires high skill and commitment in negotiating minefields between confidence in journalistic principle and arrogance in practice.

Good writers and editors have systems, usually simple ones. Therese Bottomly, a managing editor at The Oregonian, marks anything in a story that causes her to pause—perhaps it's not clear or doesn't seem accurate. She reads on, then goes back over her marks with the writer. The key, Bottomly says, is to listen to her instincts and not drift into letting her small questions pass.

Another managing editor, Amanda Bennett, practices "prosecutorial editing," adopting an attitude of skepticism that drives reporters to great distraction before publication and to great appreciation afterwards. Bennett emphasizes the importance of scrutinizing the "connective tissue" of stories—phrases that belie assumptions about motives or causes and effect—as closely as looking at facts.

Others seek out devil's advocates, colleagues or members of the public who will question assumptions that underlie a story. They read portions of stories to experts, checking not only the facts and the accuracy of quotes, but also the way they've chosen to arrange them. As an editor, I've used a method I alternately call "the idiot treatment" or "the editor from Mars."

I ask reporter colleagues to treat me as if I know nothing about journalism or the topic at hand and to explain how they've gathered and checked information and how they decided what to emphasize and what to leave out. I ask them to imagine what they might have learned if they'd asked a different question or found a different source.

My analogies are imperfect. After all, I do not believe readers are idiots or Martians. Still, it brings humor to a difficult process and acknowledges that I don't have any greater claim to wisdom than the writer does. The system allows us to scrutinize the thinking and assumptions that shape the reporting, as well as what the reporter found and wrote. And it gives a name to a deliberate effort to test the work against the standards of the people who matter most and who are in the best position to judge us—the public.

It also helps to have an emotional connection to accuracy—fear of career failure, competitiveness, or experience in how wrong information disappoints and even harms. When I started in journalism nearly three decades ago, my connection derived from fear. I lay awake nights after writing or editing a story, at once excited to see my work in the paper and fearful I'd missed something or changed something for the worse. As I gained experience, I became jaded. Then, when I was public editor at The Oregonian, I saw how much accuracy means to readers.

One case hit me hard. The newspaper featured a local high-school band member in a photo on the local news cover. The picture was tailor-made to brighten the family scrapbook. And it might well have been the only time Julia Carr would see herself in her local newspaper.

But we misspelled her name in the caption. I cringed that we had failed a young person in such a basic way. The bandleader provided the wrong spelling, but our photographer accepted responsibility. In our newsroom, we discussed ways we could more carefully check names and spellings. I was proud we didn't just shrug, blame the source, and move on.

In "The Elements of Journalism," Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel cite humility as the last of five "core concepts" embedded in journalists' obligation to verify their work. I would list it first. ■

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Determining the Line Between Fact and Fiction

In broadcast news, compelling TV and good journalism can coexist.

By Olive Talley

A national cable television correspondent was covering a murder trial of a man already serving time on a prior conviction. With a live report minutes away, she asked a young assistant to find out when the defendant was eligible for parole on the prior.

The young woman dutifully made phone calls and relayed her findings. When the on-air reporter asked for the source of the information, the young assistant proudly cited the local newspaper. She was dumbfounded when the correspondent sent her back to call court sources with direct knowledge of the case.

This incident came to mind as I read Kovach and Rosenstiel's chapter on the process of verifying information. They argue that journalism, as an institution, has failed to adhere to a system for testing the reliability of its reporting. "The modern press culture generally is weakening the methodology of verification journalists have developed," the authors write. "Technology is part of it."

After 25 years of reporting that spans radio, UPI, newspapers and, since 1995, network television newsmagazines, I share the authors' concerns about slippage in the fact-finding process in journalism and how it can erode our credibility. Unfortunately, anyone pondering this complex issue in the context of broadcast journalism gets no help from Kovach and Rosenstiel. The authors fail to include insightful or substantive examples from television or Internet news reporting in their analysis of the verification process in "modern press culture."

The anecdote mentioned above illustrates a troubling phenomenon in network TV. While seasoned reporters fill the top ranks, many of the support staffers—who actually do much of the reporting—have little or no journalism training.

Although I've long admired Bill Kovach for his integrity and advocacy for traditional news values, I'm disappointed that he and Rosenstiel did not lend their experience and thoughtfulness to an examination of this and other issues in broadcast media. Instead of citing aired pieces in which techniques of verification have been blurred, they point to TV "docu-drama" as an example of adding fiction to fact for better storytelling. I've never heard anyone in TV news use the term. The authors write: "If a siren rang out during the taping of a TV story, and for dramatic effect it is moved from one scene to another…what was once a fact becomes a fiction."

It would have been more useful to discuss a case like this: As a producer, I build an opening sequence for a crime story by showing close-ups of yellow crime scene tape with the sound of sirens underneath. The sirens and the tape are not the actual footage of the crime scene because those images don't exist. But if I create a combination of images that portray a crime scene, don't present them as being the specific crime scene in question, and get all the facts of the case correct, am I crossing the line into fiction because of my opening sequence?

Predictably, the use of hidden cameras is discussed briefly under "misleading sources." While I believe hidden cameras have been overused and improperly used by various local and network news shows, when used wisely they can provide the ultimate level of verification. Seeing is believing. It's compelling TV and good journalism when hidden cameras let viewers see and hear the misleading sales pitch, the abusive child-care worker, the dishonest employee.

In a report on the illegal trade of exotic animals and the serious dangers they pose as pets, I used a hidden camera to show the availability of baby tiger cubs in Texas. I went to a roadside zoo advertising them for sale on the Internet. I used my real name and my real phone number when I responded to the ad and when I showed up. Yet I did not tell the sellers that I worked for "Dateline NBC" and had cameras rolling.

Using the Kovach/Rosenstiel guidelines, was I deceptive? I don't think so, nor did the senior producers and lawyers who reviewed the material and my script. In the two years I've worked for NBC, there has been a rigorous approval process involving senior producers and legal and standards attorneys before hidden cameras can be used. And the network publishes a 70-page policy manual that spells out its policies and standards on reporting, use of anonymous sources, and a variety of other news practices. I'm no shill for NBC, but I was heartened during my second week on the job to attend mandatory meetings to discuss and debate ways to raise standards in our reporting process.

It's the kind of effort that can help create the system of verification that Kovach and Rosenstiel find so lacking in the industry. And while I wholeheartedly agree with many of their criticisms, they missed an opportunity to explore this from the perspective of broadcasting—perhaps the most powerful force in our industry. ■

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4 Journalists must maintain an independence from those they cover.

"...Being impartial or neutral is not a core principle of journalism. ...impartiality was never what was meant by objectivity. ...the critical step in pursing truthfulness and informing citizens is not neutrality but independence....

This applies even to those who work in the realm of opinion, criticism and commentary. It is this independence of spirit and mind, rather than neutrality, that journalists must keep in focus.... Their credibility is rooted instead in the same dedication to accuracy, verification, the larger public interest, and a desire to inform that all other journalists subscribe to....

The question people should ask is not whether someone is called a journalist. The important issue is whether or not this person is doing journalism. Does the work proceed from a respect for an adherence to the principles of truthfulness, an allegiance to citizens and community at large, and informing rather than manipulating—concepts that set journalism apart from other forms of communication?

The important implication is this: The meaning of freedom of speech and freedom of the press is that they belong to everyone. But communication and journalism are not interchangeable terms. Anyone can be a journalist. Not everyone is. The decisive factor is not whether they have a press pass; rather, it lies in the nature of the work....

People increasingly see the press as part of an establishment from which they feel alienated, rather than as a public surrogate acting in their behalf. The solution to this kind of isolation is not to repudiate the concept of independence, however. The solution is to recruit more people from a diversity of classes and backgrounds and interests in the newsroom to combat insularity. The journalism that people from a diversity of perspectives produce together is better than that which any of them could produce alone....

Independence from faction suggests there is a way to be a journalist without either denying the influence of personal experience or being hostage to it.... Just as it should with political ideology, the question is not neutrality, but purpose. This journalistic calling to independence from faction should sit atop all the culture and personal history journalists bring to their job....

In the end it is good judgment, and an abiding commitment to the principle of first allegiance to citizens, that separates the journalist from the partisan. Having an opinion is not only allowable, not only natural, but it is valuable to the natural skepticism with which any good reporter approaches a story. But a journalist must be smart enough and honest enough to recognize that opinion must be based on something more substantial than personal beliefs *if it is to be of journalistic use*."

In Crisis, Journalists Relinquish Independence

'Ideological biases can overtake the desire to be independent.'

By Ying Chan

After clashing with a Chinese jet fighter, a U.S. spy plane crash lands on an island in southern China and its 24 crew members are held by the Chinese.

This news instantly becomes the top international story. Soon CBS News Anchor Dan Rather is talking with a former U.S. ambassador to China who urges Americans to give leaders on both sides time to resolve this difficult situation. "When should *we* consider this serious?" Rather asks.

When I heard this all-too-obvious identification with the Bush administration, I cringed. Neither side had fired a shot at the other. But from the perspective of journalism, there was already a casualty in this new cold war—independence from faction had been compromised.

This notion that journalists function best when they maintain an independence from those they cover is simple to understand but more difficult to adhere to, especially in times of crisis and conflict. As journalists, we know what is required to retain our independence. Except for causes directly related to our profession, we don't join organizations or serve on boards. We report on protest marches and demonstrations; we don't join them. We don't sign petitions, as close as the issue might be to our heart. By becoming journalists, we give up the right to be partisans.

But ideological biases can overtake the desire to be independent. During this spy plane incident, it was clear that media in both countries rallied to their government's side. In China, news organizations condemned the United States with a singular voice. But that's China, where the media still are under state control. Yet in the United States, a country that boasts of having a free press, most major media accepted the Bush administration's narrow and legalistic claim to the "right of espionage." Media commentators praised the President for his "cool-headed" control, and few questioned why the spy plane flew off China's coast or the wisdom of conducting such surveillance flights.

At the University of Hong Kong, I recently explained to a young writer that his role is not to defend China. A journalist's job is to scrutinize the facts and then let the chips fall where they might. Nor is it, I told him, the task of the U.S. media to defend their nation's actions.

Then there is the challenge of staying independent of one's sources, including those on whom reporters depend for tips and exclusive leaks of information. Two years ago, by relying on leaks from overzealous officials at the energy department, The New York Times led the media pack in convicting—in the press—the Los Alamos nuclear scientist, Wen Ho Lee, of spying for China. No spy charge was ever filed, though lesser charges were. Lee was finally freed from prison after the judge apologized for wrongful detention.

One way to bolster the likelihood that news coverage will demonstrate that reporters have remained independent of faction is to support diversity in the newsroom. When people of different ethnic, racial and social groups work together, there is a greater chance that necessary checks and balances will be in place to counter biases. As a former reporter for the (New York) Daily News—a paper once found guilty of racism in its newsroom hiring—I am painfully aware of why diversity is so important.

In 1990 I created the Daily News's immigration beat, one of the first in the United States, and I wrote about Mexicans, Haitians, Italians and the Irish. I wrote more about Asian Americans because those were the stories editors gave me. I didn't resent this or worry about being pigeonholed, but I believed that to do justice to the stories of more than 170 ethnic groups in New York City, all of the paper's beat reporters had to expand their coverage to include non-white communities. Race matters. But for too long, professional organizations have pursued diversity in terms of numbers, a worthwhile measure, but by no means the only one. Today, the goal should include promoting excellence in coverage of our different communities, irrespective of writers' skin color.

Journalists cannot be true believers. Rather we are perpetual sojourners, restless and undomesticated. In pursuit of stories, our paths often cross with freedom fighters, especially in situations of extreme oppression. The experiences in Namibia of fellow Nieman Gwen Lister remind me of the importance of keeping independent even from one's former allies. In the struggle against apartheid, Gwen and her staff at The Namibian suffered through arbitrary arrests, harassment and bombing of their offices. After independence, The Namibian monitored abuses of those who had assumed power. Some of these former "comrades" did not like the spotlight put on their actions; earlier this year, the ruling Cabinet ordered that no government ministry place ads in the paper.

Perhaps by learning about experiences such as Gwen's, we will come to value—and practice—independence in our roles as journalists. ■

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Retaining Independence Isn't Easy for Journalists

But protection of sources can cheat the public and betray the truth.

By Robert Blau

Early in his tenure as a Chicago Bull, Michael Jordan asked reporters for a favor: He would appreciate if they wouldn't reveal that he had a child, since he wasn't married just yet. Many of the writers already knew this but didn't mention it because they didn't want to alienate one of the greatest athletes of the century. They liked him. They wanted to be liked by him. And they needed him.

There's a healthy debate to be had over whether an out-of-wedlock child born to a basketball player, even a superstar, is newsworthy. It certainly had nothing to do with performance on the court. But given Jordan's carefully choreographed image, the information might have been useful to readers in assessing the man.

More troubling was the tacit understanding entered into by the reporters: We'll agree to this as long as you are available to us. This daily journalistic transaction, more than any other kind of relationship, has the potential to undermine Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel's simple commandment: "Journalists must maintain an independence from those they cover." Protecting sources and currying their favor so they will remain sources, whether in a sweaty locker room or swank boardroom, too easily crosses the line from common sense to conspiracy, cheating the public and betraying the truth.

Political coverage often depends on reporters getting along with candidates and public officials in the hope they will achieve candor and trust. Ideally this benefits the reader. But these bunker friendships can obscure good judgment. Veteran political reporters and editors found it difficult to believe former Congressman Dan Rostenkowski, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, was capable of being a felon, all the way up to his conviction for mail fraud. And their coverage reflected this bias.

It's often that way when you've spent long days together picking apart policy and talking football over steaks and beer. Every police reporter knows how hard it is to remain sternly objective about the cop on the beat when you are shuttling together from one crime scene to the next, finding in each other much needed common ground.

The most egregious breach of public trust and professionalism is a hidden relationship that might compromise the journalist's ability to report fairly. News organizations have gotten increasingly vigilant about policing such conflicts, but this doesn't happen everywhere. I'm haunted by the story that a reporter covering a celebrity was at the same time writing a book with this person—without any editor's knowledge. Of course, in much of celebrity journalism, public relations specialists hold reporters and editors hostage by masterfully offering the carrot of access and exclusivity.

Further eroding "independence of mind," as the authors put it, is the expanding punditocracy. More journalists are angling for face time on television, trafficking in opinion, speculation and guesswork as part of the information elite. They give speeches for large fees. They vacation together and work out together and feed each other's sense of mission and importance. Is there any place chummier than a TV studio in Washington, D.C. on a Sunday morning?

But the most insidious loss of independence happens daily, quietly, in the minds of journalists determined to protect access. It took a freelancer, not a battalion of beat reporters, to expose the anti-Semitic leanings of the New York Knicks' Bible-study clique. In the arithmetic of daily reporting, the beat writers have the most to lose from delivering the unflinching truth and burning their sources. Context. Background. Authority. Quotes. But how many crucial facts get lost in these off-the-record conversations and moments?

There is inspiration in the opposite approach: Washington Post reporter Milton Coleman courageously revealing Jesse Jackson's Hymietown comment and a Sports Illustrated writer delivering John Rocker's racist diatribe even though it might have been easier, even tempting, to dismiss it as mischief.

Overdependence on sources is not as obvious a violation as fabricating quotes or events. But its consequences can be just as dangerous. It's about airbrushing the rough edges of truth. The antidote is reliance on incontrovertible fact. The most ambitious journalism does not require dealmaking. It doesn't depend on what someone says, but on what can be proven. It doesn't rely on hunches about a person's character or snap judgments about the relevance of private matters to public policy. The standards of the best investigative journalism should be the standards of the industry at large. Allegiances, affiliations and predilections need to be neutralized or disclosed.

Beyond that, there must be a sense that our job is different from those of the people we cover, that people are going to be mad at us, that comfort lies in the shared ideals and ethics of the newsroom and not at the feet of the best to play the game. ■

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5 Journalists must serve as an independent monitor of power.

"In 1964, the Pulitzer Prize, the most coveted award in newspapers, went to the Philadelphia Bulletin in a new reporting category...called Investigative Reporting. ...the journalism establishment was acknowledging a kind of work increasingly done in recent years by a new generation of journalists....

Some old-timers began to grumble. Investigative reporting, they harrumphed, was little more than a two-dollar word for good reporting. In the end, all reporting is investigative. The critics had a point. What the Pulitzer Prize Board formally recognized in 1964 had been, in fact, more than two hundred years in development....

[T]he watchdog principle is being threatened in contemporary journalism by overuse, and by a faux watchdogism aimed more at pandering to audiences than public service. Perhaps even more serious, the watchdog role is threatened by a new kind of corporate conglomeration, which effectively may destroy the independence required of the press to perform their monitoring role....

The watchdog principle means more than simply monitoring government, but extends to all the powerful institutions in society.... As firmly as journalists believe in it, the watchdog principle is often misunderstood.... The concept is deeper and more nuanced than the literal sense of afflicting or comforting would suggest. As history showed us, it more properly means watching over the powerful few in society on behalf of the many to guard against tyranny.

The purpose of the watchdog role also extends beyond simply making the management and execution of power transparent, to making known and understood the effects of that power. This logically implies that the press should recognize where powerful institutions are working effectively, as well as where they are not. How can the press purport to monitor the powerful if it does not illustrate the successes as well as the failures? Endless criticisms lose meaning, and the public has no basis for judging good from bad.

...the proliferation of outlets for news and information have been accompanied by a torrent of investigative reportage.... Much of this reportage has the earmarks of watchdog reporting, but there is a difference. Most of these programs do not monitor the powerful elite and guard against the potential for tyrannical abuse. Rather, they tend to concern risks to personal safety or one's pocketbook. Among some popular topics of prime-time magazines: crooked car mechanics, poor swimming pool lifeguarding, sex slave rings, housecleaning scams, dangerous teenage drivers.

...the expanding nature of journalism as a public forum has spawned a new wave of journalism as assertion, which makes the need for a vibrant and serious watchdog journalism all the more critical. In the next century, the press must watchdog not only government, but an expanding nonprofit world, a corporate world, and the expanding public debate that new technology is creating."

Investigative Journalism Can Still Thrive at Newspapers

It requires fierce determination, hard work, some guerrilla tactics, and thick skin.

By Loretta Tofani

It was never easy to be an investigative reporter, especially when the journalist wanted to tell a story that was original, that he or she saw but others didn't see. These stories took much more time than ordinary stories—months, sometimes years. And there were cases, on occasion, in which a reporter would spend time investigating a story only to find that the thesis couldn't be proven or that editors found the finished product not worth printing.

So, in this era of newspaper publishers expecting to achieve double-digit profits for stockholders, investigative journalism no longer has the same level of support. The dominant message, amid buyouts and pink slips, is produce, produce, produce! The result is that reporters tend to produce more good or mediocre stories at the expense of the great and vital stories, which are still out there.

At The Philadelphia Inquirer, where I am a staff writer, reporters still write investigative stories. But fewer of them are consistently engaged in that enterprise now than 14 years ago, when I came here from The Washington Post.

...it is still possible, today, to overcome obstacles in the newsroom.

Despite changes in newsroom culture, I think it is still possible to report and write great investigative stories at newspapers. The key then, and now, is fierce determination, hard work, and some guerrilla tactics.

In 1982, when I wrote a series on jail rapes for The Washington Post that won a Pulitzer Prize for Local Investigative Specialized Reporting, newspapers were still proudly touting their First Amendment watchdog role. Watergate and the book and movie that celebrated it, "All the President's Men," were recent memories. Nevertheless, my two immediate editors at the Post had no interest in giving me the time to report and write this series. But it was possible to circumvent them. And it is still possible, today, to overcome obstacles in the newsroom.

My series was about gang rapes of prisoners awaiting trial for misdemeanors by other prisoners who were convicted of crimes like murder and armed robbery. I learned about the rapes while I was covering the Prince George's County Courts. During a sentencing, a lawyer said, "Your honor, my client was gang raped in the county jail." I was shaken, thinking of what had happened to the young man. Afterwards, I asked the judge how often he heard about the rapes. "Oh, it happens all the time," he said.

So I began my reporting. I still covered my beat. But on my days off, and when I finished work, I visited the homes of jail guards and jail rape victims and interviewed them. I didn't say anything to my editor. After about six weeks, I finally made my pitch. At that point I knew most of the key points of the story. I explained them to my editor: About a dozen men a week were getting gang raped in the jail. Most were legally innocent, in jail because they lacked money for bond before their trials. They were gang raped because the jail failed to enforce its rules and permitted prisoners to block the view of guards with black trash bags. Indeed, jail policies actually promoted the gang rapes because the jail failed to separate the weak from the strong and to separate those charged with drunk driving, shoplifting and trespassing, who became rape victims, from convicted murderers and armed robbers, the typical rapists.

My editor said, "Let's put it on the back burner." I argued, but there was no winning. I went over his head, to another editor. He refused. The second editor needed me for daily stories. I went over his head, to the metropolitan editor. "That's a great story," he said, and ordered my immediate editor to give me some time to report and write it.

Later, of course, other newsroom obstacles appeared to publishing an investigative story: It was hard to get the time to find and interview the jail rapists and obtain medical records of the victims. One editor thought the story should be a "trend" story. Another editor didn't like case studies, didn't like quoting the men who had raped each victim. Another editor wanted a feature story.

So it takes determination to get the job done, even in the best of times. I think now, even in harder times, reporters can find more ways to report and write investigative stories at newspapers. Editors love good stories. And good reporters feel outrage about social injustice, about systems that don't work, about policies that hurt people.

Of course, it helps to have an editor who has been an investigative reporter—even if he or she is an "unofficial" editor. It helps to talk to other reporters who have written investigative stories. And it helps to have thick skin. ■

Loretta Tofani writes for The Philadelphia Inquirer. She participated in the Nieman Foundation's second Watchdog Journalism Project conference on the use of sources.

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Press Failure to Watchdog Can Have Devastating Consequences

Every news organization should monitor the powerful in the public interest.

By Murrey Marder

In this electronic age, the most serious challenge to American journalism is the threat of becoming irrelevant. Unless the American print and broadcast press can demonstrate some unique service to the public, they will be overrun in time by cheaper, flimsier news competition.

The core purpose of the American press since its origin has been to serve as a watchdog for the public interest, guarding against the abuse of power. But with notable exceptions, that distinctive, essential function is now atrophying like a muscle, shrinking from lack of exercise.

When it has been true to its heritage, the press has sounded the alarm if public rights were being impaired. It marshaled public opinion to act against city, state, or federal authorities, or against any other group, public or private, found to be misusing the public trust.

How could such a vital function fall into widespread disuse? By not admitting that it has deteriorated. By pretending that it is being pursued. By focusing on minor abuses of power and avoiding the greater abuses. By making superficiality the norm for news coverage.

Watchdog reporting—when it is done well—extends basic reporting to a deeper level of intensity and thoroughness, without hobbling deadline pressure. It allows a reporter and editor time to think, to probe, and to analyze in a profession where the clock is often the prime adversary.

The failure of the press to be a public watchdog often goes unnoticed, but it can have devastating consequences. None was costlier than the total failure of the American press—and Congress—in August 1964, at the crucial point for expanding the war in Vietnam. Reporters like me were just beginning to probe skeptically the Johnson Administration's claims about unprovoked attacks on U.S. destroyers in the Tonkin Gulf. Before anyone could unearth and assemble the facts, most U.S. newspapers (including mine, The Washington Post) editorially leaped to join the stampede that gave the administration a blank check for its covert war plans. By a combined Senate-House vote of 504 to 2, taken without public hearings, Congress yielded its responsibility to checkmate a massive abuse of executive power.

That monumental default of both press and Congress was seared into my consciousness. As a crowning irony, at the war's end American public opinion blamed press criticism for undermining the United States' war strategy, when the default was exactly the opposite. The press had failed to provide soon enough the kind of important evidence that citizens could have used to criticize it.

In "The Elements of Journalism," Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel write that in the American colonies "it was the watchdog role that made journalism, in Madison's phrase, 'a bulwark of liberty.'" But now Kovach and Rosenstiel report with dismay that journalism's watchdog role has deteriorated into "diminution by dilution," and this has happened through "overuse, and by a faux watchdogism aimed more at pandering to audiences than public service."

Watchdog reporting is no gimmick, but requires a shift from rutted, traditional habits of the mind to open thought.

During the 2000 campaign, literally thousands of reporters walked right past the biggest story of the presidential election—the humiliating inadequacy of the voting equipment not just in Florida but across the nation. Where precincts used the antiquated ballot-punching machines, the error rate was a well-known disgrace glossed over by election managers until it crashed over the nation's head. The lesson: News exists everywhere in the power structures that surround us. No reporter or editor worth their press passes should ever say, "There's no news today."

While Kovach and Rosenstiel focus on three investigative forms of watchdog reporting usually done by specialists, non-specialist alternatives are being explored by the Nieman Foundation's Watchdog Journalism Project. Launched while Kovach was Nieman Curator, this initiative seeks to elevate all reporting to more intensive levels. The premise is that even the smallest newspaper or broadcasting station in any community should accept and pursue its watchdog obligation in the public's interest. Wherever there is power, there is need for public accountability.

Walter Lippmann, early in his philosopher-journalist life, much like Madison had done, extolled newspapers as "the bible of democracy, the book out of which a people determines its conduct." But as he grew older, he often criticized the press for failing to fulfill its potential. He never gave up hope, but near the end of his life he ruefully described journalism as "a refuge for the vaguely talented." His characterization was painfully apt, but it need not remain valid forever. We, the vaguely talented, all bear the obligation to disprove it. ■

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6 Journalism must provide a forum for public criticism and comment.

"...This forum function of the press would make it possible to create a democracy even in a large, diverse country by encouraging what James Madison and others considered the basis upon which democracy would stand—compromise, compromise, compromise....

In the new age of media, it is more incumbent on those providing us with journalism that they decipher the spin and lies of commercialized argument, lobbying, and political propaganda. ...it is more important, not less, that this public discussion be built on the same principles as the rest of journalism—starting with truthfulness, facts, and verification. For a forum without regard for facts fails to inform. A debate steeped in prejudice and supposition only inflames.

Just as important, this forum must be for all parts of the community, not just the affluent or demographically attractive....

Some people might consider this argument for stewardship anachronistic—and more than a little elitist—a leftover from an era when only a few outlets controlled public access to information.... Now we can let the journalist mediator get out of the way, and let the debate occur in the genuine public square, not the artificial one defined by NBC or CBS News.

This is where the technology-verses-journalism debate comes to its clearest philosophical divide.

...it is appealing, on some level, to think that technology will free those who produce the news from having to exercise judgment and responsibility...[but] it is creating a public square with a diminished regard for fact, fairness, and responsibility. Facts are replaced by whatever sells—or can be sold. Spin replaces verification. Right becomes a matter of who has the greatest might—wattage, audience, rhetorical skill.

In practice, unfortunately, the technological argument is the digital equivalent of tyranny, not freedom. Rather than liberated, we become captive to the technology....

The problem with...the Argument culture—the diminished level of reporting, the devaluing of experts, the emphasis on a narrow range of blockbuster stories, and the emphasis on an oversimplified, polarized debate—is that [it tends] to disenfranchise people from the discussion that the media not only are supposed to support but need for their own survival. Making politics into a shouting match drives people away from the media....

The press has a stake in that discussion being inclusive and nuanced, and an accurate reflection of where the debate in society actually exists, as well as where the points of agreement are."

When the Public Speaks, Do Journalists Listen?

'I don't recognize myself or anyone I know in your newspaper.'

By Geneva Overholser

How well are journalists doing these days at behaving as what the Hutchins Commission in 1947 called "common carriers of public discussion?" That's the question Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel examine in their chapter "Journalism as a Public Forum." Their conclusions are the same ones I derive from my practice and observation of journalism: Many of us have lost our way, and both the media and our democracy are the worse for it.

The spawning of new technologies and ever more numerous channels of information make the media's *potential* for creating public forums more robust than ever. But today's conditions also greatly increase chances that the news will be distorted and manipulated and make it harder than it's ever been to shape the news responsibly. It seems anyone with a point of view—and plenty of resources—can influence media coverage. This makes it all the more incumbent on us as journalists to act prudently and carefully in choosing and presenting the news. Instead, all too often, we are primary figures in misshaping it.

Take the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, which began when I was ombudsman at The Washington Post. Certainly it was an important story, but the Post and other news organizations ill-served their public forum responsibilities in the great excess of sometimes prosecutorial, sometimes voyeuristic coverage. The paper and the political process were the worse for it. Indeed, readers' complaints frequently involved, in one way or another, the paper's failure to take into account just how much impact it had in deciding where and how to train its spotlight. "Why does your political coverage seem to imply that everyone is always scheming all the time, and no one ever means what they say?" readers asked. When the topic was legislative battles, a familiar complaint was, "Why do I have to follow the story inside to learn what a bill would actually do?" And in a message I remember well, one reader pleaded, "Could you just give me the facts? I can supply the cynicism."

At a time when voices are raised to such a high pitch in so many media, the demands on serious journalists to keep their wits about them are great. Yet we frequently feed the polarization instead. Think of coverage of gun control, crime and punishment, abortion, drug abuse, the death penalty. The thoughtful middle—the realm where most American public opinion lies—is poorly represented and often just plain ignored. The result is another complaint I heard frequently: We appear to be writing for one another and for others in power—"I don't recognize myself or anyone I know in your newspaper."

Our provision of a public forum is essential to the formation of, in these authors' words, "what James Madison and others considered the basis upon which democracy would stand—compromise, compromise, compromise." Yet with our "wedge issues R us" stance, we encourage exactly the opposite. Some would say that the proliferation of channels of communication has the potential to make this system self-correcting. We might fail in individual media to be responsible, but with the Web enabling anyone to enter the debate, someone at some point will call us on it.

But Kovach and Rosenstiel hold—correctly, I think—that instead of being liberated we have "become captive to the technology." I believe cost cutting lies behind many of the issues raised in this chapter, though the authors don't explicitly link this to their concerns. They observe that the diminished regard for fairness and responsibility leads to situations in which "facts are replaced instead by whatever sells—or can be sold." And they also cite this powerful quote from Noah Webster: "[N]ewspapers are not only the vehicles of what is called news; they are the common instruments of social intercourse, by which the Citizens of this vast Republic constantly discourse and debate with each other on subjects of public concern." Yet today we see these "common instruments" are much reduced, having developed a preference for demographics that draw advertising over old allegiances to community and the largest and most diverse possible readership.

Consider, too, the negative effect of cost cutting on what we actually produce. The authors blame "our new media culture" more broadly, but surely money is a piece of why we have "seen the urge to comment replace the need to verify, sometimes even the need to report. The communications revolution is often more about delivering news than gathering it." As the authors note, "quite literally, talk is cheap," a fact that explains much of the vitriol to which we, in the media, subject the public.

The sad result is that "the mass media no longer help identify a common set of issues." Democracy is thus weakened and so, ironically, given how much of this is driven by our quest for commercial success, is the health of our industry. ■

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Is Journalism Losing Its Place in the Boisterous Public Forum?

An editor finds an appetite for serious conversation. Media ought to respond.

By Christine Chinlund

In some ways, journalism has come full circle. It began as a spoken medium, the stories exchanged in the Greek marketplace and, later, in colonial American taverns, over a pint of ale. Then, for a time, the printed word ruled the day and set the cadence for public discourse; the "forum" had moved to newspapers' opinion pages.

But now the voices are back, blasting from the airwaves in an explosion of radio call-in shows and television talk shows, a loud and clamorous accompaniment to the printed word. In this incarnation, the volume on the "forum" has been cranked up to a new, sometimes deafening, decibel level. On any given day, television offers more than 175 hours of news and public affairs programming of which, Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel inform us, 40 percent comes in the form of talk shows. Add to that the online chatter of the Internet (granted, a different sort of volume, but news/noise nonetheless), and we have a din that needs some taming.

That's where today's mission for journalists comes in. With the expanded audience and jacked-up volume comes an added responsibility to keep the conversation focused on the fact track, to nurture the best of what this new superforum can offer and prevent the worst from infecting it.

Never before, suggest Kovach and Rosenstiel, has it been more crucial that journalists play the role of honest broker and referee in the free-for-all exchange of ideas. Never before has it been so important that the long-held principles of journalism, starting with truthfulness, prevail every day.

True, technology gives us the potential for a more open debate than ever before, and that should excite the little "d" democrat in all of us. But the new communication format, the authors warn us, already has demonstrated that the "urge to comment replaces the urge to verify." It is often more about delivering news (and concurrent comment) than gathering it. As a result, it devalues expertise—thus, the rise of inexperienced young pseudo-expert commentators (sometimes misconstrued by viewers as being journalists) who are the rage today.

One might think we are losing depth, but at least we are gaining scope as technological wizardry provides a breathtaking reach and allows coverage of more stories from more places and with more voices. But we shouldn't be willing to make that trade-off so fast. For the new media culture does not, in the end, truly expand coverage. In fact, as reporting infrastructure recedes, chat room venues define the conversation relying on the most common denominator. A handful of simplistic blockbuster stories use up a lot of the journalistic oxygen. Soap operas dramas, known by familiar names (Monica; Lady Di; J.F.K., Jr.; Elián), dominate.

"The paradox," the authors write, "is that news organizations use expanding technology to chase not more stories, but fewer."

As if all of this were not enough to discourage public participation in the forum, one final thing might: Call it the "food fight" factor. Too many of today's talk shows proceed on the theory that everyone likes a good fight. Polarization, not conversation, become the defining principle. We forget that the job of journalism is not just to foster an exchange of ideas, but to make that exchange a civil one in which truth is a requirement. But will that really sell in this market-driven age of communication?

My experience suggests it will. During the past six years, I've been able to take the temperature of the Boston community in an unusual way—through absorbing the content of the often overwhelming number of manuscripts and queries submitted to The Boston Globe's (Sunday) Focus section. The writers differ in background—from academia to the union rank and file, from retirees to high-school students—but the majority of their offerings have a common thread: They are about matters of consequence, be it public policy, social culture, politics, or sometimes history. And, by and large, all presume that facts must define the debate, albeit facts sometimes selectively offered.

This tells us something about the public's appetite for serious conversation and the need for a forum to present it. The media—out of enlightened self-interest, if nothing more noble—ought to respond. Return for a moment to "will it sell?" Kovach and Rosenstiel acknowledge that argument journalism builds a passionate following. But it is a limited one that constricts over time as shouting matches alienate the broader public, shutting it out of the conversation by failing to give it voice or reflect its nuanced views.

Therein lies the real message: The price for letting journalism get sidetracked by the boisterous, facts-are-optional, anything-goes approach is not just the sacrifice of truth and civility, important as they are. It's the loss of our audience and, with it, a piece of democracy.

It's a price we cannot afford. ■

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7 Journalists must make the significant interesting and relevant.

"...This classic way of posing the question of engagement—as information versus storytelling, or what people need versus what people want—is a distortion. This is not how journalism is practiced, journalists told us. Nor is it, we believe, how people come to the news. The evidence suggests most people want both....

Storytelling and information are not contradictory. They are better understood as two points on a continuum of communicating.... Most journalism, like most communication, exists in the middle. The journalists' task is to find the way to make the significant interesting for each story and finding the right mix of the serious and the less serious that offers an account of the day. Perhaps it is best understood this way: Journalism is storytelling with a purpose. That purpose is to provide people with information they need to understand the world. The first challenge is finding the information that people need to live their lives. The second is to make it meaningful, relevant, and engaging....

If journalism can be both significant and engaging, if people do not basically want it one way or the other, why does the news so often fall short? A litany of problems stand in the way of news being delivered compellingly: haste, ignorance, laziness, formula, bias, cultural blinders. Writing a story well, outside of the box of the inverted pyramid, takes time. It is, in the end, a strategic exercise that involves more than just plugging facts into short, declarative sentences. And time is a luxury of which journalists today feel they have less and less....

Even if reporters are given the time to report and write, there is the question of space in the paper or time on the newscast. With news organizations convinced that ever-shortening attention spans require ever-shorter stories, it is difficult for a reporter to get the space and time necessary to tell a story right....

The evidence suggests that attracting audiences by being merely engaging will fail as a business strategy for journalism over the long term for three simple reasons. The first problem is that if you feed people only trivia and entertainment, you will wither the appetite and expectations of some people for anything else.... The second long-term problem with the strategy of infotainment is that it destroys the news organization's authority to deliver more serious news and drives away those audiences who want it....

Finally, the infotainment strategy is faulty as a business plan because when you turn your news into entertainment, you are playing to the strengths of other media rather than your own. How can the news ever compete with entertainment on entertainment's terms? Why would it want to? The value and allure of news is different. It is based on relevance. The strategy of infotainment, though it may attract an audience in the short run and may be cheap to produce, will build a shallow audience because it is built on form, not substance. Such an audience will switch to the next "most exciting" thing because it was built on the spongy ground of excitement in the first place...."

Why Has Journalism Abandoned Its Observer's Role?

'The mirrorer was viewed as fat to be trimmed, and was.'

By Jon Franklin

Reporters, who are in the best position to pick up the sentiments of readers and would-be readers, often complain to me that the public no longer sees us as either engaging or relevant. Complaints, however, are rarely followed by any serious analytical thought about how we got into this sorry mess and how we might somehow climb out of it. Perhaps the Kovach and Rosenstiel book will help focus our minds.

The obvious villain, of course, is the news industry and its collective lust after very high profits. The last era of relatively good (relevant and engaging) newspaper journalism rose in the late 1960's and survived until the early 1980's when "The Age of Gannett" began and ushered in a crackdown by publishers, who'd complained bitterly during the 1970's that they had lost control over their editors and reporters.

Perhaps this disjunction between reporters' and publishers' perspectives on how news can be conveyed engagingly should not surprise us. This is, after all, a business in which advertisers, not subscribers, pay the fare. And this fact creates the central fallacy of the business. When a reader pulls the Daily Blatt out of the box, he or she perceives the transaction in an innocent simplicity. The reader bought the paper, right? But, in fact, the major financial transaction happened when the publisher sold the readers' attention to advertisers for many times the value of the coins put in the box.

So it is that the journalistic content of the newspaper is ultimately a loss leader. And the shrewd businessperson strives to make loss leaders as formulaic, efficient and cheap as possible. The rise of Gannett-think brought this insight into sharp focus. The scope of the newsroom was inexorably narrowed; the once-sacred role of the reporter as observer-analyst was transmogrified into that of information gatherer; the most compliant editors were promoted; the chain of command became six notches more militaristic, and hot-button news flowered into a star-crazy sensationalism.

When I was a young reporter, I was taught that the function of a newspaper was to report news and mirror society. This was in the mid-1960's, when Nicholas von Hoffman of the Los Angeles Times wrote what became known as the "Haight-Ashbury" series, in which he portrayed for the first time the gathering of flower children in San Francisco. Other reporters, reading the von Hoffman piece, discovered similar gathering places in their towns. Suddenly the nation awakened to find the New Age all around it.

So why did Nick discover this, instead of some reporter in Kansas City or New York? The answer: reportorial vision, on an heroic scale. Youngsters like me were captivated by the power of it. I, for one, bought into the mirroring aspect of journalism and spent the following decades explaining complicated subjects and writing true short stories that let the reader walk for a while in another person's shoes.

Readers love these kinds of stories. Tom Hallman, who just won a Pulitzer Prize for a story about a patient's saga to find himself, provoked many thousands of reader calls, letters and e-mails. You want relevant? You want engaging? The stories are there, and so are the reporters, though few young ones are being trained.

Why is this kind of journalism so rarely allowed? The question is, of course, rhetorical. Such stories are expensive. They take specially trained reporters and equally expert editors ready to break newsroom rules of thumb and to fight the story through the copy desk. They are disruptive and time-consuming, as mirroring reality is wont to be. But by 1980 many newspapers had set up systems to do the job—special editing procedures, narrative-savvy copy editors, and the like. Soon, however, all bean counters saw was the expense. The mirrorer was viewed as fat to be trimmed, and was. In years since, feature writing, in general, has become softer, flabbier, more star-driven and sensational. And information gathering resembles the work of the long-vanished rewrite man going through stacks of releases and making a phone call or two. Covering the obvious.

All this makes for quarterly profits, but it does not build and expand a readership. It does not find new narratives to interest or engage. It does not function as an institution that binds us together. It drapes stories around the ads, but those stories seem less and less likely to distract from the advertisers message.

What should we do? For openers, we should take a recess from our front-page romanticism and face the reality: We journalists are thrall to the printing, advertising and distribution industries, and in recent decades we have steadily lost what little power we once might have had. This is not just a professional issue: It's a social one. But as was the case with von Hoffman's flower children, this critically important story is too close for most of us to see. It's in our own newsrooms. ■

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Journalists Engage Readers By Learning Who They Are

Newsrooms should know more than marketers do about their audiences.

By Melanie Sill

The most oft-mentioned and misrepresented figure in journalism might be "the Reader" (or alternately, "the Viewer"), a spirit summoned to support nearly every content argument that cannot be won on its own merit. Its voice sounds so familiar. "The Reader doesn't want to plow through long stories." "The Reader doesn't want to see dead people on the front page." "The Reader doesn't like stories that jump."

Engagement and relevance absolutely do involve a consciousness about who is on the other side of communication. But often such arguments within news organizations overlook an abiding reality: There isn't one reader or viewer. There are tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of them, and they have lots of conflicting likes and dislikes. Add to this that more and more people are getting through life without subscribing to daily newspapers or watching network or local news broadcasts and our concern should become even deeper.

Such realities add urgency to questions of how to engage, or reengage, more people in the kind of presentation of important issues to which high-quality journalism aspires. These challenges require us to do more than look inward to our ideals and aspirations about journalistic quality. We also have to consider what's happening on the other end of this exchange, a place where we need to think hard about how to connect with readers and viewers, in the plural.

Of course, the goals of engagement and relevance are inseparable from the other elements of journalism that Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel identify. Yet I would add a bit to their arguments in this chapter. To engage someone in a conversation, it helps to understand who they are, what they know, what's going on in their lives. The old "know your audience" rule of public speaking might be worth adapting for newsrooms. To extend our reach and, perhaps more importantly, intensify the connections between our work and our readers or viewers, we might need to devote more time to exploring communities and considering what's going on in the neighborhoods (both geographic and demographic) that we serve.

I wonder, for instance, how newsrooms are using the new census results. Are these numbers being left to the census beat reporter while others in the newsroom tune out? Or are reporters, editors and news directors poring over them with the idea that the numbers can inform their coverage in much deeper ways? Does the local editor look at information about poverty and wealth, age and race, family structure and migration in the various areas of the paper's coverage as part of considering the paper's reporting strategies? Job trends, housing patterns, changes in retailing, these are the kinds of information that flesh out what journalists see in neighborhoods or find in archives.

Knowledge like this begets relevance at the most fundamental level. And this kind of knowledge can bring power. If a newspaper or television station applies these layers of knowledge to the area it reports on, chances are its coverage will be smarter. Such depth of understanding informs stories, helps journalists to spot trends and, in turn, can enlarge the reach of the newspaper or station. Out of it can come new sections, new beats, and new sources of stories. Out of it can come coverage that is accurate, ahead of the curve, truly relevant, compelling and important.

One of the worst mistakes journalists make is to leave such understanding to marketers. Newsrooms ought to know more than any other department about their reader or viewer data. Readership studies commissioned by newspapers often are complex and contradictory, including information not just about up arrows and down arrows of numerical change but about people's lives, interests and habits. The details show you not just who's reading (and who isn't) but also how people read. Of all the kinds of numbers that push news companies in different directions, these are most important to us in news, but only when we examine them in combination with this broader understanding of our community.

Such challenges loom for broadcast as well as print. On the newspaper side of things, the massive Readership Institute project undertaken through Northwestern University offers not just understanding of long-term readership trends, but useful and specific analysis. I find its approach encouraging because it considers not just why people don't read newspapers, but why they *do*, along with what they like, what brings them back to newspaper reading, what gets them to read more closely. This is a study that offers encouragement and hope, but the question is whether newsrooms and news companies will take hold of the material and use it to improve their journalistic efforts.

If we can do better at knowing our audience, and understanding how to engage them in our work, we'll stand a better chance of carrying these principles into the next generation of journalism. ■

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8 Journalists should keep the news in proportion and make it comprehensive.

"Journalism is our modern cartography. It creates a map for citizens to navigate society. This is its utility and its economic reason for being.... As with any map, journalism's value depends on its completeness and proportionality. Journalists who devote far more time and space to a sensational trial or celebrity scandal than they know it deserves—because they think it will sell—are like cartographers who drew England and Spain the size of Greenland because it was popular. It may make short-term economic sense but it misleads the traveler and eventually destroys the credibility of the mapmaker. The journalist who writes what "she just knows to be true," without really checking first, is like the artist who draws sea monsters in the distant corners of the New World....

Thinking of journalism as mapmaking helps us see that proportion and comprehensiveness are key to accuracy....

But as journalism companies aimed at elite demographics and cost efficiency, the industry as a general rule did not try [to reach more diverse audiences].... The concept of the mapmaker makes the error clear. We created a map for certain neighborhoods and not others. Those who were unable to navigate where they lived gave it up....

Proportion and comprehensiveness in news are subjective. Their elusiveness, however, does not mean they are any less important than the more objective roads and river feature of maps. To the contrary, striving for them is essential to journalism's popularity—and financial health. It is also possible...to pursue proportion and comprehensiveness, despite their being subjective. A citizen and a journalist may differ over the choices made about what is important. But citizens can accept those differences if they are confident that the journalist is trying to make news judgments to serve what readers need and want. The key is citizens must believe the journalists' choices are not exploitative—they are not simply offering what will sell—and that journalists aren't pandering. Again, people care less whether journalists make mistakes, or correct them well, or always pick the right stories. The key element of credibility is the perceived motive of the journalist. People do not expect perfection. They do expect good intentions.... Concern for proportionality is a key way of demonstrating public interest motives.

...we need to stop using market research that treats our audience as customers, asking them which products they prefer. We need to create a journalism market research that approaches people as citizens and tells us more about their lives. How do you spend your time? Take us through your day. How long is your commute? What are you worried about? What do you hope and fear for your kids? [Give us] open-ended research on broad trends of interest. The kinds of questions that will allow editors to understand how to design a news package that is comprehensive and proportional to their community and their needs...."

The Absence of Memory Hurts Journalism

Short-term investors stifle investment in long-term and necessary research.

By Philip Meyer

It is a lovely metaphor. Journalism today, Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel tell us, is where cartography was in the 15th century. We report well about what our audiences already know, but lapse into sensationalism and exaggeration elsewhere—just as the early mapmakers drew sea monsters for titillation or expanded and shrank continents to fit the prejudices of their consumers.

Journalism should be more like modern cartography, they argue. The news ought to be "proportional and comprehensive," keeping readers informed about segments of the population with which they are not familiar. Instead, the trend toward target marketing, which began in the 1960's, is pushing us in the other direction, toward the eventual self-absorbed audience of one.

The two authors have that right. But their proposed solution, adoption of newer market research techniques, won't cut it. The first problem is that the proposed techniques aren't new. Kovach and Rosenstiel want to segment audiences "not just on demographics, but on attitudes and behaviors." Jonathan Robbin, the founder of Claritas Inc., got that idea 40 years ago, and Christine Urban applied it to newspapers in the 1970's. It is still helping editors visualize their audiences even as their size diminishes.

Kovach and Rosenstiel present another oldie but goodie when they argue that editors should concern themselves less with what readers say they want and more with what they need. True, but uses and gratifications of mass media have been topics of academic research since the 1950's. The late Steve Star drove the point home to newspaper editors at his marketing seminars in the 1970's by telling them, "People don't buy quarter-inch drills, they buy quarter-inch holes." Heads nodded, but nothing changed. In a business whose product has to be recreated every 24 hours, there's no time for basic reflection about long-range goals.

The problems that are killing journalism, as we know it, are far too fundamental to be solved by tactical redirection of market research. In the first place, the media industry only pays for research that promises cheap solutions to superficial problems. Its ownership by short-term investors prevents it from looking deeper.

Is this assessment too gloomy? After all, most industries and professions have provisions somewhere in their structures for thinking about the basic questions that will determine their future over the long haul. For many, it involves a close alliance between educators and industry. But newspapers and network television, for most of their existence, never needed the long-term thinkers of academic research. Their oligopoly status made them immune to market forces and any need for innovation. This created a culture that is anti-intellectual and scornful of work without immediate application. But without theories that put some structure on isolated bits of fact, there is no way to understand what is happening to journalism today, much less to develop strategies for preserving it.

Developing theory requires a tribal memory. As Kovach and Rosenstiel note in a previous chapter, journalism doesn't have one. Unlike other industries, we "fail to communicate the lessons of one generation to the next." Indeed, we don't even communicate them from one year to the next. The March 2001 issue of American Journalism Review [AJR] presented the results of a national survey on newspaper credibility funded by the Ford Foundation. The report contained not a single reference to any of the previous credibility studies of the past two decades.

Even Christine Urban's 1999 study for the American Society of Newspaper Editors was ignored. And ASNE, in commissioning Urban's study, ignored its own previous work with Kristin McGrath in 1985. She'd laid the groundwork for a better theoretical understanding of the sources of media credibility by revealing intriguing evidence of a relationship between a newspaper's ability to build strong community ties and the trust its readers placed in it. To ignore this is like writing a local story without checking the clip files—a firing offense at good newspapers.

The purported good news in the AJR study is that 31 percent of respondents to a telephone survey thought their newspapers were becoming more accurate. Asking a one-shot cross section to judge change over time by comparing its current impression with its own offhand recollection is, of course, the world's worst way to detect change. The right way would be to replicate McGrath's work today, but nobody will pay for it because each new study sponsor insists on acting as though he or she were the first intelligent life form to ever consider the problem.

We need continuity and theories. Where do theories come from? They can start as metaphors. Kovach and Rosenstiel put us on a good path with the parable of the cartographers. "Comprehensive and proportional" news is a worthy goal. We can define that concept in a way that would allow it to be measured and studied and its value assessed. Let's get on with it. ■

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A Newspaper Strives to Make Its Coverage Complete

The new approach works but reporters feel constricted by its rigidity.

By Mike Connor

Four years ago at The (Syracuse) Post-Standard we had a rare and precious opportunity to start our newspaper all over again. We'd announced that the morning and evening newspaper staffs, once fiercely competitive, would merge. Because our company has an ironclad policy of no layoffs, the staff would be the sum of the two newsroom rosters—a huge increase for the newspaper.

This change did not happen overnight. Fortunately, we were given several months to create a blueprint for this new entity. We could step away from the daily press of business and ask ourselves questions not asked when the clock is ticking. What, for example, would we do if we suddenly had 250 journalists with whom to start a newspaper? How would we do it? What would our organizational chart look like? How would we define "community" and cover it?

When I read Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel's words about making coverage comprehensive and proportional, my mind leapt back to this time of reflection, when we said that making our news complete would be our primary goal. Of course, what "complete" meant resided in the eye of the person who maps it and the needs of those who used it. And because journalism is part science, part art, our notion of "complete" would integrate our experiences, instincts and what research told us about our audience.

To create navigational guides, we drew a series of maps—some geographical, others topical, and still others demographic. These helped us decide where to open new bureaus and how to assign reporters: For example, our education reporters increased from two to nine and our suburban staff went from four to 20. It wasn't just numbers that changed. So did our journalistic mission: We pledged to record every public vote, every crime, every important transaction of public and business life that we could obtain. We'd use agate type—as we do with sports' scores—to build a newspaper of record to offer readers consistent community data.

But we wouldn't stop there. We'd put our reporters' skills and ingenuity to work questioning, explaining and analyzing the data, putting it in a comprehensive context. If the best investigative reporting helps readers to closely inspect aspects of their civic life, why not publish as much detailed data as we could each day so readers—and reporters—would have what they needed to form probing questions? Enterprise and explanatory reporting would grow up naturally from this seedbed of data about public actions, transactions and records.

To contrast these changes is to vividly see how completeness and proportionality fit into our transition. Before, a reporter received a hunch or tip about exorbitant fees that a town paid its hired lawyers. To do the complete investigation, she collected data about legal fees paid by that town and neighboring ones. She compared the fees, showed anomalies, and did reporting to reveal why it happened. This was a massive amount of work to be done for one story.

Now we publish legal fees in zoned sections of the newspaper. Our reporters cull the highlights and present them in articles that compare costs in each town and the billing practices of lawyers. Each year, we build on this database to deepen the perspective. When we see anomalies, they prompt reporting instead of the reporting being done to find them. The result is that stories of community importance no longer depend on a chance tip or hunch by one reporter.

Of course, this approach to being a comprehensive purveyor of news can be—and is right now being—jostled by economic downturns at the newspaper. Financial constraints are forcing us to redefine what we mean by complete coverage and causing us to reorganize beats and shrink the numbers of reporters assigned to certain ones.

But we are also facing a different threat. No matter how well our maps might be guiding us in filling in gaps in our coverage and giving readers a sense of connection and scale, they are failing to inspire individual reporters. While reporters understand the reasoning, this approach doesn't jazz them. We've lost too many who felt constricted by our systematic approaches. Imagine Jack Kerouac, Least Heat-Moon, or Pirsig with a TripTik and directions from an editor.

What we need is to use new metaphors to help the best daily journalists see connections between our approach to community coverage and their individual work and aspirations. Right now, to many, our form must seem like haiku—its pattern austere and rigid, signaling death to the individual spirit. But within haiku, infinite creative possibilities abound, as its great practitioners show.

Surely we have within our newsroom the potential for reporters to demonstrate greatness within the form we have created. It's our challenge, as editors, to find ways to help them realize this potential without diminishing our promise to readers of complete coverage. ■

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9 Journalists have an obligation to personal conscience.

"Every journalist—from the newsroom to the boardroom—must have a personal sense of ethics and responsibility—a moral compass. What's more, they have a responsibility to voice their personal conscience out loud and allow others around them to do so as well....

Innumerable hurdles make it difficult to produce news that is accurate, fair, balanced, citizen focused, independent-minded, and courageous. But the effort is smothered in its crib without an open atmosphere that allows people to challenge one another's assumptions, perceptions, and prejudices. We need our journalists to feel free, even encouraged, to speak out and say, "This story idea strikes me as racist," or "Boss, you're making the wrong decision." Only in a newsroom in which all can bring their diverse viewpoints to bear will the news have any chance of accurately anticipating and reflecting the increasingly diverse perspectives and needs of American culture.

Simply put, those who inhabit news organizations must recognize a personal obligation to differ with or challenge editors, owners, advertisers, and even citizens and established authority if fairness and accuracy require they do so.... And then managers have to be willing to listen, not simply manage problems and concerns away.... Allowing individuals to voice their consciences in the newsroom makes running the newspaper more difficult. It makes the news more accurate....

This notion of open dialogue in the newsroom is at the core of what a growing number of people who think about news consider the key element in the question of diversity and in the pursuit of a journalism of proportion.... Traditionally, the concept of newsroom diversity has been defined largely in terms of numerical targets that related to ethnicity, race, and gender. The news industry has belatedly recognized that its newsrooms should more closely resemble the culture at large. ...intellectual diversity is also difficult for managers. The tendency, for many reasons, is to create newsrooms that think like the boss....

Maybe the biggest challenge for the people who produce the news is to recognize that their long-term health depends on the quality of their newsroom, not simply its efficiency. The long-term interest pulls one toward a more complex and difficult newsroom culture....

Journalists must invite their audience into the process by which they produce the news. ...they should take pains to make themselves and their work as transparent as they insist on making the people and institutions of power they cover. This sort of approach is, in effect, the beginning of a new kind of connection between the journalist and the citizen. ...it gives the reader a basis on which to judge whether this is the kind of journalism they wish to encourage. ...the way journalists design their work to engage the public must not only provide the needed content but an understanding of the principles by which their work is done. In this way, the journalists will determine whether or not the public can become a force for good journalism."

Journalists Need Help With Ethical Decisions

In today's newsrooms, there are plenty to be made.

By Carol Marin

When journalism students arrive at my door to ask what they should know about being reporters, I give them the same spiel again and again. I'm sure some consider it a rant.

"Being a reporter is a privilege," I begin. "For that privilege, you have to give up some of your rights as a citizen. You're no longer a Democrat or a Republican, no longer a public proponent of any social issue, a protester in demonstrations, a signer of petitions, an advocate of good causes, a fundraiser for charities, or an advocate on behalf of any constituency. Whether objectivity is achievable in the absolute sense, a reporter has, above all else, to be fair. Prepare to be unpopular. Finally, get ready to be fired for the wrong reason or quit on principle."

In 1997, my rant rang in *my* ears. For two years I'd fought with management about the direction our newscasts were taking. My concerns: the progressive dumbing down of content and the commercial corruption of the news because of promised "stories" to advertisers. Finally, with the hiring of trash talk show host Jerry Springer, I quit my anchor job at WMAQ-TV in Chicago.

'Conscience' and 'morality' seem to hold a bit too much righteousness and rectitude for what journalists really do when they try to do the right thing.

Now, in reading what Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel say about journalists and their responsibility to conscience, I agree with much of what they say. But I get uncomfortable when they write, "Journalists have an obligation to personal conscience. Every journalist—from the newsroom to the boardroom—must have a personal sense of ethics and responsibility—a moral compass." I quibble over the use of words like "conscience" and "moral compass."

I tell people all the time that news is my religion. But what I fear is that these words open the door for a kind of moralizing that is antithetical to good journalism. I didn't quit my job because I thought Jerry Springer and his show were morally offensive. My decision had much more to do with his hiring being a ratings stunt, that he brought no credibility to our newscast, and that I felt his presence would destroy the trust we'd established with our viewers.

For me, resigning was an ethical decision, not a moral one. This might seem a distinction with no difference, yet words are powerful instruments. Kovach and Rosenstiel use "ethical" and "moral" interchangeably, as do dictionaries. But while definitions overlap, I find important distinctions in the different tones. "Conscience" and "morality" seem to hold a bit too much righteousness and rectitude for what journalists really do when they try to do the right thing. "Ethical" suggests a search for guidance for conduct and decision-making, a process rather than a doctrine.

The authors and I agree that journalists need a support system to help them make good ethical decisions. A few years ago, a young woman who was the medical reporter at a small television station called me. Her boss asked her to prepare reports that a local hospital would vet before they were broadcast. What should she do? I could tell she knew the answer before she called, but she needed me to be her support system that day.

I'd been involved in a similar situation at WMAQ a few years earlier. Management was "selling" the news through making "value-added" deals with advertisers. This meant that in addition to buying commercial time on a given newscast, advertisers were promised to be part of actual news stories. (If a hospital offered free thyroid tests, we'd broadcast a medical "news story.") The problem: The viewer was left unaware that such "news stories" were being bought. When I refused to read copy that prompted a "value added" story, I was suspended.

My decision then was not based on conscience or morality but on my belief in the need to uphold a professional context for our work. Ours is, after all, a public trust in which we are required to seek out and report the truth, not hide it from those we serve. Our privilege carries risks, and this young reporter was learning this quickly. And she was doing what we all do, seeking out someone to talk to for guidance.

The Chicago Headline Club of the Society of Professional Journalists is trying to break some ground on this. With ethicists at Loyola University, it has set up an advice line where journalists can confidentially ask for help on thorny problems they face in their newsrooms. There are kinks to be worked out, but it's a heroic effort by very dedicated journalists. They understand that journalists don't just report on ethical dilemmas that others confront—though we do plenty of that, as well—but also travel through territory of ethical conflicts. What journalists need are safe harbors like this one to turn to when the pressure becomes intense. ■

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Refusing to Take the Easier Route

Journalists have an important social contract to uphold.

By Mark G. Chavunduka

"Why didn't you just give them the names and save yourself from this barbaric torture?"

Following my harrowing experience at the hands of Zimbabwean military authorities in January of 1999, I've been asked this question again and again. For nine days, I was tortured in an attempt to try to get me to divulge names of my sources within the Zimbabwe National Army that I'd used in a story that published details of an attempted coup against President Mugabe's government. I endured beatings with planks, booted feet and fists, electric shocks and water suffocation for hours on end. Finally, I was released. The information had been withheld.

It would have been easier, certainly, for me to reveal our sources and "simply go home," as my torturers kept telling me. "Yes, I have family," I'd respond, and "Yes, I want to see them again," I'd reply. But by taking that easier route, I'd have violated the professional ethics I'd been taught in journalism school as well as my personal conscience, about which Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel write. Revealing their names would have betrayed and endangered our sources. And what would this have meant to the public's perception about the integrity of my newspaper, of me, and of journalists in general? With all of this at stake, that route was neither an easy one nor the right one to take.

I left with an invaluable lesson—never would I hesitate in speaking up and challenging those in authority when something wrong is occurring.

At a time when technological advancements are bringing about big changes in the way that our industry operates, some important tenets of journalism are being sacrificed in the rush to publish "news." Are journalists adhering—as doctors and lawyers do—to a code of ethics that calls on them to protect their sources' privacy in ways that are making members of the public feel safe in confiding information to a reporter? Or is the lure of a scoop obliterating this responsibility to protect sources and to follow the obligation of personal conscience? Too often, I believe, these more difficult burdens of our profession are simply tossed aside.

Kovach and Rosenstiel contend that "those who inhabit news organizations must recognize a personal obligation to differ with or challenge editors, owners, advertisers or citizens if fairness and accuracy require that they do so." Some years ago, while I was working as a junior reporter on a Zimbabwean paper, I learned about a situation in which a used razor blade was found in a sealed Fanta bottle. When a man was just about to open the bottle to give to his three-year-old son, he saw the blade in the drink. After hearing this, I discussed the story with my editor and also made arrangements for a photographer to take pictures from various angles showing the contents of the bottle.

Here was a case of a young boy who could have been killed by this object. I wanted to find out if there were similar cases occurring on the bottling company's product lines or, at least, investigate how this happened. But the editor did not share my enthusiasm for this story. Later, his lack of interest was explained to me: He'd taken the story to the publisher who had stated emphatically that no such story would be done. The Coca-Cola Company was the largest single advertiser for consumer publications like ours, and its parent company had the largest advertising budget in Zimbabwe. Weigh the potential loss of advertising against possible harm to people who purchase these drinks, and you can guess which one comes in a distant second in the publisher's perspective.

Though I'd done everything I could to push for this story to be done, I felt angry, guilty and hopeless, and my view of the publisher and the publication deteriorated. I'd tried to challenge the editor and ask that the story about this bottle be published, if only on moral grounds. He threw his hands into the air and pleaded impotence given the publisher's strict instructions. Yet this publication was considered a leader in exposing inequities brought about by the actions of individuals and businesses in Zimbabwe. We held ourselves out as being the fearless and outspoken champions representing the underdogs of society.

After this experience, a feeling of revulsion gripped me and, at the first possible opportunity, I happily closed the door behind me at that paper. I left with an invaluable lesson—never would I hesitate in speaking up and challenging those in authority when something wrong is occurring.

There are numerous instances when journalists' personal conscience is tested. Challenges that journalists confront and obligations they hold must be revisited as a way of reminding them of the important social contract they've made with society. ■

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Words & Reflections

David Nyhan, a columnist with The Boston Globe, describes why—at a time of deepening public mistrust of journalism—there needed to be a way of recognizing and rewarding fairness. "Rare is the subject of a news story who does not feel hard-done by the coverage," he writes. In sharing the genesis of the Taylor Family Award for Fairness, a prize the Nieman Foundation will administer, Nyhan—whose idea set the creation of this award in motion—describes what fairness looks like. "Fairness is that level playing field we all look for," he says.

Bob Haiman, president emeritus of the Poynter Institute, illuminates nine newspaper practices that are regarded as unfair based on interviews with community leaders and ordinary citizens. He then showcases policies and practices editors are adopting to make their coverage fairer. These examples emerge from research he did for The Freedom Forum on reader perceptions of unfairness.

Ray Brady, who for 23 years was chief business correspondent for CBS News, writes about what financial reporting looks like today. It is not a pleasing sight. He reports that "financial reporting began to look like sports reporting: 'Give 'em the scores, and show a few highlights of the game. Above all, keep 'em entertained!'" While viewers now know much more about the stock market, Brady cautions them that journalists don't always reveal financial tie-ins of analysts who assess the news.

Media analyst **Ellen Hume** reviews "The Children Are Watching: How the Media Teach About Diversity," and shares her ideas about how media curriculums can be integrated into classrooms and why such an approach is urgently needed. "One has only to look at Bosnia and Rwanda and the impact of 'news' propaganda there on recent violent ethnic conflict to see what happens when independent media are compromised by propaganda," she writes. "To counteract this, one needs informed news consumers who can tell the difference, particularly in confronting emotional issues involving diversity." ■

International Journalism

The battle over the ownership of NTV television—Russia's largest non-government national TV network—appeared to Western eyes to be a story about the role that President Vladimir Putin was playing in the demise of freedom of the press. **Andrei Zolotov, Jr.**, a reporter at the English-language Moscow Times, tracked extensively the course of events and writes about why this story is more about how journalists became embroiled in politics than it is solely about politicians limiting press freedoms. He also shares lessons that Russian media should learn from NTV's situation.

Sanford J. Ungar, the director of Voice of America since June 1999, takes us inside the VOA coverage in China of the recent China-U.S. standoff over the grounded U.S. Navy surveillance plane. When examined in the context of usual news in China, VOA offers—in a variety of Chinese dialects—"an extraordinary array of perspectives for the people to hear." ■

Taylor Family Establishes Award for Fairness in Journalism

'Fairness keeps the playing field of a democratic society level.'

By David Nyhan

All's fair in love and war, as the man claimed, but nobody makes that claim about journalism.

The widespread perception that journalists periodically or even routinely deal from a stacked deck was one of the most troubling developments about newspaper work at the turn of the millennium. And that perception spreads still, like a leaking oil tanker not yet contained. The cynicism summed up in the old axiom "You can't fight city hall" oozed over into the newspaper game: "You can't believe what you read in the newspaper." Of course, it is often what you read in the newspaper that cleans up what you can't tolerate in city hall.

"The only security of all is in a free press," Thomas Jefferson concluded. "The agitation it produces must be submitted to. It is necessary to keep the waters pure." Virtually every journalist accepts that, but our readers, the citizenry, seem increasingly agitated. They don't like what we are doing to politics, to government, to the news.

They suspect we're feeding them soft news, biased news, phony news, news-on-the-cheap. "You are what you eat" is as true of the news as of what you put down your throat. And Twinkie-and-soda news doesn't stick to ribs.

When survey after survey turns up the dispiriting belief that the most reliable purveyor of journalistic content is local television news—*local television news!*—newspaper people have to feel discouraged. That's finishing in a beauty contest behind a burro. The Los Angeles Times last year quoted a disillusioned local TV person as saying, "If it can't be filmed from a helicopter, then it's not news."

The fact that there is no major journalism award for fairness seems to underscore that sense of mistrust that blights our trade. During the last century, the news industry became electrified and fragmented; now it is atomized by the Internet. Endless rounds of surveys by perplexed proprietors seem to agree that the more local the outlet, the more it is trusted by the news consumer; the larger and more remote the institution, the less so.

The urge within the Taylor family of Boston to give something back to the craft coincided with a ripening sense that something is not all that well off in the land of journalism. As a result, the Taylors, whose antecedents started and ran The Boston Globe for a century and a quarter before selling out to The New York Times seven years ago, amassed a $450,000 endowment for Harvard's Nieman Foundation in the cause of fairness in journalism. [See Curator's Corner for more discussion of how this award will be judged and who is eligible for consideration.]

The notion of seeking out for recognition examples of journalistic fairness might seem quaint to some, ridiculous to others. Fairness is easy to sneer at, if yours is a sneering profession. (And much of what is perceived to be the work of newspapers today can be confused with a sneer.)

Rare is the subject of a news story who does not feel hard-done by the coverage. There are the cops accused of making less than righteous arrests, the politicians who feel damned-if-do and damned-if-don't, and the bureaucrats and businesspeople who feel twisted and torched by what appears in the paper. All contribute their daily drop of cynicism to the eventual cataract that becomes the nostrum: "You can't believe what you read in the newspaper." The plaint of an indicted-but-acquitted cabinet member of a previous administration epitomizes the helplessness of those who claim to have been unfairly treated by the profession as a whole: "What office do I go to, to get my good name back?"

Outgoing Nieman Curator Bill Kovach offered his working definition of fairness in journalism on his way out the door a year ago when he said, "Fairness in journalism is more than objectivity. It includes honest and balanced judgments in reporting, writing, editing and presentation of news. The test for fairness is whether people in the news are offered an adequate opportunity to express their views regardless of the opinions of the reporters and editors or the prevailing views of society.

"Fairness means that journalists should use their skills to give a voice to those who are limited in their ability to speak for themselves, whether poor or rich, powerful or weak, famous or unknown. Fairness keeps the playing field of a democratic society level."

Fairness is that level playing field we all look for. It is the unstacked deck. It's getting your turn at bat after the other side got theirs. It is a straight-ahead fight without ganging up. Or without delivering low blows or sucker punches. Getting a fair shake. It is implanted in America's psyche.

At the core of our country's idealism is the conviction that freedom ultimately means fairness. The hallowed phrase "created equal" stems from the easily grasped concept of fairness. For immigrants it meant a fair crack at some frontier land. And by the millions they sailed here to get out from under the absence of fairness back in a hundred other countries.

Compulsion is the enemy, in all its

guises, even when we are force-fed by giant media fire hoses of information whose gatekeepers might or might not conduct their business in fair and square fashion. Unfairness is essentially authoritarianism: me telling you what's what, when it isn't. The great virtue of journalism is not the license to print money, but to disseminate ideas, freely, fairly. Those ideas are what keep society more or less level, more or less on the straight and narrow, more or less fair.

As we lurch into this new millennium with the dot-com destabilization of the newspaper game as practiced in the last century, there should be a quiet corner of the publishing game where a word can be said for fairness. Fairness is the first great philosophical measure that children instinctively grasp at a very young age. And the fact that this principle of fairness seems to be such a remote concern from much of what is current news industry practice shows how far the business has strayed from the moral judgment any normal kid can bring to bear on a childhood game or situation.

If an average kid can get it, why can't we? Is it a case of *can't* or *won't*? And if not, why not? Whatever the reasons are, we can use more reflection, and that's the point of this effort. ■

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Readers Know Unfairness When They See It

If journalists listen to readers' observations, there is progress in fairness to be made.

By Bob Haiman

So what is this thing called "fairness" anyway? Perhaps it's the opposite of "unfairness," for which no one I know has yet come up with a perfect definition. But to paraphrase what a Supreme Court justice said about pornography, I'm getting to where I know it when I see it.

I'm more familiar with fairness because I spent much of 1998 and 1999 traveling around the country for the Freedom Forum to convene groups of readers—both community leaders and ordinary citizens—who were willing to talk about what their local newspapers did that often made readers think the press was not being fair. This was part of The Freedom Forum's "Free Press/ Fair Press" project.

Across the nation, with almost no variation from city to city, readers agreed that the following newspaper practices struck them as unfair:

1. Newspapers are inaccurate and get basic facts wrong. (This was by far the top complaint about "unfairness." People phrased it this way: "Why does the paper get so much, so wrong, so often?" "If I know that's wrong, it makes me wonder what else they get wrong.")
2. Newspapers refuse to admit their errors and publish prompt, full and candid corrections.
3. Newspapers use anonymous or disguised sources, particularly to make charges or level attacks.
4. Newspapers have reporters who simply do not have the special knowledge or expertise to cover complex subjects or stories. (Most often mentioned was coverage of subjects such as science, medicine, health, business, finance and technology.)
5. Newspapers prey on the weak and defenseless, particularly children, victims of tragedy, and unsophisticated citizens not accustomed to being questioned by reporters or surrounded by photographers.
6. Newspapers concentrate too much on the negative problems and failures of society and too little on positive accomplishments and successes. And they tend to frame everything as conflict.
7. Newspapers lack diversity of all kinds in the composition of staff and the content of the paper.
8. Newspapers allow editorial opinion—or the opinions of reporters—to infiltrate news stories. Reporters write news stories laced with reportorial speculation on the possible motives of the people involved, and this makes it difficult for readers to grasp what actually happened as opposed to why the reporter suspected it happened.
9. Newspapers are unwilling to admit that "sometimes there simply is no big story here," despite what might have been thought when the story was assigned or the reporting begun.

Readers can come up with a list of what's unfair. But are there policies and practices editors could adopt that might make their coverage more fair? The good news is that some already are doing so. Here are a few examples:

- The Chicago Tribune instituted an elaborate system to track every error in the paper, to find out who made it, how it happened, and how it could be avoided in the future. In five years, errors were reduced by 50 percent.
- The St. Petersburg (Florida) Times publishes every correction on the front page of the section in which it occurred, even if the error occurred far back in the section.
- The New York Times regularly publishes clarifications of stories in which all facts were correct, but the

overall impression may have been misleading or important nuances were missed.
- The (Colorado Springs) Gazette is willing to publish corrections of errors that might have affected as few as five people.
- The Washington Post instituted the following rule: "No speculation on motives in first-day stories; the public deserves one clean shot at the facts of what happened before the motive-seekers and opiners descend on the story."
- The San Jose Mercury-News will, on occasion, allow subjects of stories to withdraw or revise a quote. This policy does not apply to politicians or other savvy newsmakers, but to "naive, ordinary citizens who didn't realize that what they said might get them fired, sued, divorced, etc."
- When dealing with a potentially problematic photograph of a minor, The (Portland) Oregonian will call the parents and describe it or even have someone drive it to the family home to let parents see it and have a say in the publication decision.
- At several papers, one high-level editor is kept completely out of the loop while a big investigative project is being reported and edited. This editor is then brought in to put a completely "fresh eye" on the article when it's presented for publication. The goal: to ensure that the reporting team has not gotten carried away with enthusiasm for the project and not fully supported its conclusions with evidence and facts.
- Newhouse Washington Bureau Chief Deborah Howell created a new beat called "Doing Good" to look "not for puff" but for genuine and newsworthy stories of accomplishment and success and instructional explanation of why something was working the way it is supposed to work.
- Many papers are tightening the use of anonymous sources, following the AP's longtime policy, which says, "no anonymous sources unless a top editor has been persuaded that there is absolutely no other way to get the story…and it had better be a story of major importance to the community or the nation."

The general credibility problems of the press are complex and have been a long time building. They are not likely to be fully resolved anytime soon. But if journalists would only listen, as I have for two years, to readers talk about the changes that would make them think the press is trying to be fair, much progress could be made, and rather easily. ■

Bob Haiman, former executive editor of the St. Petersburg Times and president emeritus of the Poynter Institute, has been a Freedom Forum Fellow since 1998. His research on reader perceptions of unfairness in newspapers appears in "Best Practices for Newspaper Journalists: A handbook for reporters, editors, photographers and other newspaper professionals on how to be fair to the public." Free copies are available from the Freedom Forum at www.freedomforum.org (click on "Publications").

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What Does Financial Reporting Look Like Today?

Give 'em the scores and show a few highlights of the game.

By Ray Brady

My interview with a high government official was running longer than usual. Behind me I could feel my cameraman moving restlessly. When it was over, I found out why.

"The interview took almost an hour," he told me. "I couldn't check my stocks."

My curiosity piqued, I asked him how he picked the stocks he owned.

"I watch CNBC in the morning," he said, "and I write down which stocks they are pushing," he explained. The word "push" caught my attention, but he moved ahead without missing a beat. "Then I check two days later to see which stocks are moving ahead and I buy those. You know, it's like a horserace."

My cameraman was hardly alone. As captivating tales of skyrocketing prices of stocks such as Lucent, Yahoo! and a myriad of dot-coms and high-techs filtered through to the public, rank-and-file Americans scrambled to get in on this seeming bonanza. Many of them had never invested before; even high-school kids used their computers to log in to the market. Mutual funds, brokers and others stepped up their advertising to create their own bonanza.

For much of the press—electronic and print—eager to give the public what it wanted to read and hear, financial reporters became cheerleaders for Wall Street. Banished was the traditional emphasis of economic stories about inflation, the trade balance, consumer information, and similar themes. Gone, too, was the usual approach to reporting the stock market when the byword had been "check it out carefully. Don't lose anybody's money."

In its place, financial reporting began to look like sports reporting: "Give 'em the scores, and show a few highlights of the game. Above all, keep 'em entertained!" Did Hewlett-Packard miss its earnings estimate? Quick, get it on the air! No need for a long, drawn out

explanation that there could be solid reasons for the shortfall. Newsweek helped to stoke the frenzy in a 1999 cover story, "Everybody is Getting Rich but Me," and Time weighed in by making dot-com CEO Jeff Bezos of Amazon.com its Man of the Year.

Entertainment needs stars. And the financial press helped to create them. CNBC anchor Maria Bartiromo, for example, became known as the "money honey." Even Wall Street analysts, whose job is to analyze the worth of a company and its stock for investors, became media celebrities. Morgan Stanley Dean Witter analyst Mary Meeker was interviewed so often that, in time, she was dubbed the "Queen of the Internet." And her words inspired action. Meeker praised Priceline.com, and its stock shot up more than 17 points, to $151 a share. (By spring 2001, it was trading at about three dollars per share).

What a lot of the media outlets failed to let their readers and listeners know at the height of the boom was that many analysts worked for firms that had a financial interest in the stocks they were talking about. Indeed, as The Wall Street Journal reported, Meeker was paid $15 million in 1999 because her work had brought in $100 million in business (including that of Priceline.com) for the firm. Even Louis Rukeyser, that doyen of TV market reporters, interviewed an analyst who recommended three gaming and hotel stocks, all of which had been financed by his brokerage firm. And when a frequent Rukeyser guest was indicted for allegedly taking $6.9 million in kickbacks from brokerage firms, Rukeyser publicly defended him.

The relationship between analysts and companies their firms financed could have been easily checked. Yet few journalists bothered. Not until late in the game, perhaps too late for some investors, did much of the media begin to question, or at least to mention, these tie-ins. Nor did anybody check to see that some of the bullish dot-com CEO's whom they were interviewing were actually selling chunks of their shares.

The huge concentration of financial press coverage pouring into Americans' heads, in a seemingly endless 24/7 stream of consciousness (even early morning radio began to report on stock "futures" for the coming day), helped set off an investing mania not seen in the United States since the late 1920's. And it happened at a time when the Internet had made would-be investors especially vulnerable. Stock touts and fly-by-night operators roamed the Internet. Worse, investors could now trade stocks right on their computers, bypassing the work a day stockbroker, who might possibly have warned them off risks in certain stocks.

Granted, this flood of information also made Americans somewhat more sophisticated about the stock market. Ten years ago none of us reporting economic news would ever have dared use terms such as "price-earnings ratio," "cash flow," or "futures," and if we had our producers and editors would have demanded that we provide an explanation. No longer is that required. But while this flood of financial information makes Americans more aware of the market, the sad consequence is that more people are relying on what they hear about a stock, rather than making the effort to really research an investment. Today, the investor is likely to be someone like my cameraman who, not incidentally, was playing the market with his wife's IRA money.

Even in this age of the Internet and 24/7 news cycles, I believe that part of the job of the financial reporter should be to offer the kind of guidance and information that can protect investors from themselves. There can be no argument that haphazard (some have called it "irrationally exuberant") investing has, to some extent, existed whether the media was mindful of this obligation in their reporting. During the 17th century, Dutch investors bid up the price of tulip bulbs to exorbitant heights only to see that market crash. Then, a century later, thousands of Frenchmen lost their savings in what became known as the "Mississippi Bubble," a scheme that promised investors unbelievable riches from huge gold and silver deposits in Louisiana and from out of the Arkansas River which was said to contain a fabulous emerald rock.

In defense of the working press—of the foot soldiers in the print and electronic trenches—much of the pressure to perform in this fashion came from top management. Through much of the 1990's, CNBC, Fox and a slew of magazines chased after James Cramer, a huge fund operator who moonlighted as a financial writer. He was a loudmouth in what until then had been a pretty low-key environment. His copy and delivery were lively, even if his journalistic judgments were questionable. He once recommended a group of stocks in "Smart Money" without telling readers that he happened to own them. This is (or should be) an absolute no-no in any reporter's book; indeed, it should be a firing offense, and in many places it would be.

In contrast to Cramer, NBC News's long-running financial correspondent (now retired), the bow-tied Irving R. Levine, was offered a spot on his network's then-new CNBC channel. He went but was quickly dropped. Why? Not enough pizzazz in his delivery! Significantly, CNBC kept going strong while arch cable-competitor CNN was paying the ultimate price for less pizzazz in its reporting: budget cutbacks and job layoffs.

Even with all the pizzazz, there remain financial journalists in print, TV, radio and the Internet who adhere to the old rules and maintain journalistic standards. Even during the feeding frenzy, New York Observer columnist Christopher Byron debunked high-flying, overpriced stocks week after week. Alan Abelson's stock market column in Barron's is a joy to read. And, at Forbes, its long-time former editor, James W. Michaels, was known for grilling reporters before he would publish a story (I know, having worked with Jim at Forbes in the early 1960's).

By and large, the three network evening news programs did a fairly straightforward job of reporting both economic and Wall Street news, though the same could not always be said about some of the morning news shows. Both PBS's NewsHour and CBS's "Sixty Minutes II" did stories spotlighting the analyst-brokerage house connections and, in print, Washington Post reporter Howard Kurtz did truly groundbreaking

work in his recently published book, "The Fortune Tellers."

I believe this kind of down-to-earth journalism will last despite a down market or investor disillusion. It will last because what gets reported is of value to everyone, even the non-investor. Indeed, as winter turns to spring, CNN is no longer alone in laying off financial journalists. The pink slip has been making the rounds at CNBC, including at least three on-air personalities. When ratings of these once high-flying shows go down, the reason ought to be obvious and the lessons to be taken from it instructional: When investors are losing money they don't want to see anything that reminds them of their losses or their gullibility.

The fact is bull markets often end in years of tears for both investors and those who work on Wall Street. In recent times, though apparently not recent enough for much of today's financial press to remember, investors who bought at the top of the "Soaring Sixties" market in 1966 did not get their money back until 1995. It can take a generation for investors to forget their losses. In one such period, so many brokers and analysts were laid off that the joke on Wall Street was that New York City had the best-educated fleet of taxi drivers in the world. As the old saying goes: "The most expensive lessons are the ones you learn on Wall Street."

This admonition might also apply to those in the media who put the razzle-dazzle in stocks that, in the end, cost their audience a lot of money but cost them something even more precious—their journalistic credibility. ■

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Teaching About Diversity

Media play an inadvertent but critical role in youngsters' learning.

The Children Are Watching: How the Media Teach About Diversity
Carlos E. Cortés
Teachers College Press. 224 Pages. $22.95 pb.; $52 hc.

By Ellen Hume

American children under the age of 18 are subject to a "racial generation gap" because they tend to be more racially diverse than their elders, according to William H. Frey, a University of Michigan demographer quoted recently in The New York Times Magazine. These youngest Americans are not only less likely than adults to be white, but they are twice as likely to identify themselves as being of more than one race, the same article noted.

Are journalists and other media "teachers" presenting that reality in a way that helps young people and their parents manage differences? Or are they falling prey to stereotypes and scenarios that fail to do justice to America's expanding diversity? Carlos Cortés, a multicultural teaching specialist and professor emeritus of history at the University of California, Riverside, offers ideas about how media can affect this generational divide.

Cortés's central idea is that in the classroom teachers should pay more attention to popular media—to news accounts, rap songs, films, television shows, and Internet Web sites—treating them as "media textbooks." Media messages often contradict or overwhelm what students are being taught in school about multicultural America, he contends, so teachers cannot afford to ignore these competing outside-the-classroom lessons. In addition to using media content more effectively in the classroom, Cortés sugggests scholars of media need to join together with education scholars to develop a more effective classroom approach to diversity issues.

Cortés's call for schools to use popular media as a resource and context for teaching certainly makes sense. What is even more urgently needed, however, is for teachers to provide students with sophisticated media analysis tools as they receive these media messages. For example, students should learn to identify and *value* serious journalism as different from advertising, entertainment and propaganda, all of which might be more dazzling but less accurate than a professional account that attempts to take in all sides and verify facts. Informed news consumers are needed for real journalism to survive in a world of infotainment, embedded advertising, and "reality" television.

If teachers need a guide for what

journalism is supposed to be, they can pick up another new book, "The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect," by former Nieman Curator Bill Kovach and former media critic Tom Rosenstiel. They offer clear definitions that can be used to evaluate newscasts, television reports, Internet bulletins, and other forms of journalism. While Cortés is willing to let media be media and simply use whatever good or bad content comes out as a part of his diversity curriculum, Kovach and Rosenstiel refuse to let the media purveyors off the hook so easily.

The need for "media literacy" training in schools, to build support for good journalism and wariness about using entertainment in place of verified facts, is underscored by a recent study from Harvard's Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. The study, by Thomas Patterson, confirms the bad news that young Americans are "particularly uninterested" in news, much more so than their parents were at the same age.

This audience drift is happening partly because American political issues seem unimportant compared to the Vietnam War, civil rights, the cold war, and Watergate, and partly because cable television and the Internet have offered so many entertaining distractions. But Patterson also blames the journalists themselves for offering more soft news of accidents and crime, rather than hard news of major issues and events affecting the community and the nation. The soft news isn't entertaining enough to compete with real entertainment, and the hard news is too "nasty," the study finds. As a result, young adults in Generation Y aren't likely to develop their parents' habit of reading newspapers or watching TV news, Patterson concludes.

So what can be done to counter these trends and develop the demand side for journalism that informs citizens and enables them to participate in shaping their community's future? Some news organizations have been trying for years to seed America's classrooms by offering free newspapers, videos and lesson plans. Time magazine's excellent student edition quizzes students not only about the news they have read but also asks them to identify which statements in the article were "facts" and which were "opinions." This is a start.

A more systematic media analysis curriculum is increasingly necessary as the pressure builds on journalists to erase boundaries among news, entertainment and advertising. "We are facing the possibility that independent news will be replaced by self-interested commercialism posing as news. If that occurs, we will lose the press as an independent institution, free to monitor the other powerful forces and institutions of society," Kovach and Rosenstiel write. One has only to look at Bosnia or Rwanda and the impact of "news" propaganda there on recent violent ethnic conflict to see what happens when independent media are compromised by propaganda. To counteract this, one needs informed news consumers who can tell the difference, particularly in confronting emotional issues involving diversity.

Cortés suggests that teachers or parents start by making a "media watching diary" to map messages on such topics as race, gender roles, or religious differences. It heightens awareness of those messages and is a useful way to get a discussion started with students.

Quoting dozens of media studies, Cortés also observes that the media's impact is influenced by:

- The previous attitude of the learner: If a news or entertainment show's message about an ethnic group, a culture, a religion or some other diversity issue coincides with the media consumer's previous beliefs, those beliefs will be reinforced. But if the media message counters that person's preconceived notions, the media message "will tend to be consciously or unconsciously rejected, modified or otherwise muted."
- The remoteness or familiarity of the subject: Cortés offers scholarly affirmation of what journalists dub "the Afghanistan effect"—The less the media consumer knows in advance about the subject, the more influential the media message becomes.
- Competing messages on the same subject from teachers, parents and peers: Content analysis of media might not reflect its true educational impact. "While scholarship has demonstrated that media contribute to (not determine) multicultural learning, the precise assessment of that influence remains a perplexing scholarly challenge," Cortés writes. "One scholar's content analysis does not necessarily mirror another consumer's learning from that same content."

Cortés concludes that the news and entertainment media's impact is often cumulative and includes powerful "sleeper" factors that appear in the background, rather than the main body, of the media presentation. The "Willie Horton" political ad during the 1988 presidential race is perhaps the most famous example of this effect. Indeed, Cortés asserts that background information and images may stick more in consumers' minds than the more obvious images which are designed to attract their conscious attention.

Alas, Cortés's book is too flawed to serve as a media analysis textbook. Too many of his tripartite distinctions appear to be academic devices, rather than useful insights. Instead of building arguments by walking through the actual academic research findings, he offers personal anecdotes and assertions, followed only by academic citations of previously published studies. The job still remains open for someone to frame the right questions, argue the main points, and assemble the best advice for journalists, teachers and others who are involved with these deliberate—or unwitting—"media textbooks" describing our multicultural world. As Patterson and others keep reminding us, the shrinking audience for fact-based public affairs journalism—and our increasingly diverse citizenry—make this job an urgent one. ■

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The Roots of NTV's Difficulties Dig Deeply Into Political Turf

In Russia, there are lessons to be learned from what happened at Media-Most.

By Andrei Zolotov, Jr.

It was February 28, 2001. The battle for NTV television—the largest non-government national television network in Russia and its affiliates in the Media-Most empire founded by tycoon Vladimir Gusinsky—was at its height. The showdown was looming. Journalists throughout the world watched and waited as this battle about ownership seemed—from a distance—to hold within it a fight for press freedoms in a country not long accustomed to such ideas.

But more than a month would pass before NTV's general shareholders' meeting was held on April 3 by its largest single shareholder and creditor, the state-controlled natural gas giant Gazprom. That day Gusinsky and his associates were removed from the board of directors, and U.S.-born investment banker Boris Jordan was appointed general director. In the early hours of April 14, Jordan and his new management team took control of the company despite passionate protests being waged since the takeover was announced. As Jordan arrived, a large number of journalists left, choosing not to work under this new leadership.

There has been much coverage in the international press of these recent events. But for those of us who've observed and written about this situation, it is not so much what has gone on since February but what has occurred during the past eight years in Russia that gives us a context for understanding why this happened and what its consequences might be.

On February 28, Yevgeni Kiselyov, then general director of NTV television and the country's leading political commentator, was meeting with a group of European businessmen at a luxurious Moscow hotel. Speaking in his trademark slow and imperious manner, Kiselyov recounted the history of the channel's bitter struggle with the Kremlin during the past year and a half, complete with seemingly unexpected debt collection, the prosecutors' armed raids to confiscate the station's documents, two arrests of Gusinsky, one in Moscow the other in Spain, and the possibility of a takeover by Gazprom.

Former NTV General Director Yevgeni Kiselyov (right, wearing glasses) and company lawyers Yuri Bagrayev (left) and Alexander Berezin (middle) talking to a policeman in view of many companies' television cameras on April 4, 2001, at the height of NTV's protest against the company's takeover. The policeman came asking Kiselyov to address an unsanctioned rally so that people would take down their pro-NTV slogans and leave. He eventually did. *Photo by Igor Tabakov, The Moscow Times.*

Halfway through the session, Kiselyov said: "For me personally, NTV is the cause of my life. Not the Itogi [the weekly analytical show he anchored]—that's just a hobby. I was one of the three men who began all this back in 1993. And to imagine that it will pass into the dirty claws of Mr. Kokh [head of Gazprom's media arm]? No, it's better to hold on to death!"

Having covered NTV's ordeal for The Moscow Times, a foreign-owned English-language Moscow daily, I found nothing new in Kiselyov's litany that day. I'd followed every episode of the battle as told by different parties, always struggling to pick grains of news out of a sea of propaganda. But the statement about "holding on to death" struck me then as a bad signal. Gusinsky, Kiselyov and other officials at NTV and its parent company, Media-Most, spared nothing in their accusations that President Vladimir Putin and his lieutenants were destroying the most professional and politically independent television

network in Russia. They portrayed NTV as the last bastion of free speech in the country and claimed that they preferred to blow up the ship rather than reach a compromise when the new owners take over.

And that is exactly what happened. As Gusinsky said in one of his recent interviews, "NTV does not exist anymore."

Antagonized by the long-standing conflict with the authorities, a large group of NTV journalists backed Kiselyov, declared the shareholders' meeting illegal, and refused to hold discussions with the new management. For three days, they stopped all broadcasts other than news programs, which were largely dedicated to reporting news about their own situation. On the station's televised logo they stamped the red letters "protest" and showed on the air how they were unwilling to listen to Kokh's arguments when the new board chairman dared to come and face the angry barrage from journalists.

Thousands of Moscovites came for a rally outside Ostankino television channel to back Kiselyov and his team. When the protest subsided after several days and Kiselyov left for Spain to hold talks with Gusinsky, the new management took over. It was April 14, and many Russians were preparing for Easter.

In the wake of this change-over, many members of the former NTV news team left. Today, more cheaply produced versions of some of their programs appear on second-tier networks (Media-Most-controlled THT and Boris Berezovsky's TV-6). Kiselyov accepted the post of TV-6 acting general director while erstwhile rivals Gusinsky and Berezovsky discuss a merger. A large group of TV-6 managers and journalists left the company in protest of this takeover—by Kiselyov's team.

Meanwhile, back at NTV, those who decided to stay under the new management are now joined by other journalists, including those who left TV-6. Late in April and early in May several of those who'd left NTV returned to try working under this new management. The station broadcasts regular news now that is little different from what it produced before, including detailed coverage of international reaction to NTV's takeover. There is a major difference, however: Gazprom-controlled NTV has toned down its criticism of the Chechnya war and concentrates its coverage on the pro-Moscow side of the conflict. At the same time, the number of lighter, more entertaining news reports, such as the birth of a baby elephant in a zoo, has increased.

Throughout the conflict, two versions of the events have competed for the attention of journalists who covered it. One version, projected by Media-Most officials and free press advocates, was that the conflict is purely political and the Kremlin is simply looking for ways to suppress critical media. The other version, projected by Gazprom-Media and the government, was that the conflict was pure business: Gazprom, which has invested about $900 million in Media-Most, both in direct investment and loans, had been completely ousted from any control of the company which it now wanted to reassert.

That control is now reasserted, along with a promise to "sanitize" the company's finances and sell part of the company to international investors. CNN founder Ted Turner, who has publicized his plans to buy shares of NTV from both Gusinsky and Gazprom, is now mum about the progress of the deal.

Today, it's crystal clear what has happened to NTV has its roots in Russian politics. However, these political overtones emerged not in the past year, when Putin came to power, but existed since the first days of the company's beginnings in 1993. In an open letter to Kiselyov, published at the height of this recent series of events, one of NTV's founders and acclaimed guru of Russian news journalism, Oleg Dobrodeyev, wrote that "from the very outset the company was not just Gusinsky's but also the Kremlin's." In 1994, it obtained its licenses with the help of then-presidential property manager Pavel Borodin and Shamil Tarpishchev, President Boris Yeltsin's tennis coach and Russia's sports minister. Dobrodeyev, who left NTV after a conflict with Gusinsky and Kiselyov in January of 2000, now heads the state-owned television and radio conglomerate VGTRK, which runs NTV's competitor RTR television channel. This process was also documented by Chrystia Freeland, former Moscow bureau chief of the Financial Times in her book "Sale of the Century."

In his letter, Dobrodeyev wrote that he represented NTV in closed-door Kremlin meetings and described how NTV journalists advised Yeltsin on public relations during and immediately after his 1996 campaign and even drafted his radio addresses in 1997. NTV's first president, Igor Malashenko, was a key member of Yeltsin's campaign staff and, as Yeltsin wrote in his memoirs, "Midnight Diaries," built an efficient "line of command" between the Kremlin and media.

"The channel's moral capital that was earned during the first Chechnya campaign was actively transformed, by participating in the Kremlin's actions, into real capital, including endless loans from state-controlled Gazprom," Dobrodeyev wrote. When last year NTV sharply criticized the federal government's policy in Chechnya, it was also not just an editorial decision, Dobrodeyev suggested. NTV's management had hoped that another deal could be struck with the Kremlin: a softer line on Chechnya in exchange for an extension of millions of dollars in loans.

Nothing is black-and-white in Russian media decision-making. The fact that their bosses made deals with the Kremlin or decided to attack a certain faction in the government, as was the case in 1997 when Gusinsky lost his bid for the blocking stake in national telecom giant Svyazinvest, does not mean that all NTV journalists were always just instruments in the power games. In fact, Media-Most created the environment for some of the best journalistic talent to flourish at NTV. It paid the highest salaries in the industry and lured the most professional personnel and stars from competing channels.

The problem is that in being an integral part of post-Soviet Russian politics, NTV fell victim to this system. It backed the alliance of former Prime Minister Yevgeni Primakov and Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov in 1999 parliamentary elections. At that time,

Primakov was regarded as the most likely successor to Yeltsin. (ORT and RTR backed the pro-Putin Unity party.) Neither Primakov nor Luzhkov ran for president in March of 2000, in which the winner was Putin and he looked unfavorably on the channel's earlier lack of support. With only two of Gazprom-guaranteed debts to Media-Most totaling $473 million, NTV and its sister companies could not survive in a normal business environment without Kremlin backing. (Consider that the nation's entire advertising expenditures this year on television are estimated in the range of $320 million.)

Even before these elections, in the wake of the 1998 economic meltdown, the advertising budget had fallen by 70 to 80 percent, and media analysts—including me—wondered which media outlets would be shut down. Spending was tightened everywhere and, in the end, only one newspaper in Moscow merged with its sister publication. Not a single TV channel stopped broadcasting.

Where did these news outlets get their money? There were three possible places: from advertisers, foreign investors, and/or the Russian government. Now we have learned the degree to which the government subsidized the media, either directly in the case of state-controlled national networks (ORT and RTR) or indirectly, as in the case of Gazprom-affiliated NTV. But free cheese, as it is known, is found only in mousetraps.

On the other hand, Putin's Kremlin knows too well the power of national television networks as propaganda tools. After all, Putin was brought to power with the help of shameless propaganda on the state-controlled ORT and RTR channels, and despite NTV's efforts to the opposite. So the Kremlin's desire to ensure that no such powerful weapon is in opposition to it is in harmony with Putin's campaign slogan of "equally distancing" the authorities from the oligarchs and consolidating the power of the state.

Unfortunately, NTV journalists, who in past private conversations referred to Gusinsky as "our dear oligarch" turned—willingly or unwillingly—into instruments of his policies and preferences. Kiselyov and his team, who passionately protested the takeover, did so as politicians, as liberally minded citizens, and not just as journalists whose privileged position was being threatened.

But in this proposition, too, many of them have been consistent. For years, they have seen themselves as the vanguard of liberal politics in Russia and as promoters of westernizing reforms rather than just nonpartisan, independent reporters. "If we survive, that's a chance for the whole country, for the whole people of Russia, to go in the same direction we are trying to go," Kiselyov told PBS in March. Such a statement would better fit a leader of a political party rather than a commentator and television manager, not to mention a journalist.

Once Putin was elected, NTV had two options: either to compromise with the new political system or be destroyed. It chose the latter.

It is too early to predict the full range of consequences the fall of Gusinsky's NTV will bring about for the Russian television market, politics and the journalistic profession. It is also not clear yet which shape Gazprom-controlled NTV will likely take as it recuperates from the shock of its beginnings. Instead, one can speak only about a few lessons Russian media should learn from the rise and fall of NTV.

- Truly independent media must be financially solvent, otherwise they have to rely on political money and become vulnerable to political battles. The present level of media expenditures can be maintained only with the coming of foreign investment, which is certain to generate new conflicts of interest.
- By equating its own fate to free speech in Russia, NTV has further devalued this relatively young and little-appreciated notion among the Russian public. According to an April poll by Public Opinion Fund, about half of Russians said the conflict represented a struggle either "for power" or "for money" and only seven percent said it was a "struggle against free speech."
- Media legislation must be amended to include the shareholders and publishers, but there are concerns in trying to do so. In Russia, there are two conflicting laws regulating media: The law on mass media, adopted during a euphoric wave of liberal reform, stipulates that journalists have the right to elect their editor and an editor cannot be appointed without the consent of journalists. This law says nothing about media owners and publishers. There is also a 1996 law on private companies in which managers, including editors in media companies, are simply appointed by shareholders. There is interest among journalists in amending the law on mass media to regulate their relationship with owners. But some fear that in trying to amend this law (which doesn't work now), some rights might be curtailed by the government. Last year, the Kremlin drafted the Information Security Doctrine—a conceptual document that both upholds press freedom but also speaks about the threat news practices might create for national security. This raises concern among advocates of free speech who worry this could happen if the law on mass media is revised.
- The collapse of NTV endangers the future of regional, privately owned television stations since they are also usually part of similar political alliances at the local level.

These lessons are valuable ones for journalists in Russia to absorb. But in today's tough economic and political climate, the challenge will be in applying these lessons to the everyday job of trying to report and convey news. ■

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News and Views Got Inside China During the Airplane Crisis

Voice of America delivered comprehensive reporting in native languages.

By Sanford J. Ungar

During April's tense standoff between the United States and China over the U.S. Navy surveillance aircraft, American and other Western media repeatedly reported that the Chinese people were only getting their own government's account of the crisis. Major media news reports suggested that the Chinese government had somehow succeeded in closing the information thoroughfares, including the airwaves. It was as if China were impervious to information from the outside.

However closed China is, its people are resourceful in seeking and conveying information. International broadcasters, such as the Voice of America (VOA), have long demonstrated their ability to reach the Chinese people directly—in their homes and in their own languages—to provide reliable news and information through shortwave radio broadcasts. In addition, today, alternative uses of the Internet and satellite television can and do circumvent Chinese censors. As a result, in the midst of a potentially escalating crisis, many Chinese did hear an alternative voice, and an informative one.

The Chinese have attempted to jam VOA's Mandarin broadcasts since the events in Tiananmen Square in 1989. They also attempt to block our Web site and those of other Western news organizations. During the recent crisis, our engineers told us that the jamming worsened. We know, however, that despite their government's attempts to interfere with the flow of information, thousands of Chinese tuned in and logged on to the Voice of America and other international broadcasters, from the U.S. aircraft's arrival at Hainan Island to the eventual release of the 24 crewmen and women. They did so because whether they approved of the actions of the U.S. government or not—and feedback to VOA during the crisis indicates that many did not—they knew from experience that they would get the straight story from VOA.

VOA's reporting network enabled us to give a broad and nuanced view of the accident when the story broke on April 1. Our two Beijing-based reporters, Jim Randle and Leta Hong Fincher, were filing within minutes. They alternated coverage of briefings at the Chinese Foreign Ministry and the U.S. Embassy and kept up a steady stream of live interviews and correspondent reports that included Mandarin and English sound bites. Backstopping their reporting in Washington were our correspondents at the White House, Capitol Hill, the State Department and the Pentagon, as well as around the world, including on Taiwan.

We also got lucky. An additional veteran VOA Mandarin correspondent, Alexander Tien, who arrived in China just after the story broke, primarily to report on China's bid to host the 2008 Olympics, subsequently provided extensive on-the-ground coverage. VOA reported on the developments in the story and provided expert analysis of the importance and meaning of events. While we might not be able to match the financial resources of commercial U.S. broadcasters, we believe that our human resources are unmatched in terms of understanding the languages and cultures of both the United States and China. Our China branch correspondents have lived extensively in China, Taiwan and the United States and variously speak Mandarin, Cantonese and Tibetan, along with English. Their experience and knowledge enable them to report on critical events such as the plane collision accurately and objectively, and in a manner that is meaningful to our audience.

How in fact did VOA cover this story? Many in the United States might be surprised to learn that the U.S. government's principal overseas broadcaster, supported entirely by the taxpayers, covered the standoff in a balanced manner. With a foundation of almost 60 years of experience, VOA followed both its charter, which requires accuracy and credibility, and the tenets of American journalistic practice. Our journalists follow stringent coverage guidelines, including, for example, a two-source rule. Officials from both sides were heard, including Presidents George W. Bush and Jiang Zemin, Secretary of State Colin Powell and Chinese foreign ministry representatives, members of Congress and Chinese political officials.

We broadcast opinions and analysis from U.S. and Chinese experts, including business representatives from each country. Comments from family members of the crew and the wife of the Chinese pilot were reported, as were interviews with people on the streets of China, the United States, and Taiwan. In addition, VOA broadcast U.S. and international editorial and opinion round-ups. All of these features might seem commonplace from the perspective of a media consumer from a developed nation with a free media environment. But in the context of what usually happens in China, this is an extraordinary array of perspectives for the people to hear.

VOA provides this broad view of events in several languages of its Chinese audience. VOA news is broadcast daily with 12 hours of Mandarin, four hours of Tibetan, two hours of

Cantonese, one and a half hours of VOA Special English (delivered with a slow rate of speech and a limited vocabulary designed for non-native English speakers), and our 24-hour "VOA News Now" standard-English programming. Six hours of the Mandarin broadcasts are simulcast on television weekly, and audience members in China are invited to call collect to join discussions with experts on U.S.-China relations and other topics.

Viewed hastily, this political, linguistic and cultural context might seem unimportant. But one need only consider the extent to which the crisis centered upon the wording of the American statements of regret and the Chinese demands for an apology to comprehend better the power of words. There are numerous examples where VOA and official Chinese media differed in their reporting on events surrounding this incident. Chinese media covered the event as an act of U.S. aggression, alleging that the Navy plane deliberately veered off course and collided with the Chinese aircraft. In contrast, relying on a variety of U.S. government and non-government sources, VOA reported that an accident occurred following interception of the U.S. aircraft 70 miles offshore by Chinese jets.

On the second day of the crisis, U.S. government officials stated that boarding the U.S. military plane was a violation of international law. VOA's guest, James Feinerman, Professor of Asian Legal Studies at Georgetown University, agreed with the U.S. position, saying that he considered the boarding of the plane a violation of customary international law and that crafts forced to land in distress are subject to diplomatic immunity. However, a second VOA guest, Hungdah Chiu, Director of East Asian Legal Studies at the University of Maryland School of Law, disagreed, saying that the plane did not have permission to land in Chinese territory and that Chinese personnel were permitted to board the plane. VOA also covered divergent views surrounding China's claim of an international boundary of 200 miles offshore, in contrast to the international standard of 12 miles adhered to by the United States.

The stark contrast between what was reported in official Chinese media and VOA's comprehensive coverage sparked considerable audience feedback. E-mails and phone calls in English, Mandarin and Cantonese poured into VOA at the rate of several hundred a day from China. Most were scathingly critical of the United States—and VOA. Several Chinese lambasted their government's competence before turning to us for even more blistering criticism. Some expressed disbelief of VOA's coverage because of the disparity between VOA's news and reports that were saturating the airwaves in China.

One wrote, "I trusted and liked your comments and news. However, your behavior during the embassy bombing and collision has disappointed us Chinese people. You only show concerns to your own pilot, but have no compassion and concern to the missing Chinese pilot."

This differs markedly from other feedback we received in a complaint addressed to the editor, "For Pete's sake…why aren't you talking about the responsibilities of the American pilot? He is not going to risk the lives of 23 American service personnel because of a sky confrontation by a Chinese pilot(s). There is zero chance that a pilot of an American plane with 23 other Americans on board is going to engage in a sortie with a lone Chinese pilot."

Another, a Mandarin listener, wrote: "I was a VOA listener, but not anymore. Your report [on the collision] is very biased and I feel regret and angry. I have to concede that the Chinese Government Party is corrupted, but you Americans are by no means decent, either, especially the U.S. government."

In contrast, a university student noted in an e-mail message in early April, "I am glad that the VOA is objective and comprehensive in reporting the air collision accident.… You do not blame China for everything. I hope you will continue with your objective and fair reports. We students in Guangzhou are indignant about this, and the anti-American sentiment is on the rise."

Direct contact with our audience through e-mail and call-in programs is not simply a nicety of customer service. The Chinese government, through intervention with the handful of Internet service providers in China, effectively blocks access to the news reports on VOA's Web site, (voanews.com). VOA circumvents this obstacle by transmitting news reports to more than 108,000 individual subscribers to our e-mail news reports and more than 136,000 subscribers to our English-teaching materials in China alone. We understand that the subscribers in turn forward the news on to others, including listservs, producing a multiplier effect many times the initial subscriber number. In addition, we know from audience feedback, for example, that our TV simulcast programs are reaching university students in their dormitories. This is further evidence that China is more porous to information and news than U.S. and Western media have generally understood.

VOA's balanced coverage of events in China itself demonstrates to our audience the nature and strength of our democratic system. We provided a modest antidote against the one-sided official Chinese media accounts of events in April. Despite the efforts of the Chinese government to block us out, the Voice of America was heard. We believe our reporting was unbiased and informative. Just as VOA has endeavored to do since its inaugural broadcast nearly 60 years ago, we reported news and information vital to our audience and the interests of our two nations. We believe that if we can give an audience the full story, they will be able to draw their own conclusions. Whether they approved of the U.S. behavior or not in April, our audience knows they can trust VOA to provide comprehensive coverage of the news. ■

Sanford J. Ungar has been the director of Voice of America since June 1999. Ungar departs VOA on July 1, 2001, to become president of Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland.

sungar@goucher.edu
(After July 1)

Nieman Notes

Compiled by Lois Fiore

Digital Technology Could Lead Journalism Back to Its Roots

Entrepreneurial reporters will gather and distribute news in new ways.

By Bryan Rich

I first heard the word *convergence* when it was proposed that I teach digital journalism to this year's class of Nieman Fellows. Evidently, its one of those words that defines something that a lot of people are already doing but haven't named. I "went digital" about three years ago while I was working on a series of short documentaries in Africa. I used digital technology because its affordability made it a cost-effective way to work. And the small size of the equipment made it less invasive and thus helped me to more easily connect with those whose lives I was profiling. The camera is so unobtrusive that people forget it's even there.

Currently, I am editing a film I directed that involves young men confessing to acts of ethnic cleansing in the African nation of Burundi. In this documentary experience, the digital advantages are clear. A traditional video (beta) camera costs exponentially more, would have made moving around difficult and, more important from a journalistic perspective, would have drawn undesired attention not only to us but to our sources. After six weeks of filming in the midst of that country's civil war, we were able to put all of our recorded cassettes and the camera in a single carry-on bag. And here's where convergence comes in: One month later, the story of these confessions was published on the front page of The Washington Post.

Five years ago, an independent journalist would not have been able to do this kind of multimedia reporting. This leads one to wonder how many other stories like this one are waiting to be told, but due to cutbacks in foreign reporting, especially by network news, will never be told unless journalists start to reinvent themselves as information entrepreneurs.

Right now, the best example of the digital medium's greatest impact can be found in the music industry. Musicians and bands used to have to wait for big-money record labels to record, package and promote their work. There was a good chance they'd be ripped off along the way. With digital recording, there are now thousands of labels and independently produced CD's that find niche markets. An entirely new economy has emerged to support these artists. Combined with increased bandwidth, the direct sale and transfer of this independently produced music cuts the traditional music industry out of the picture. As a model for independent journalists/entrepreneurs, think something like a subscriber-based Napster.

If journalists were to operate in this way—merging passion with careful deployment of technology—then news and information will find its market. Out of this could emerge a real change in the culture of news in similar ways to how this shift occurred in music. But before we can talk about a revolution in independent journalism based around this new technology, we need to remember that the cost of gathering and distributing information has steadily declined for decades without a corresponding improvement in the quality of news reporting. In fact, the coverage of news—like the story I did in Burundi—seems to be disappearing at a rate that is in direct proportion to technical advances.

If changes in the music industry are worth emulating, then the food industry offers a chilling reminder of approaches to be avoided. New technology in agriculture could have improved health and eradicated hunger decades ago. Instead, hunger seems as prevalent worldwide as it ever did and, in this country, our mass-produced and nutrition-deprived food can actually harm those who consume it. Technologic advances in the food industry have solved neither the problem of malnutrition nor hunger. In fact, the quest for profit puts new chemicals and artificial ingredients into our bodies, resulting in a whole new set of health concerns, from obesity to heart disease to cancer.

Similarly, new technology that could have enhanced foreign reporting and increased the number of important and illuminating news reports has failed to do so for a variety of reasons. One reason involves another kind of convergence, this one financial. The lack of investment and commitment by major networks has left serious TV journalists and viewers without a way to connect. Unfortunately, this circumstance has also flowed into print and radio as cross- and conglomerate-ownership of various media creates further confusion in the relationship between journalists and their communities.

It is precisely to try to relieve this confusion that I wanted to work with

mid-career journalists at the Nieman Foundation this spring. We talked about how and why new technology will enable them to stay alive in the fast changing news business. I urged them to think about how the future of real reporting will be concentrated not in the hands of network news executives but in the hard drives of independent journalists who find the means to produce and market their information directly to readers or viewers. It might take time for these channels to develop, but they will.

It is conceivable—and hopeful—that someone at the corporate headquarters of Disney or GE will decide that provocative, hard hitting journalism is at least as marketable as cartoons or weapons systems. Until then, journalists should stop bemoaning the anorexic news budgets and use this new technology to move forward on their own. ■

Bryan Rich, a 1998 Nieman Fellow, is teaching a course on digital technology at the Nieman Foundation. His documentary about atrocities in Burundi, "Breaking the Codes," based around on-camera confessions of genocide in Burundi, is in post-production. See www.breakingthecodes.com.

bryanrich@mediaone.net

—1951—

Sylvan Hugh Meyer, editor and civil rights champion, died of renal and heart failure on April 8 at the age of 79. A native Georgian, Meyer was editor of The Gainesville (Ga.) Daily Times from 1947 to 1969. He spoke out as a white supporter of civil rights and peaceful integration during that time and, according to his obituary in The New York Times, "chaired the Georgia Advisory Committee to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission during the turbulent 1950's exposing himself and his family to death threats."

Meyer edited the Miami News from 1969 to 1973. He was an environmentalist, chairing the Georgia Mountains Planning Commission and the Lake Lanier Islands Authority. In 1994, he wrote "Prostate Cancer: Making Survival Decisions" (University of Chicago Press)," and went on to recover from that disease himself.

He is survived by his wife, **Anne Heineman Meyer**, a daughter, two sons, and five grandchildren.

Memorial donations may be made to the Sylvan Meyer Newsroom, c/o Dean Arthur Heise, School of Journalism, FIU North Campus, A.C. II, Rm. 335, Miami, FL 33181. Anne Heineman Meyer's address is 5500 Collins Avenue, Apt. 901, Miami Beach, FL 33140.

—1956—

Richard Harwood died of cancer on March 19 at the age of 75. Harwood began his reporting career in Nashville, Tennessee, and Louisville, Kentucky, quckly gaining recognition in political circles as a journalist not to be trifled with: His nickname at the time, "Black Death Harwood," according to The Washington Post, "grew out of a combination of fear and respect among the politicians he covered."

In 1966, Harwood moved to The Washington Post as a reporter and, after two years, became national editor. According to the Post, he and editors Larry Stern and Benjamin C. Bradlee "shaped an approach to reporting and writing about national affairs that became a central element of the personality of the Post, and remains so." He later was named the paper's first ombudsman and was known for his stern and often scathing criticism of his paper's standards.

He is survived by his wife, **Beatrice Mosby Harwood**, four children, and eight grandchildren. His son **John Harwood** is also a Nieman Fellow, from the class of 1990.

—1970—

Eugene Francis Goltz died of esophageal cancer on April 10 in his home in Silver Spring, Maryland. He was 70. According to his obituary in The Washington Post, he "was skeptical of 'men in suits' and often stressed his humble roots by describing himself as an 'Iowa hillbilly'…."

Goltz won a Pulitzer Prize in 1965 when he was a reporter at the Houston Chronicle for uncovering city hall cor-

Lukas Prize Project Awards Announced

On May 8, 2001, the second annual J. Anthony Lukas Prize Project awards ceremony took place at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. The three prizes—two for books and one for a work-in-progress—honor "superb examples of nonfiction writing that exemplify the literary grace, the commitment to serious research, and the social concern that characterized the distinguished work of the award's namesake," according to Columbia's announcement.

This year's winners are:

"The Chief," by **David Nasaw**—2001 J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize

"Crucible of War," by **Fred Anderson**—2001 Mark Lynton History Prize

"A Need to Know," by **Max Holland**—2001 Lukas Work-in-Progress award

The prizes are awarded in memory of J. Anthony Lukas (NF '69), former national and foreign correspondent for The New York Times and the author of five nonfiction books. Lukas died in 1997 having just completed "Big Trouble," after 10 years of work. His best-known book, "Common Ground" (1986), focused on the impact school desegregation had on three families in Boston, Massachusetts. For "Common Ground," Lukas won a Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, and the National Book Critics Circle Award. ■

ruption in Pasadena, Texas. Later, at the Detroit Free Press, he shared in that paper's 1968 Pulitzer Prize, awarded for its effort to cover and understand the 1967 Detroit riots.

Goltz worked for the Washington Times, retired in 1986, and wrote freelance articles for Presstime. He was one of 25 co-authors—several of whom were Nieman Fellows—of the 1969 sex novel spoof, "Naked Came the Stranger."

Goltz is survived by his wife, **Rosemary**; three sons; two brothers, and three grandchildren.

—1976—

Foster Davis, Jr. died of cancer at the age of age 61 on May 20 in his home in Charlotte, North Carolina. His interest in journalism began when he was writing letters home while serving with the 8th Army in Korea. He later wrote, "That is why I became a reporter: to show humans 10,000 miles or two blocks apart their common humanity."

Davis covered the Vietnam War for CBS News and, after his Nieman year, worked for The Charlotte Observer. He was managing editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch from 1992 to 1995, and returned to Charlotte in 1996 as a writing and editing consultant. He spent a year in South Africa as deputy director of the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism in Johannesburg. He also was a visiting faculty member at the Poynter Institute in Florida.

He is survived by his widow, **Cheryl Carpenter**, and two children. He is being honored with the establishment at The Poynter Institute of the Foster Davis Fellowships for African Journalists. Donations can be made to the The Poynter Institute, 801 Third Street South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

—1979—

John C. Huff, Jr. writes:

"I have been managing editor at The Post and Courier in Charleston, South Carolina, since January. After more than 30 years in newsrooms from North Carolina to Pennsylvania to Texas, and for the last 14 years in Orlando, this is a kind of homecoming. My daughters Kelly and Brenny, who experienced the Nieman year as toddlers, are living and working in Florida, and my daughter Neely is in school at the University of Central Florida. That leaves only John III (Johnny) making the move to the South, and he's 18 and won't be with us for very long. So this is a major life move for both me and **Patty** [his wife], who continues to tolerate the hurricane zone in exchange for being closer to the mountains. She still has the touch for creation and the patience for quilting and…now has the time.

"Journalistically, I'm having a great time at a mid-sized newspaper that's been significantly improved by my immediate predecessors and still has great potential. The folks here are talented and fun and, despite Charleston's designation as the most polite city, are adapting well to my dry-witted, cantankerous style. I love having a hand in all aspects of the newsroom. And what a great place to live!"

Frank Van Riper, a former Washington political writer, now a photographer and columnist, has two new books in the works to follow his portrait of life in coastal Maine, "Down East Maine/A World Apart," which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

"It's funny how things happen. As I finished work on the Maine book, I was asked to teach a photography seminar during Carnevale in Venice. My wife, **Judy**, and I had honeymooned in Venice and loved the thought of going back. The Carnevale trip, in February 1998, convinced me that Venice in win-

'The Day After Yesterday'

"What I sought to do, in the midst of all this, was to express through people's stories the tensions I have described between history, myth and individual memory. As I have said, memory cannot be photographed. That is one reason why I believe we stone-age men and women of the written word still have something to say."

Roger Cohen spoke these words at the Harvard Faculty Club as he delivered the 20th annual Joe Alex Morris, Jr. Memorial Lecture on March 7, 2001. The Lecture commemorates foreign correspondent Joe Alex Morris, Jr., who was killed covering the war in Tehran on February 10, 1979.

Cohen, a foreign correspondent for more than 20 years and presently the Berlin bureau chief for The New York Times, discussed the centrality of memory to culture and conflict, and the importance to journalism of uncovering and faithfully reporting the stories memory tells.

"We deal with the beginning of memory: what is it then, this thing that first takes hold 'the day after yesterday'?" Cohen asked. He observed that memory and its deformations are central to identity, juxtaposed—even opposite—to history, and essential to cultural unification, division and control. Accordingly, he said, the uncovering of memory is essential to the work of the journalist: "Understand one person's psychology, his or her memories, and you may understand, or at least get closer to, the psychology of a nation and a conflict. In this, my understanding of journalism, there are no anecdotes. The anecdote is a facile shortcut. But there are no shortcuts to the psychology of a human being."

Cohen called upon journalists to strive for clarity—"tangible lucidity"—to be clearly aware of the intertwining of two worlds, the remembered and the historical. "Watch closely how they interrelate—past and memory.... In my view, it [print journalism] must concern itself equally with memory and history—the felt past and the factual past—in its attempt to paint the deepest, most truthful, and most vivid of pictures."

To view the full text of the 2001 Joe Alex Morris, Jr. Memorial Lecture, go to http://www.nieman.harvard.edu, where the Morris Lecture is linked; or order a booklet at 617-496-2968. ■

ter would be the subject of my next book—one on which Judy (also a photographer) and I would collaborate.

"We spent a month in Venice this past winter and are going back in November to finish shooting….

"I've been aching to get into the darkroom to print pictures from the 150 rolls of film we shot from this last trip, but I've been too busy meeting the deadline for my other book, "Talking Photography," a collection of my Washington Post photography columns and other essays from the past eight years. That book will be published by Allworth Press in New York City next February.

"I should note, too, that my Washington Post photography column, formerly carried in print biweekly in the Friday Weekend section, has now moved to the Post Web site—washingtonpost.com. I'm also back to being weekly, no longer bound by the tyranny of the shrinking newshole." To see Frank's work, go to the Post Web site, navigate to the Camera Works section, then click on "Frank Van Riper on Photography."

Nieman Group Visits South Korea

Curator Bob Giles tells us, "I led a delegation of 14 Nieman Fellows and Nieman Foundation staff members on a 10-day trip to South Korea from May 23 to June 1. The trip was arranged by our Korean Nieman Fellow, Lee Dong-Kwan, who worked closely with the Korea Press Foundation and the Korea Broadcasting System. Our visits included a meeting with President Kim Dae-Jung, discussions with Korean journalists, a reunion of Korean Nieman Fellows, trips to major ports and industrial centers in southeastern Korea, and to the demilitarized zone at Pan-Moon-Jom."

Fellows who made the trip are Anil Padmanabhan of India, Ana Lourdes Cárdenas of Mexico, María Conseulo Saavedra of Chile, Sayuri Daimon of Japan, Sunday Dare of Nigeria, Senad Pecanin of Bosnia, Stefanie Friedhoff of Germany, Lee Dong-Kwan of Korea, and Anne Fitzgerald and Kirstin Downey of the United States. Accompanying them were Bob and Nancy Giles, Nieman writing instructor Rose Moss, and fellows coordinator Julie Felt. ■

—1981—

David Lamb returned to the Washington, D.C. area after nearly four years in Hanoi as the Los Angeles Times's Southeast Asia bureau chief. Lamb, who covered the war for UPI in the late 1960's, writes: "To have encountered Vietnam as a country instead of a war was an eye-openng and wonderful experience. **Sandy** [his wife] and I developed a great fondness and respect for Vietnam and the Vietnamese." Lamb is on a leave of absence, writing a book on Vietnam. He will rejoin the Times in its D.C. bureau later this year.

—1985—

Bernard Edinger writes from Paris that he has taken early retirement (at 59) after 32 years with Reuters "on four continents and including reporting stints in about 50 countries and territories, some of which, like South Vietnam or the Spanish Sahara, no longer exist in their prior form." He continues, "To celebrate, wife **Suzanne** and I are immediately going to spend a couple of weeks in Israel, where we met, and where I began working for Reuters. Trips to Britain and Greece are scheduled for the months which follow. I've already received some offers to 'string' from Paris for publications further afar but, like all self-respecting journalists, I have a book and a TV film documentary in mind.

"Best greetings to classmates of '85. Yes, I can confirm it, it definitely looks like there is a life after journalism…."

—1996—

Alice Pifer is to be honored with correspondent Lynn Sherr by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in its 2001 "Let's Do It Better" workshop. Pifer produced a documentary for ABC's "20/20" called "Family Secret," which followed a woman uncovering a history in her family of "passing" for being white. According to the workshop's press release, "As the story producer, Pifer is being honored for her superb reporting, strong narrative style and the ability to bring out the voice of Jill Atkin Sim during some very challenging and difficult moments in her life."

Each year, the "Let's Do It Better" workshop honors examples of outstanding newspaper and broadcast journalism as part of its effort to improve reporting on race and ethnicity. "Family Secret" is among 17 stories to be honored and taught as "a case study of outstanding reporting on race" this June in the third annual workshop.

(See Nieman Reports, Spring 2001, for an article about Columbia's workshop program by Director Arlene Notoro Morgan.)

—1998—

Philip Cunningham writes: "I'll be joining the Hong Kong University Centre for Journalism and Media Studies as a Knight International Fellow in September. In a short three years **Ying Chan** [NF '96] has done a tremendous job in creating and empowering the Centre. It has gone from a dank, dark, one-room office to a major academic division, housed in a historic building on a hill overlooking Hong Kong harbor with a constant flow of journalists and scholars, graduate courses, exchanges with China, not to mention modern computer equipment, ample classroom space, and proximity to an excellent Chinese cafeteria.

"Most of my work will focus on China, promoting journalism education and exchange with universities and newspapers in Shanghai and Beijing. I know that China's young journalists have the talent and enthusiasm to do a good job, but political conditions pose tough challenges for Chinese and foreigners alike.

"Although the details of the program have to be worked out, one of my interests is to look at the American media's imperfect and often distorted coverage of China—jingoism, cultural ignorance, ideological prejudices and all—as a way to get to the topic of what journalism is and how it can be im-

Nieman Foundation Announces U.S. Fellows For 2001-02

Thirteen U.S. journalists were appointed to the 64th class of Nieman Fellows at Harvard University.

Their names and interests follow:

Geneive Abdo, former Tehran correspondent for The Guardian; comparative religion and the global religious revival with an emphasis on Persian and Islamic studies.

Roberta Baskin, senior producer/investigations, ABC News "20/20;" the impact of globalization on the increasing complexity of the marketplace, particularly as it relates to trade issues and public health.

Matthew Brelis, business reporter, The Boston Globe; the role of multinational corporations and non-governmental organizations in world affairs and their place in the global economy.

Jeffrey Fleishman, foreign correspondent based in Rome, The Philadelphia Inquirer; the historical aspects of American culture and its impact on other nations, particularly emerging democracies and developing countries.

Mary Claude Foster, producer for ABC News "Nightline;" the impact of race on the American experience with a focus on African-American, Hispanic-American and Asian-American experiences in the United States.

David J. Lynch, chief of European correspondents for USA Today; economic and cultural development of Asia and U.S. policies related to Asia, particularly the policy toward China.

Michel Marriott, technology reporter for The New York Times; how technology transforms the human condition and imagination, focusing on the dynamic relationship between modern culture and technological advances.

Michele McLellan, special projects editor for The Oregonian in Portland; ethics, particularly in the news media, and their social context and practice, through philosophy, public policy, history and scientific research.

Matthew Schofield, senior writer at The Kansas City Star; life and society in sub-Saharan Africa with an emphasis on government, politics and health.

Barbara A. Serrano, political editor for The Seattle Times; the role of state and federal courts on political life in the United States by examining the relationship between politics and legislators, and the courts and judges.

Lisa Stone, editor in chief, channel programming at Women.com; new ways of fulfilling the editorial potential of new media technologies, particularly as they relate to women and their evolving social, political and economic roles.

Tim Sullivan, West Africa bureau chief for The Associated Press; colonialism and its roots in Africa and Asia along with its impact on current political and social affairs.

James Trengrove, senior producer of the Capitol Hill Unit at "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer;" the economic and cultural future of the United States, with a focus on these changes in the Midwestern farmbelt.

Members of the selection committee included: Mark Carter, vice president for strategic partnerships, television and broadband for Women.com and a 1995 Nieman Fellow; Joseph Kalt, Professor of international political economy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard; Richard J. Parker, adjunct lecturer in public policy at Harvard's Joan Schorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy; Sandra Mims Rowe, editor of The Oregonian, and Bob Giles, committee chair, Nieman Foundation Curator, and a 1966 Nieman Fellow. ■

proved. The Media Studies Journal's Winter 1999 China issue and Kyoto Journal's 2001 Asian Media issue offer essays and case studies about why it's important to understand and respect a culture before reporting on it, and I hope to continue in that tradition."

Cunningham can be reached at the following e-mail address: philip_j_cunningham@post.harvard.edu.

Tatiana Repková writes of two major events in her professional life:

"The World Association of Newspapers in Paris announced the publishing of my manual for newspaper managers March 1.... The book is also being translated into Albanian, Bulgarian, Croatian, French, Slovak, Romanian and Russian. Those editions might be published this year as well.

"As of March 1, I have also been appointed general director (read: publisher) of the Slovak publishing house Perex. You may be more familiar with the name of its major periodical, the national daily Pravda. Although the Slovak Pravda no longer has anything in common with its former Moscow counterpart, except the name. Rather, it goes West: The new editor in chief of Pravda, as of today, is the Czech editor Petr Šabata, who was running a successful Czech daily, Mladá Fronta Dnes.

"Coming back to work in my native country [Slovakia], I would like to say *thanks* to each of you. Thanks for being around during the previous part of my journalistic experience. I hope to stay in touch with you during the following journey."

David Welna has relocated from National Public Radio's Chicago Bureau to Washington, D.C., where he is NPR's congressional correspondent.

—2000—

Mary Kay Magistad was named a Radcliffe Institute Fellow for the upcoming academic year in the field of "nonfiction/journalism." She is one of 44 women and men, in disciplines as varied as sculpture, psychology, evolutionary biology, and Near Eastern history, to receive the fellowship from a

pool of 569 applicants.

The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study defines its mission as supporting "advanced work across all the academic disciplines, the professions, and the creative arts, while simultaneously sustaining a commitment to the study of women, gender and society."

The fellowship (formerly the Bunting Fellowship and still at Radcliffe's Bunting Institute), gives fellows an opportunity to work "individually and across disciplines on projects chosen for their quality and long-term consequence," according to the Harvard University Gazette. Fellows publicly present and discuss their works in progress throughout the year.

Thrity Umrigar read on May 4 from her forthcoming novel, "Bombay Time" (Picador USA /St. Martin's Press; July 2001), at the South Asian Humanities Seminar in Cambridge, Massachusetts, sponsored by Harvard's Humanities Center. On being a journalist and novelist, Umrigar writes:

"I did the bulk of the work on my novel…during my Nieman year and was lucky enough to find a publisher for it while still in Cambridge. It may seem paradoxical to be writing a work of fiction while being immersed in a journalism fellowship but, in reality, I found the transition to fiction to be quite easy.

"I quickly realized that the rigors and discipline of daily journalism were wonderful tools for creating a novel. I often laugh when I hear friends who are fiction writers complain about writer's block and lack of inspiration. As a reporter, you are allowed no such luxuries, and this forces you to bring a craftsman-like focus to your writing.

"But the promotion aspect is something strange and new—something that I'm working to be more comfortable with. Doing book readings, giving talks, and generally promoting my book is a totally different ball game. After years of being the one who asked the questions, it is disquieting to be the one who has to come up with intelligent—or at least intelligible—answers. After years of being the one who scribbled down other people's words, it's intimidating to see others take my words down. After years of asking sources to trust me with their stories, it is hard to trust a strange reporter with my words and story.

"For the first time in my life, I understand how vulnerable people feel when they talk to a reporter and have no control over how their words will be used. In fact, I have to bite down on my tongue to not ask a reporter to run the finished story by me—a request that used to drive me crazy when it was made to me.

"I love writing fiction because, for once, you can make reality conform to you, rather than the other way around. I find it liberating and fun to make up stories and characters, to not have facts get in the way of a good story. Also, after over 15 years of reporting other people's words and thoughts, it is great to talk about my own values, beliefs and memories."

Umrigar's Web site address is www.umrigar.com. ■

Taylor Award Nominating Panel

(For more information on the Taylor Family Award for Fairness, see pages three and 79.)

Jim Amoss, editor, The (New Orleans) Times-Picayune

Felicity Barringer, media critic, The New York Times

John Costa, editor, The (Bend, Or.) Bulletin

John Dotson, retired publisher, Akron Beacon-Journal

Mike Fancher, executive editor, The Seattle Times

Gregory Favre, vice president, news, The McClatchy Company

Sam Fulwood III, metro columnist, The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer

Félix Gutiérrez, senior vice president, Freedom Forum

Bob Haiman, president emeritus, The Poynter Institute

John Haile, retired editor and vice president, The Orlando Sentinel

David Hawpe, editorial director, The (Louisville) Courier-Journal

Maria Henson, deputy editorial page editor, Austin American-Statesman

Ellen Hume, media analyst

Michael Jacobs, editor, Grand Forks (N.D.) Herald

Anne Marie Lipinski, executive editor, Chicago Tribune

William K. Marimow, editor, The (Baltimore) Sun

Denny McAulliffe, Freedom Forum Native-American journalist in residence, University of Montana

Jim Naughton, president, The Poynter Institute

Jack Nelson, senior correspondent, Washington, D.C. bureau, Los Angeles Times

Rich Oppel, editor, Austin American-Statesman

Geneva Overholser, syndicated columnist, Washington Post Writers Group

Mike Pride, editor, Concord (N.H.) Monitor

Eleanor Randolph, editorial board member, The New York Times

Walter Rugaber, retired publisher, The Roanoke (Va.) Times

David Shaw, media critic, Los Angeles Times

Melanie Sill, managing editor, The (Raleigh, N.C.) News & Observer

Frank Sotomayor, assistant director, Minority Editorial Training Program, Los Angeles Times

Will Sutton, deputy managing editor, The (Raleigh, N.C.) News & Observer

Jacqueline Thomas, editorial page editor, The (Baltimore) Sun

Cynthia Tucker, editorial page editor, (Atlanta) Journal and Constitution

Ed Williams, editorial page editor, The Charlotte (N.C.) Observer. ■

End Note

Convergence Arrives at Lippmann House

Fellows learn about digital technology, but wonder about its place in journalism.

By Anne Fitzgerald

Digital technology has journalists and others talking about its impact on the future of news reporting. Some envision a day, not too far away, when the various media will merge their news gathering efforts. A reporter will dig for information, shoot images, record ambient sound, write and deliver the text. No need for producers or camera and sound people when a reporter can do it all. These digital images, words and sounds then can be readapted to fit the varying needs of the Internet, radio, TV and print. This is called convergence.

Many see this approach as advancing—for the better—how journalism is practiced. After a few weeks of introduction to its possibilities, count me among the skeptics.

In April, six Nieman Fellows embarked on a crash course in digital video, a new offering at Lippmann House. Our instructor was documentary filmmaker Bryan Rich, a 1998 Nieman, whose most recent project is a film about ethnic cleansing in Burundi. For the first series of classes, 18 Niemans vied for six coveted spots. Four women and two men from five countries, evenly divided between print and broadcast, were chosen by lottery. Others would have a chance to participate before our year ended. We were enthused and curious about the new technology, but also harbored mid-career fears about being left behind in this digital revolution.

Most of us caught on quickly to the basic shooting techniques, but it was hard to see how to focus on reporting while fumbling with equipment. With practice, though, the camera felt more comfortable in my hand. On a visit to the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, I panned across a wall of historic photos. As I did, I realized that the images being captured were telling a story that a thousand words might not. As pictures rushed past my eye, I imagined hearing JFK's distinctively Boston voice, answered by thunderous applause, giving way to narration.

One evening, when Lippmann House was quiet, I sat at the editing keyboard, moving clips around, using the mouse to drag them from a storage bin into the timeline. I hit the "b" key to activate the razor blade to cut unsteady images and unwanted sound. I highlighted frames to be discarded and hit "delete." The trim was done. Then, I called up a list of special effects and, one by one, dragged their icons into the timeline, dropping them onto the seams between clips. Images dissolved, swirled and spun into one another.

Shaping the video segment was fun, but deceptively easy. What looked steady to my eye shook when I replayed it. Getting the light just right proved problematic. And the editing program, while user-friendly, was complicated. The instruction book, though written for non-technical folks, was hard to follow.

Consider what our group accomplished in a month, and those who want to reserve a place for old media might feel comforted. Yes, we now know how to load and operate a digital camera. And we produced clips of Nieman children playing at Lippmann House, Nieman Fellows reflecting on the year's events, and student protesters pushing for living wages for Harvard workers. At the editing table, we learned how to log and capture clips, how to put pieces together and how to tear them apart. Though some in our group produced short features, no one managed to make the tidy two-minute story Bryan envisioned we would when the course began. Even so, he was pleased with what he saw, because at least it was a start.

Mastering the technology is one thing. Reinventing ourselves as a one-person production crew is another. Has our vision been enlarged? Unquestionably, yes. For those already familiar with radio and TV reporting, possibilities appear more real. Andrew Sussman (radio) believes digital video is a way to combine the best of traditional media in a single medium. Lourdes Cárdenas (TV and print) regards it as a good tool to report breaking news stories from the field. But Consuelo Saavedra (TV) doesn't think she alone could replace the production team she relies on and she worries that the unique nature of various media will be lost as they merge.

Former Curator Bill Kovach reminded our Nieman class recently that the most important skills for journalists in the future will be reporting, gathering information and verifying it—just as always. "Technology is nothing but a transmission machine," he said. Still, he urged us to learn how to use this new technology.

Now I've done that, and I'm glad to have had the chance. However, as I get ready to head back to The Des Moines Register, I intend to keep my day job. As promising as this technology might seem, we're still a long way from being replaced. ■

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