

NIEMAN REPORTS

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#NowWhat?

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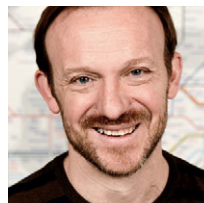
Katherine Goldstein (page 8), a 2017 Nieman Fellow, is a digital journalist covering women and work. She is also a contributing editor to the Better Life Lab at Slate, and a journalism instructor at the Harvard Extension School. Previously, she worked as the editor of *vanityfair.com*, and the director of traffic and social media strategy at Slate. In addition to her editorial, strategy, and managerial roles, she has covered topics ranging from how to make newsrooms more supportive of mothers to the first gay wedding on a military base. She lives in Brooklyn, New York with her husband and son.



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Michael Blanding (page 36) is a senior fellow at the Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism at Brandeis University. The author of two books, his work has appeared in *Wired*, *Slate*, *The Nation*, *The Boston Globe Magazine*, and other publications.



Shalini Singh (page 44), a 2018 Nieman Fellow, has worked for the Indian newsmagazine *The Week* and the daily *Hindustan Times*. She is a contributor to the People's Archive of Rural India (PARI) and a founding trustee of CounterMedia Trust, the nonprofit that owns PARI.



A recent Take Back the Workplace march in Los Angeles. The media must take steps to end sexual harassment in newsrooms

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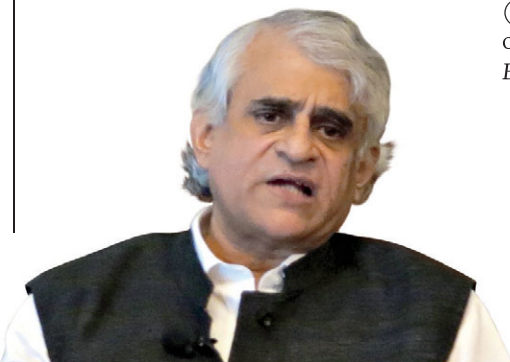
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When Women Stand Up Against Harassers in The Newsroom

We don't need more training—we know what to do

BY ANN MARIE LIPINSKI

WAS A KID, really—24 or 25—walking up Chicago's Michigan Avenue on my way to the bus when a man twice my age blocked my path. He was dressed in the uniform of the business elite and held out identification from one of the city's leading cultural institutions, as if that could excuse what he was about to say.

He leaned in close so that I would hear his coarse proposition above the evening rush hour. "Five hundred dollars for a half hour," he said. "I'm a very wealthy man."

Over the years, there would be other, more personal affronts of the sort familiar to many women in newsrooms—the handsy city editor; a source's solicitations mid-interview; a feature editor's unbidden shoulder massages. Looking back, I see that anticipating and deflecting predator colleagues was simply a skill woman journalists of my generation acquired in stride, like how to write a lede or decode property records. But on my walk to the bus that evening—worn from the work day, weighed down with newspapers and notebooks—the stranger taught me the limits of my imagination. Depravity lurked around unseen corners, the power to sting without ever touching you.

The reason it is so easy for women to believe the avalanche of accusations about harassment and sexual abuse is that most of us are members of a reluctant sorority. We don't need to have suffered the worst to have seen that men can abuse with impunity. And it is not coincidental that our industry—where harassers recently have



Editor Ellen Soeteber stood up to sexism in journalism, inspiring others to follow suit

been toppled at National Public Radio, CBS, Fox, NBC, The New Republic, and elsewhere—employs so few women in the most senior roles. The fix is not sexual harassment training, but more people in leadership who already know better.

I once watched an editor canvass the Chicago Tribune newsroom looking for reporters to staff an upcoming story. An experienced reporter, who happened to be pregnant, volunteered. "Forget it!" he belted. "You'll be in the stirrups by then." And just like that, in front of dozens of colleagues, a senior editor reduced the woman to a useless, child-bearing caricature.

Word of the exchange reached Ellen Soeteber, who had heard worse in her long newspaper career. But on this day, the paper's first female metro editor was in a position to do something about it. She occupied a glass office and I wasn't the only one to witness her righteous rebuke of the offending editor. Whatever sanctions followed were less important than a sense that something had just

shifted in our corner of the Tribune. Ellen was fun and fierce and the best of Chicago's old school. But routine sexism, so long a part of the newsroom culture, was no longer at home in her presence.

I SUCCEEDED ELLEN as metro editor, and several years later was editor of the paper when a colleague handed me an anonymous email. As many reporters would later recount, it was from a woman accusing Bob Greene—popular Tribune columnist, best-selling author, and one of the nation's most widely-syndicated writers—of sexual misconduct more than a decade earlier. As a teenager, she had come to the paper to interview Greene for a high school journalism project, a meeting about which he wrote a column. He would later invite her to dinner, and then to a hotel. When she contacted him some years after to talk about those encounters, the Tribune's most prominent columnist reported her to the FBI.

We never publicly identified the woman

and I feel bound still to the confidentiality of my conversation with her. But as was widely reported, I accepted Greene's resignation following an investigation, then wrote a note to readers that ran on the Tribune's front page. His behavior "was a serious violation of Tribune ethics and standards for its journalists," it said in part. "We deeply regret the conduct, its effects on the young woman and the impact this disclosure has on the trust our readers placed in Greene and this newspaper."

Greene sent a statement to the Associated Press referencing "indiscretions in my life that I am not proud of. I am very sorry for anyone I have let down."

The former editor of *The New Republic* recently said he didn't act on harassment accusations against literary editor Leon Wieseltier because he was "profoundly uncomfortable" with the prospect of confrontation. And while it's true that confronting colleagues with potentially career-altering accusations is bitter duty, it's the conversations with aggrieved accusers I keep thinking of. How are we to regard the women whose charges we would bury or belittle? How profound the discomfort then? One corporate executive suggested I find a way to discipline Greene but allow him to continue his lucrative column. A longtime reader said he supported my action but missed Greene's columns and wondered if I could secretly employ him to write under a pseudonym.

The strong cultural currents in place to buoy abusers may be weakening, along with the fraternity that has existed to protect harassers and discredit the women who would complain. But long experience tells us that progress is rarely a straight line, and already the distant drums of backlash are sounding. In a recent piece for *New York* magazine's

“
The cultural currents in place to buoy abusers may be weakening, along with the fraternity that has existed to protect harassers and discredit the women who would complain. But ... progress is rarely a straight line, and already the distant drums of backlash are sounding

The Cut, writer Rebecca Traister quoted a commentator's sympathy for Mark Halperin, fired by MSNBC for sexually abusing female subordinates. "How many times can you kill a guy?" the commentator asked.

"A powerful white man losing a job is a death," wrote Traister, "and don't be surprised if women wind up punished for the spate of killings."

The year after he left the Tribune, *Esquire* magazine, where Greene had been a regular contributor, published a long, mournful portrait of the columnist. Writer Bill Zehme called Greene's downfall "a heartland Greek tragedy." He bemoaned Greene's "lost voice." He said Greene had been "all but murdered on page one of his own publication."

Zehme wrote that in interviewing Greene for her Catholic school project—an interview to which her parents drove her—the teenage girl had "chosen him as her quarry."

The *Esquire* article would win the 2004 National Magazine Award for best profile writing.

ELLEN SOETEBER PASSED away last year and, while it was never safe to presume her reaction, I think she would have admired the insistent reporting that has focused a nation's attention on harassment and abuse, including in our newsrooms—maybe especially in our newsrooms. Journalism, a tool we use to scrutinize the powerful, is just as useful when the powerful are us.

It would be wrong to remember Ellen, or others who have stood up to misogyny in journalism, as merely standing *against* something. I was at the city desk one day when one of her deputies leaned back in his chair, appraised a new intern, and proclaimed, "She looks like a woman of many tastes." I don't know what her deputy made of Ellen's instant, indignant admonition, but to witness a woman in command respond so unflinchingly was a powerful management lesson for me—a lesson in standing *for* something and a #MeToo every newsroom manager should aspire to. She didn't vanquish harassment, and neither did I, but she set new standards that obligated us all.

My daughter recently asked me if I thought women bosses were more likely to hear the voices of the harassed and take action to discipline workplace predators. I had an answer but asked for hers. She thought for a while and gave the wiser response, one that allows for anyone to be an ally.

"We lose those voices at the bottom," she said, "when there's no one to advocate for them at the top." ■

A New Fellowship Turkish citizens are invited to apply

The Nieman Foundation for Journalism has joined with the New York City-based Turkish Philanthropy Funds to launch the Robert L. Long Nieman Fellowship to support the work of exceptional Turkish journalists. The fellowship, to be offered in each of the next three academic years, honors the memory of journalist, filmmaker, and news executive Robert L. Long. His widow, Joan Rebecca Siregar-Long, established the program to support Turkish Nieman Fellows. "Robert was passionate about many things in life, and two of his greatest passions were his love for Turkey and his dedication to truth in journalism," she said.

Open to journalists who are Turkish citizens, the fellowship will fund fellows in two semesters of study at Harvard University. Fellows participate in the activities of the Nieman Foundation and engage with Nieman classmates and faculty at the university.

The deadlines for two journalism awards administered by the Nieman Foundation are approaching. Entries for the Worth Bingham Prize for Investigative Journalism and the Taylor Family Award for Fairness in Journalism will be accepted through Friday, January 19, 2018.

Established in 1967 to commemorate the life and work of journalist Worth Bingham, a D.C. correspondent for *The Louisville Courier Journal* and *Times*, the \$20,000 Worth Bingham Prize for Investigative Journalism honors investigative reporting of stories of national significance where the public interest is being ill-served. The investigative reporting may cover actual violations of the law, rule, or code; lax or ineffective administration or enforcement; or activities that create conflicts of interest, entail excessive secrecy, or otherwise raise questions of propriety. Work published in 2017 is eligible for the upcoming year's award; in the case of a series, at least half of the individual stories must have been published during 2017.

The Taylor Family Award for Fairness in Journalism was established by the Taylor family—who published *The Boston Globe* from 1872 to 1999—in 2001 to encourage fairness in news coverage by American journalists and news organizations. The winner receives \$10,000. Work published during the 2016 calendar year is eligible for the upcoming award. ■

Elle Reeve: “Now that the whole world knows that these guys exist, you can’t just do the straight-on coverage of their events. You can’t ignore it either”

The “Vice News Tonight” correspondent on the white supremacist movement, the tech industry’s reaction, and de-escalating hostility

ELLE REEVE, a technology correspondent for “Vice News Tonight,” shows little emotion as she interviews white nationalists spewing hate in the chilling documentary “Charlottesville: Race and Terror.” That was by design.

“I grew up around some rough people,” says Reeve, who was heckled and filmed by white nationalists during the making of the documentary. “If you act scared, they will give you a reason to be scared. I knew I could not let my face show any fear.”

Slate called the film that went viral in August “an argument for not looking away.” Prior to joining Vice News, Reeve was a senior editor at The New Republic and politics editor at The Wire. Her writing has appeared in the Daily Beast and on TheAtlantic.com.

During a conversation at the Nieman Foundation in October with television producer Jamieson Lesko, a 2018 Nieman Fellow, Reeve—who has been covering the alt-right for a year and a half, first for The New Republic and since June 2016 for “Vice News Tonight”—discussed the making of the documentary. It started when a production assistant for the show pitched the idea of doing a story on the upcoming march in Charlottesville, Virginia. Reeve looked into it and believed it was going to be significant. The plan had been to do a three-minute piece for “Vice News Tonight.” “I was told by my boss to be emotionally prepared for it never to run,” she says. “We didn’t have a show on Friday during that part of the season. It was maybe going to be old news by Monday.” Once the Vice crew

witnessed hundreds of torch-carrying marchers shouting in unison “Jews will not replace us,” they decided the story might be bigger than expected and they went after it. That weekend a Virginia woman, Heather Heyer, was killed while protesting another rally in Charlottesville of white supremacists.

Edited excerpts:

On planning for Charlottesville. A lot of thought went into our coverage when we were just thinking of a three-minute piece before we ever went to Charlottesville. The night before, I called my producer, Josh Davis, and we talked for an hour and a half. We had many conference calls. We talked a lot with the Washington bureau chief, Shawna Thomas, who is an African American woman.

It’s like, “What are we doing? Are we making the world a worse place by introducing it to white supremacist Christopher Cantwell?” That being said, these guys have the internet. They have so many platforms. It’s not going to go away if we ignore it.

On covering the alt-right. I’ve been covering this for a while. Every time I would talk about it, my friends would say, “Well, they don’t really mean it though, right? I mean there’s not that many of them.” I feel like that’s denial. I think it is very dangerous to ignore this. So that is one reason I am very happy with the final product because it made people wake up to it.

I’ve gotten a lot of hostility from them, but also have tried to cut through a lot of stereotypes. People particularly assume that white supremacists are poor and somewhere in Alabama, and ultimately have no political power. These people are quite young, very well-educated, and from the North. They’re very well organized. They respect that I present the true them. It’s not easy.

They have hours and hours and hours of podcasts. There’s one called “The Daily Shoah,” a pun on “The Daily Show” and the Holocaust. They have a website called WeSearchr that posts journalism bounties. You put up \$5,000 for Megyn Kelly’s divorce records. Someone tries to fulfill that. They can raise \$100,000 almost overnight. They have done that several times this year. They have Hatreon, Goyfundme. They have think tanks. They have magazines. They have 4chan. They recruit through videogame platforms as well.

I let them be rude to me. They’ve got this macho code of conduct. Cantwell’s the kind of guy who says things like, “I’m a man of my word, so I’m going to keep my word even though I don’t like what you’re doing.” I know how to operate within that system.

It’s really tricky. They’re recording you all the time. They might try to manipulate that. They might post that. You have to be really careful when talking to them. I just try to keep it pretty short, ask them open-ended questions about what they believe.

On sexism. It’s a very misogynist movement. They think that I’m feeble-minded because I’m a woman. They think that I believe in egalitarianism because I’ve been tricked by Jews into believing that because I’m a conformist, that I’m genetically more conformist than men are.

When we had the interview in the park before the march, Christopher Cantwell had a semicircle of some dozen and a half, two dozen supporters heckling me. In the documentary, you can hear a man, there’s Mike Peinovich behind David Duke in our piece, shouting at me, “Say hi to your ex-husband. Say hi to your Jew boyfriend.”

This is my first TV job. I’ve always done print before, and you can seamlessly meld into the scene when you’re a print reporter, something that you just can’t do at all with TV cameras. I do like it in one way, which is it’s so easy to get under these guys’ skin.

I do think that’s part of being female. All I have to do is not give approval, and they get upset. I find that powerful and kind of fun because sexism is working on my side for once.

I think they also wanted to show off in front of their friends and hurt my feelings.

When we got in the van [with Cantwell and other white supremacists in Charlottesville], I think that surprised them. Lots of people ask me about the van. They don't expect me to be in there. I think part of that is because I'm female. That works for me too, throwing them off guard. It mellows the hostility a little bit.

The guards, the protesters trying to keep us out [of the area set aside in Charlottesville for protesters], they're like, "That's that bitch from Vice. That's the bitch from Vice." I'm like, "Yeah, let me in. That's right. I'm that bitch from Vice. Now let me go in there," and they did. It worked. I'm a very competitive person. It was like I'm not going to let this go. That's what I was thinking.

On racism. I think it's absolutely critical that we stay on top of a rising fascist movement in the country, not just because of the president who sometimes exceeds the expectations of these activists. Something to really think about is that these men argue that there's something innately wrong with African Americans, that they are less than for some genetic reason.

Obviously, that's despicable, but there is a lot of much more mainstream commentary that makes the same argument in coded language, that says that there's a culture of poverty, that there's some kind of problem in the culture of black people and that's why there are disparate outcomes. That's why there's a giant wealth gap between black people and white people.

That is on a continuum. Those beliefs are connected. I think when you have mainstream politicians saying makers versus takers, that kind of stuff, there's pressure not to call that out for what it is. It is racism. It's not that many steps away from this white supremacist movement.

On de-escalating hostility. There was this really big man who was filming me. They stopped the van for a second to get another guy in. That was when he was like, "We'll all push the media out if we have to."

I could sense in the back less hostile emotions, and so that's why I turned to Robert Ray of The Daily Stormer. You can hear me stumble. At first I was going to say, "Who are you?" but I knew that he would like it better if I let him know that I recognized who he was. I was like, "What do you do for the Stormer?" Then the emotion calmed down, and they let us stay.



Vice's Elle Reeve: "This piece had a lot of consequences for the alt-right"

On interviewing Christopher Cantwell. When you're getting set up for an interview, you have to make small talk but not about the thing you're there to talk about. It's so hard to do that with the Nazis because they want to make everything racist. You can't talk about pop culture with them, because they'll try to bait you into saying something racist or agreeing with something racist.

With Cantwell, we ended up talking about fruit. I noticed he had a whole bunch of bananas and two pounds of strawberries on his TV stand. I was like, "Oh, wow, I don't know anyone other than me who likes fruit that much." We just started talking about fruit. I love mangos. He said his favorite fruit was the kiwi. He goes, "You know, kiwi doesn't look like something you'd want to eat from the outside," which my friend pointed out to me later is such an obvious metaphor. You shouldn't judge the thing from what it looks like on the outside.

When [in an interview I did with him after the march] he says of Charlottesville that it's tough to top, he's got that smirk. I know he's trying to make me upset. I'm just trying to get him to explain his logic. The person who died was white. He's saying blacks

are killing each other from coast to coast. I felt like his beliefs are on display in all of their ugliness.

On the aftermath. This piece had a lot of consequences for the alt-right. One, Cantwell is in jail as are, I think, four other protesters. One reason he's been held without bond are the statements at the end of the video about how we're going to see a lot more people die. And it is one reason why I've gotten some attention, recently, from the alt-right people, because they believe he's a political prisoner for what he said.

More importantly, the tech industry has dealt a real blow to them in the wake of this. They've been kicked off of Squarespace, Discord. All of their communications, all the way down to payment processors such as Swipe, have been affected. They're not able to collect funds. About a week after Charlottesville, I talked to Richard Spencer, who was complaining that the only way he could raise money was through cashing physical checks at his bank.

Within the alt-right world, the reaction's been mixed. Some of it is the typical misogyny, like I'm so ugly. Some have some respect that I got into the van. Cantwell himself called me after it aired but before he was in jail and said that he thought it was fair and that I didn't misrepresent him.

On future coverage. I can't give a solid answer because I don't know. They're really savvy about the media. They're really, really good at social media. Now that the whole world knows that these guys exist, you can't just do the straight-on coverage of their events. You can't ignore it either. ■

“**These guys have the internet. They have so many platforms. It's not going to go away if we ignore it**”

“A Podcast Every Day For Three Weeks Straight”

After covering the 2016 Tour de France, Tim de Gier, NF '16, launches a podcasting network in the Netherlands

THE WORK OF a print journalist can be very unrewarding. When I worked for a magazine, writing a piece could take several weeks. The potential audience was a hundred thousand. Often, this is the response: 15 likes on Facebook, one angry letter maybe, five friends who promise to read it. On a lucky day, some people share the article.

Then in the summer of 2016 I started a podcast on the Tour de France. It was in many ways a marginal project, a podcast recorded with hardly any skills on a niche subject. We knew the exact audience: a thousand listeners for an episode. But for everything we did, the response was overwhelming: Facebook likes, retweets, emails expressing gratitude, angry listeners because the podcast was too late, listeners providing us with useful information, invitations to cover more cycling races. By Christmas we even got “Happy Holidays” cards.

On the last day of the Tour de France 2016 I celebrated finishing the first season of our show, a podcast every day for three weeks straight. I was having a beer with a friend in the Amsterdam sun. That friend appeared to like podcasts as much as me and was looking for a new career path. The both of us were concerned about media and where the industry is going. Podcasting, we figured, is a big opportunity, mostly for a new, deeper connection between the media and its audience.

We reached out to other podcasters. There weren't any podcasting networks yet in the Netherlands. Four other podcasts joined, some of them much bigger than ours. One on new media and tech, one on babies and toddlers, one with real life stories. The plan was to find advertisers together. Maybe one advertiser for each show, to begin with. We did like most startups do: we started in the living room

furiously filling in Excel sheets. I kept my daytime job as books editor for a national paper and did most of the work at night and on the weekend. We asked a friend to design us a logo. We bought some basic equipment. We had lots of coffee meetings and afternoons where we'd write ideas on brightly colored Post-its. And eventually, after five months of preparations, we organized a launch party and spent too much money on drinks.

Since the launch, things went faster than the average race day in the Tour de France. We made the silly mistake of putting a contact form on our website. The phone didn't stop ringing for weeks. During the week of our launch party in April we were interviewed by papers and magazines. An unexpectedly large number of people and organizations appeared to be interested in podcasts. Now, more than six months in and with more than 100,000 listeners, we're still working extra hours to respond to all the contact requests. It's advertising partners that reach out, but also news outlets, magazines, and companies that want to hire us to make podcasts with them.

Fortunately, we can learn how to scale by looking carefully at Radiotopia, Gimlet, and Acast. But we're much smaller still and the context of the Netherlands is different. For one thing, we watch a lot of cycling here. We have no idea where we'll be a year from now. But hopefully I can report back that putting a contact form on the site remains a problem because so many people reach out. ■



Tim de Gier, here recording a podcast, is now an entrepreneur. Audiences and advertisers are embracing his network of podcasts

A Deep Dive Hurricane Irma moves Joan Martelli, NF '08, to finish her book about a storied wreck

AFTER WORKING FOR more than 20 years in television as a newsmagazine producer, I am diving into uncharted waters and publishing my first book.

“The Law of Storms: The True Story of the RMS Rhone and the Great Virgin Islands Hurricane of 1867” is a nonfiction narrative centering on the story of a luxurious passenger steamship that crashed and sank in a hurricane in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) 150 years ago.

I began writing “The Law of Storms” when I was a Nieman Fellow in 2007-08, but the Nieman connection to this project actually goes back much further. I was first introduced to the BVI and the Rhone by my good friend and colleague, Roberta Baskin, NF '02, whose father owned a scuba diving business on the main island, Tortola. I went there for the first time with Roberta and her husband in the early 1990s, fell in love with

the place, and returned more than half a dozen times to dive and go sailing.

It was on one of those trips in 2007 with my husband that I got the idea for this book. I was eager to explain to him the significance of what he would see on the Rhone dive, considered one of the best wreck dives in the world. I tried reading up on the Rhone’s history but was disappointed by what I found so I decided to see if I could dig up enough information to write a book.

A freelance producer in the Netherlands covering European political, environmental, and feature stories for PBS “NewsHour Weekend,” I kept working on the book but shelved the project when I couldn’t find an agent.

Then came Irma at the end of the summer. The Category 5 hurricane caused utter devastation across the Caribbean. The eye of the monster passed right over the BVI, just as another storm had 150 years ago when the Rhone sank.

The wreck of the Rhone had been such an important source of pride and of income for the islands before Irma. As rebuilding began, wouldn’t the Rhone play that role again?

I decided to finish the book and I published it October 29, the 150th anniversary of the 1867 storm that sank the Rhone. I concluded the only way to meet that deadline



Martelli explores the Rhone shipwreck

to publish the book through Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing.

Central to the book are the dramatic stories of how each of the 25 known passengers and crew members survived the wreck of the Rhone. The book also examines Rhone’s rival captains and explains how destruction caused by the hurricane along with a yellow fever epidemic, an earthquake, and tsunami (all within a month’s time) played a role in delaying for 50 years the sale of St. Thomas and St. John to the United States.

I hope the book is a good read and that it will do some good. I will donate 10 percent of the net proceeds from sales to hurricane relief. ■

The Story Behind A StoryCorps Success

Dean Haddock, a 2015 Visiting Fellow, on sticking to a budget while building a robust oral history app

In 2015 Dave Isay, StoryCorps’ founder, received the \$1 million TED Prize. The money funded the development of an app for preserving and sharing meaningful conversations with the world. Those in the audience that night at TED’s annual conference may have thought the prize money was itself the beginning of something grand, but in reality, Brooklyn-based StoryCorps, where I am managing director of digital and technical innovation, had been moving toward that guiding star for several years.

In 2008 we began a campaign to replace #blackfriday with a #nationaldayoflistening, encouraging people to give each other the gift of listening, instead of just shopping. (It’s now the Great Thanksgiving

Listen, an annual event in which we invite high schoolers across the country to interview elders over the holiday weekend.) A few years later, we launched a website where anyone could record and share those interviews.

In the fall of 2014, we received a Knight Prototype award to build a mobile app that people could use to record and upload interviews to the web. That award helped us find an approach to developing mobile technology that would fit a modest nonprofit budget. Our prototype, a hybrid app that worked in Android and iOS, was fully functional, but it still wasn’t ready to launch.

The user interface was thin. It was a simple proof of concept that lacked elements to walk people through preparing

for their interviews, like lists of questions and recording tips, but it worked with one programming language on multiple operating systems. We were looking for a technology stack that a small nonprofit team could maintain, and we were stoked when we found one. Now we could use human-centered design to develop features for the app.

When the TED Prize landed, we knew exactly what approach to take, backed by several years of learning and iteration. In about three months we built a viable app for recording people’s stories and the infrastructure to support it. It didn’t have all the features we envisioned for the perfect StoryCorps app, but it had all the essentials and gave us room to grow in subsequent versions.

Developing a new technology to give people a StoryCorps interview experience like the ones we facilitate in our recording booths was in reality a long, natural evolution led by user feedback and constant

experimentation, each step a means to the next rather than an end in itself. We also had to work within tight budgets and ensure that the infrastructure choices we made would keep the project solvent in the long term.

Now a couple of years after the launch, our platform has grown to over 125,000 conversations and nearly 400,000 users. In October, the second anniversary of my Visiting Nieman fellowship, we launched a new version of the website and platform that powers the app, and we’ve added dozens of new features, some I worked on at Lippmann House, like community pages for groups to share interviews and new privacy options for people to control who can listen to their recordings.

We’re nowhere near the end of this journey with the new StoryCorps app and platform. In fact we’re at the beginning. That’s what innovation is to me—no matter how far we travel, there is still so much road ahead to explore. ■

#NowWhat?



How newsrooms must
change to stop sexual
harassment and foster
a supportive work
culture for women

BY KATHERINE GOLDSTEIN





Participants at a Take Back the Workplace march on November 12 in Hollywood PREVIOUS SPREAD: Women take part in a “Day Without a Woman” march in New York on International Women’s Day, March 8, 2017

A GOOD PLACE to start telling the unfolding story of sexual harassment in newsrooms is July 6th, 2016. That’s the day former Fox News host Gretchen Carlson sued Roger Ailes, chairman and CEO of Fox News, saying she was fired in retaliation for rebuffing his sexual advances. Within days, Gabriel Sherman, who was working at New York magazine at the time, had heard from a half dozen other women describing incidents of Ailes’s harassment.

Ailes’s behavior toward women at Fox, going back decades, was not a revelation when Carlson sued. Sherman had detailed on-the-record allegations against Ailes in his 2014 biography, “The Loudest Voice in the Room.” Sherman was disappointed those initial allegations were only lightly covered. But something had changed by the time Carlson sued.

“I definitely noticed a marked sea change in the impact of my reporting on Ailes’s harassment after Gretchen Carlson filed her lawsuit,” says Sherman. “Those stories [of other harassment incidents] exploded on social media and were picked up by other news outlets.” Fifteen days after Carlson sued, the Murdoch family forced Ailes to resign.

Carlson’s lawsuit had done what might before have seemed impossible: It brought down a powerful man who many viewed as untouchable. “When we start to look back at this whole thing years from now, what

Carlson did will loom very large,” says Washington Post columnist Margaret Sullivan.

We now know that Fox is far from the only news organization that has big problems with both sexism and sexual harassment. In the wake of the Harvey Weinstein allegations, a cascade of men in leadership positions at prominent news outlets have fallen—Matt Lauer, Charlie Rose, Mark Halperin, Leon Wieseltier, Michael Oreskes. More allegations and revelations come out almost daily—and it’s not just in the U.S. The BBC says it currently has 25 active sexual harassment investigations (up from just a few a year) after leaders explicitly encouraged staff to come forward following the Weinstein story. “This is the predictable outcome of continuing to have newsrooms without gender equity,” says Ann Marie Lipinski, curator of the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard, publisher of Nieman Reports, and former editor of the Chicago Tribune.

The issue facing journalism is not simply about preventing sexual harassment; it’s about also acknowledging that this behavior is often a part of a sexist and unequal work environment. Newsroom cultures need to change in ways that both stop sexual harassment and foster supportive work environments for women.

There’s clearly a lot of work to be done, inside and outside newsrooms. Three months after Carlson came forward, David Fahrenthold and The Washington Post

30%

Percentage of women who have experienced unwanted sexual advances at work

Source: ABC News/ Washington Post poll conducted Oct. 12-15, 2017, among a random national sample of 1,260 adults, including 740 women

PREVIOUS SPREAD: LUCAS JACKSON/REUTERS
LEFT: CHELSEA GUGLIEMINO/FILMMAGIC VIA GETTY IMAGES

published the “Access Hollywood” tape, in which Donald Trump brags about grabbing women by the pussy. About a dozen women subsequently came forward to say Trump had sexually assaulted them.

Sexual harassment is a persistently common feature of the American workplace. According to a ABC News/Washington Post poll conducted in October, 30 percent of women have experienced unwanted sexual advances at work. Of those women, eight in 10 say it rose to the level of sexual harassment, and a third say it went a step further, to sexual abuse. The poll also found that most Americans, 75 percent, consider sexual harassment in the workplace a problem. A year after Trump’s election, “a lot of women have a desire to take some of that power back,” says Jessica Valenti, columnist at The Guardian and author of “Sex Object: A Memoir,” which examines the toll sexism has taken on her life.

As part of the Women’s March the day after Trump’s inauguration, thousands of women donned pink pussy hats to protest Trump’s agenda and the attitude toward women expressed by his “Access Hollywood” remarks. Since the 2016 election, Emily’s List, an organization that trains women to run for public office, says over 20,000 women have reached out in less than a year about running, smashing the previous record of 920 over a two-year period. In November’s local and state elections, women won mayoral races for the first time in cities like Manchester, New Hampshire; Boston elected a record number of women to the City Council; and 11 of the 16 Democrats who flipped Republican-held seats in the Virginia House of Delegates are women. Employment lawyers are reporting record numbers of calls from potential plaintiffs interested in filing workplace discrimination and sexual harassment claims. “Maybe you can’t get this total asshole out of office, but you can get the total asshole out of *your* office,” says Valenti.

In addition to Carlson’s suit, part of the explanation for why these allegations are coming to light now has to do with Harvey Weinstein and his celebrity victims. April Reign, a diversity and inclusion expert who created the viral hashtag #OscarsSoWhite, describes the difference between how Bill Cosby’s victims were seen in 2015 and Weinstein’s victims today: “The media immediately is going to pick up on a celebrity [angle]. Some of Cosby’s victims were famous but perhaps not in the public eye currently. So I think that’s what the distinction is—and it’s unfortunate.”

Alyssa Milano, a celebrity with a big social media following, ignited the current phase of media attention when she tweeted on October 15: “If you’ve been sexually harassed or assaulted write ‘me too’ as a reply to this tweet.” “#MeToo gave women and men an immediate sense of solidarity,” says Reign. “You knew that there was already someone out there who had experienced a similar violation. People felt that they were no longer standing alone.”

As of late October, Twitter confirmed that 1.7 million tweets had used the hashtag and 85 countries had at least 1,000 #MeToo tweets. Facebook shared that users generated 12 million “me too” posts, comments, and reactions in the first 24 hours, and says that around 45 percent of all U.S. Facebook users have a friend who posted #MeToo.

Reporters on Covering Harassment

“This is much bigger than a few bad apples like Roger Ailes and Harvey Weinstein. This is a systemic problem”



Gabriel Sherman
Special correspondent,
Vanity Fair

Sherman for years had a laser focus on covering the late Fox News chairman and CEO Roger Ailes, the subject of his 2014 biography. For New York magazine, Sherman wrote extensively about sexual harassment allegations against Ailes, who was forced to resign from the company last year. He denied the allegations.

We’re at a cultural moment when the culture is ready to listen to victims and take the allegations seriously. Unfortunately, a lot of these stories, if you look back, starting with Bill Cosby, had been floating out there in the public domain and had been dismissed. It took the snowball effect of the Roger Ailes story, Bill Cosby’s story, to create this cultural moment when the public was ready to open their eyes and see the depth of this problem.

Going back, I had several examples in my book [“The Loudest Voice in the Room: How the Brilliant, Bombastic Roger Ailes Built Fox News—and Divided a Country”] of on-the-record allegations. Unfortunately, those were lightly covered at the time. In fact, Janet Maslin writing in The New York Times dismissed the allegations. That was partly maybe reflective of major news organizations weren’t willing to dive in and investigate these allegations against powerful men. After [former Fox news

anchor] Gretchen Carlson filed her lawsuit [in 2016], that was a public document. That pushed the Ailes sexual harassment story into the public domain so that it created a context for me to do further reporting and perhaps have women’s allegations taken more seriously by the public.

Within days of her lawsuit, I heard from a half dozen women, two of whom I believe spoke on the record about incidents of Ailes’s harassment. Those stories exploded on social media and were picked up by other news outlets. I continued to hear from more women. The floodgates were open, and I was hearing from more and more of Ailes’s victims. That willingness to come forward was very different than when my book came out in 2014. I was expecting there to perhaps be more people coming forward, and it didn’t materialize.

This is much bigger than a few bad apples like Roger Ailes and Harvey Weinstein. This is a systemic problem.

I think back to the way The Boston Globe covered the Catholic Church abuse scandal. They really focused on the system that protected priests who had abused children. In many ways, this is similar. There is a corporate system in place, enforced through contracts and legal means, that has kept this epidemic of harassment hidden from the public.

Sexual harassment is an epidemic in all industries. As someone who’s been a media reporter during his career, it’s oftentimes not easy, but one of the checks and balances on our business is that we have reporters who cover the media industry.

What will change, whether through legislation or shifting cultural norms: The enforcement of nondisclosure agreements and secrecy around harassment will no longer be tolerated in workplaces, this open secret of people knowing about abusive behavior not being tolerated. ▶

While the press has rightly focused on the misdeeds of prominent men in the media industry, the news industry must also address the less high-profile forms of belittlement, sexism, and harassment many women have come to experience as routine. Denise-Marie Ordway, managing editor of Journalist's Resource at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, who worked at regional papers for nearly 20 years, was the only woman in the newsroom during her first internship. One day as an intern, her supervisor called her into a small recording room, cornered her, and kissed her on the mouth. She fended him off but spent the internship dealing with constant inappropriate remarks from male colleagues, including one who once demanded to know what color her nipples were.

It was clear to Ordway that this behavior was seen as completely acceptable by all the men around her, so she didn't know who to raise it with or what to do. Because she was so early in her career, she thought, "I didn't want to create a problem and not be successful. I tried to just focus on doing my job." Throughout her reporting career, she had trouble with sources touching her inappropriately or acting as if interviews were actually dates. When she did go to supervisors, they told her to brush it off and toughen up. "I always felt totally unsupported in those situations by my bosses," Ordway says. "I'd like to think that maybe it would have been different if I hadn't had so few bosses who were women."

After #MeToo posts started pouring in from female journalist colleagues, she realized how common these

experiences are for women who work in journalism. And it's clear that many people in power at news organizations have not been attuned to the endemic nature of this problem, with some men just beginning to be sensitized to the prevalence and consequences of sexual harassment.

Washington Post columnist Dana Milbank wrote a column called "A #MeToo for clueless men," in which he admitted that, until he read about allegations against The New Republic's Leon Wieseltier, he'd been in a "cone of ignorance" about the sexual harassment that had gone on at his previous workplace. Had Milbank and other male journalists heard about sexual harassment allegations at the time directly from colleagues who had experienced it, they might have brought greater awareness of the scope of the problem as they moved through their careers.

In a 2014 study, researchers at the University of Bielefeld in Bielefeld, Germany showed that understanding the repercussions of rape as well as hearing women's points of view about sexual harassment lowers sexually aggressive behavior in men and improves empathy for victims. The study, published in the journal *Aggressive Behavior*, found that when men read a first-person description of sexual harassment from a woman's perspective (think the flood of #MeToo posts), they were less likely to blame the victim and, additionally, they self-reported a lower likelihood of sexually harassing someone themselves than men who read either a neutral description of a case of sexual harassment or one from the perpetrator's perspective.

45%

Percentage of U.S. Facebook users who have a friend who posted "me too"

Source: Facebook

New York residents rally in solidarity with the Women's March on January 21 in D.C.



Researchers found that many men essentially feel it's not their business to intervene on behalf of women or advocate for gender parity in the workplace

"Men have to understand that many of us have come up in male-dominated workplaces. That's somewhat the situation in newsrooms," says Kevin Riley, editor of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. "Every man should visit with the idea that a woman can come to a situation, an opportunity, or a problem with a different perspective than theirs."

In dealing with any kind of workplace issue, including sexual harassment, Riley sees diverse leadership as an important part of creating a supportive newsroom: "People have to feel like they have someone they can go to who might understand a concern they have. Of course, you would want people to feel comfortable going to any leader at any time with a concern like this. But I think you can do better making sure that you have visible and important leaders that represent a diverse spectrum."

Other research suggests why men might not have stepped up on this issue in the past. In a study published in *Organization Science* in April, researchers found that many men essentially feel it's not their business to intervene on behalf of women or advocate for gender parity in the workplace, largely because they believe they do not have the "psychological standing"—they fear they are not legitimate spokespersons—on gender parity issues in the workplace compared to their female coworkers. Often, men can feel like either the issues don't affect them so it's not their concern or they are intruding on territory that's better understood by women.

In an interview on Slate's DoubleX Gabfest podcast, Franklin Foer, former editor of *The New Republic*, described why he didn't act on the accusations against Leon Wieseltier: "Confrontation is hard, I think is part of the grand moral of this entire story. And I wish I shrouded myself in doing the right thing and being confrontational in those instances, but really I was just profoundly uncomfortable."

Women can also find it difficult to intervene on their own behalf, and then later regret that other women went on to experience the same thing. "It's really hard to say what could have been done or should have been done," says Michelle Cottle, contributing editor at *The Atlantic* who reported on and told her own stories of Wieseltier's behavior. "That's why people feel guilty now, because they're like, 'Oh, well, even if it was weird or delicate, I should have just said, 'Enough' and put on my big girl pants and done what needed to be done.' Every time somebody

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

What changes will be the willingness of not only women coming forward, but bystanders coming forward to speak up about a behavior they see that's either inappropriate or abusive.

Journalism is a mirror of the society in which it functions. The fact that this issue is now getting the public attention it deserves is reflective of the increased power of women in the workplace. The mobilization we saw after the election of Donald Trump, where women felt emboldened and motivated to speak up when we had a president who was bragging about sexual assault on the "Access Hollywood" tape.

Also, we can't discount the role that social media has played in breaking down this culture of secrecy. The whole #MeToo campaign, the different Twitter hashtag movements we've seen spring up around stories of sexual assault and abuse in the workplace, this has all created the kind of context that journalism needs to expose large-scale abuses. I hope this moment doesn't pass because there's still, unfortunately, a lot more work to be done. ■

"Women certainly have found their voice to talk about these issues"



Emily Steel
Business reporter,
The New York Times

Marquee Fox News host Bill O'Reilly was fired in April and there was an exodus of advertisers following a story by Steel and Michael S. Schmidt that about \$13 million had been paid to address complaints about O'Reilly's treatment of women. Six months later, the two Times reporters published another

bombshell report, that O'Reilly—who continues to dismiss the allegations—was said to have agreed to a \$32 million settlement of a sex harassment allegation by a former Fox analyst.

When we were doing our reporting on the Bill O'Reilly story, we started by looking at that 2004 dispute: This young woman, this young producer, Andrea Mackris, who worked for O'Reilly's show, filed a suit against Bill O'Reilly that included a number of salacious allegations. In the course of our reporting, we went back and looked at coverage of that case in 2004. The initial round of stories covered the allegations in the suit.

Then in the weeks before that case was settled, what our reporting found is that the Fox News-O'Reilly camp really fed this next wave of stories, and they used a private investigator and a public relations campaign to dig up information about the woman. They fed that information to the tabloids, and it was really this attempt to depict her as a promiscuous woman who was deeply in debt and who was trying to shake O'Reilly down.

I think that a lot has changed since 2004, and our culture listens to these allegations in a different way. There isn't necessarily as much victim shaming or slut shaming when people make these allegations.

There's a lot of forces at play about why we're seeing all these stories now, and why news organizations are maybe thinking about them or writing about them differently. To understand that, you really do have to go back to how these issues were covered before, and what might change when there's more women in newsrooms or when there are young women who are assigned to do these stories. Maybe they're taken seriously in a way that they might not have been before. Women certainly have found their voice to talk about these issues.

A lot of the reporting has been about allegations against ▶

one person, but I think to really understand the forces at play here you have to think a lot about power dynamics in this system that have allowed this to perpetuate. What does this mean for human resources departments? What does this mean for reporting lines? What does this mean about the law? ■

“There shouldn’t be fatigue, because each time these stories come out, it’s really a big deal for the person who reports it”



Glenn Whipp
Entertainment reporter,
LA Times

Following the downfall of Harvey Weinstein and the rise of #MeToo, Whipp got a tip about filmmaker James Toback. Once his story about Toback’s alleged serial sexual harassment was published, Whipp soon heard from 200 additional women who wanted to talk about their encounters with Toback, who has denied the allegations.

The first story I wrote had 38 women, 31 on the record, talking about Toback, and that’s a large number. I think that speaks to women finding the courage in the wake of what happened to Harvey Weinstein to come forward and share their experiences.

There was the hashtag campaign on Twitter, #MeToo, where women were identifying themselves on Twitter as victims of a spectrum of sexual misconduct. At that time, I plugged Toback’s name into the Twitter search engine, and there were five or six women who had used his name in connection with

#MeToo. I contacted as many as I could who had done this. One of them was Louise Post, who’s a singer/guitarist for the band Veruca Salt. She was in the story. I’ve received emails back from some of these other women. I talked to Selma Blair around noon that day, and then it kept snowballing from there.

I know a lot of very good people in the motion picture industry that are working toward change, but we’ve seen these moments before, too. If somebody asks, “Will things change? It’s a watershed moment.” You’d like to think so, but then again, we’ve been here before, and we think we’re on the cusp of change, and it doesn’t. It goes back to the same old, same old. I will say that I feel like news organizations like the LA Times, The New York Times are working toward covering this and writing about it in a way that, hopefully, does enact some change.

As for fatigue, it’s like you’ve become somewhat deadened to another story about this topic, but each story is a new story, and it’s with new victims who have been keeping these stories inside for decades. I have to treat them like it was the first woman I talked to, my first source on the story, because for so many of these women, they probably told someone at the time it happened, and then they just kept it inside for years.

There shouldn’t be fatigue, because each time these stories come out, it’s really a big deal for the person who reports it. It’s still so hard for people to come forward and share their stories, and that won’t ever stop. It’s never going to be easy for a woman or a man to come out and say these types of things, because the stories are so personal, and there’s a lot of guilt and shame wrapped up in coming forward and talking about it. That was always my thing with this, making sure that I honored these women’s stories. That was the most important thing always for me in reporting the piece. ■



Thousands converge for the Women’s March in New York

gets taken seriously and every time the signal is sent that this is not the way it’s supposed to be, it makes it easier for the next woman and say, ‘Well, OK, you did it, and you survived it. I can do this.’”

But there are risks to standing up on your own. Sarah Wildman reported Wieseltier’s behavior while she was a junior staffer, but no one with power took her complaint seriously, and she left the company a few months later.

Sometimes, if rumors about bad behavior are widely known in an organization, a bystander effect can take hold, with people assuming someone else will or should address the problem. A 2016 study of federal court employees in Australia found that the most effective ways for bystanders to counteract harassment is if people who witness the behavior immediately call out or report what they see or if people who have high levels of organizational influence intervene. Solely relying on victims to file complaints is an ineffective way to root out the problem, because often they want to avoid confrontation and don’t want to risk retaliation. A 2003 study of U.S. public sector employees, published in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, said 66 percent of employees experience retaliation after reporting workplace mistreatment.

Going forward, men pleading ignorance is not an option. “So much of media is still controlled by men, and men still are most of the decision-makers at the top,” says The Guardian’s Valenti. “What we’re seeing reflected in



a day after President Trump's inauguration

the media is *men's* awakening. Feminist media has been covering this for a very long time.”

Some of that awakening has to do with the “shitty media men list” created by a group of industry women who anonymously compiled lists of grievances against men in the media. Allegations range from non-specific “sexual harassment,” physical violence, and rape to creepy messages and abusive language. The list’s existence was first acknowledged in the press by BuzzFeed on October 12. Few news organizations are precisely detailing how they are assessing accusations of sexual harassment, but Vox Media has given a bit of insight into its process of dealing with a public accusation.

In a November memo to staff, provided to Nieman Reports by Vox Media, CEO Jim Bankoff detailed how the company handled its investigation into allegations made by a former employee in a Medium post against editorial director Lockhart Steele. Vox Media hired a specialty law firm that interviewed about 20 current and former employees, finding more than one example of unacceptable behavior. Steele was subsequently terminated for cause. Being transparent with staff about the investigation sent a signal to everyone about how the company will respond.

As Paul Farhi reported in The Washington Post, many women at NPR were incensed that Michael Oreskes was kept in his post while sexual harassment allegations swirled around him. Since his firing, staffers have raised

“The biggest drug in our culture is celebrity”



Jim DeRogatis
Music journalist

In 2000, after he reviewed R. Kelly’s new album for the Chicago Sun-Times, DeRogatis received a tip that Kelly was having sex with underage girls. Over the years, DeRogatis has continued to investigate the musician. This summer BuzzFeed published DeRogatis’s exposé alleging that Kelly is keeping six women in a sex “cult.” Kelly has dismissed the allegations.

Now, we have the floodgates opened, but for how long, and to what extent does it change anything? It’s hard to be optimistic when we have a president of the United States of America who said, “Grab them by the pussy,” and apparently meant it and did it.

The biggest drug in our culture is celebrity. That’s why we have the president we have. I know of many other stories that are similar of predators, of people who were abusing women, that aren’t being told because they’re absent celebrity. Either the predator’s not a celebrity or the women, the victims, aren’t celebrities, or both. What we’re seeing in #MeToo and all the press coverage is famous people got hurt, so we care.

This is a cultural problem. It’s part of rape culture. It’s part of law enforcement not doing what it should do for anyone who is in peril. How many of those stories would be running if the victims weren’t famous and the perpetrator wasn’t famous? I don’t think many of them at all, because for every one we’re reading, hundreds or thousands aren’t being reported.

There are centuries of great artists who have been fairly despicable human beings. It’s a laudable notion: Let us separate the art from the despicable human being. There are cases where that can’t be done. That’s when the art is a reflection of the artist’s misdeeds.

I don’t see how art, the art we consume, should get any less thought than the way we operate in life in general as ethical, thinking people. I think art can inspire us to change the world, and I think art in very rare circumstances can be used to do considerable evil. Criticism is a conversation between people who care passionately about the art. The critic is not somebody who sits on the mountaintop and dictates her opinions to the rest of you plebs who don’t understand, don’t know better.

I think everybody is a critic, or everybody should be. To live life to the fullest, think about the art that you’re consuming. I use that word because it’s the same as the cheeseburger. You’re putting it in your body. Think about the art you’re putting in your body. You’re sitting there watching “House of Cards” or listening to R. Kelly, or seeing the Gauguin exhibit. I think everybody should not only be a critic, but an investigative critic, in the sense that we owe it to ourselves to investigate the meaning of and the context for this art. ■

“It can’t be 30 or 40 women’s fault”



Michelle Cottle
Contributing editor,
The Atlantic

While Cottle worked at The New Republic for 12 years beginning when she was 28, she was subjected to what she calls literary editor ▶



The day after President Trump's inauguration participants at a march in New York encouraged political activism

adjacent issues, including the use of temps and interns. Most full-time reporters and editors are members of the SAG-AFTRA union. But NPR, like many other newsrooms, employs many interns and temporary workers, who do not have the same protections as staff.

“People who are temps and interns are particularly vulnerable and seem to skew heavily towards being young women,” says Marilyn Geewax, senior business editor at NPR. “There’s been a lot of internal discussion among women about how the extensive use of interns and temps in the news industry puts many young women in particularly vulnerable positions. How do we make people in precarious positions know that they shouldn’t have to be subjected to this? NPR is looking at not just the idea that there’s one bad apple, but at how do we make a barrel that is safer.”

Apart from the physical, emotional, and psychological trauma it causes, sexual harassment may also factor into women’s decisions to leave the industry altogether. While financial instability and family responsibilities have been identified as reasons women leave, there’s been little or no research on sexual harassment as a reason for attrition. “The saddest thing about these stories is women who say, inevitably, ‘I retreated,’” says the Nieman Foundation’s Lipinski. “It’s clear that for a lot of individuals a sexual harassment situation is untenable. You can’t stay. My guess is a lot of women have left in the wake of this abuse.”

66%

Percentage of employees who face retaliation after reporting workplace mistreatment

Source: 2003 study, published in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, of 1,167 public sector employees

Part of the solution: Put more women in newsroom leadership positions.

Margaret Sullivan thinks institutions should look at themselves and make systemic changes, such as more women in leadership and pay equity. There are currently ongoing public disputes over unequal pay at the Detroit Free Press, The Wall Street Journal, and the BBC. She cites past precedents of how in the wake of flawed reporting on weapons of mass destruction, newspapers more closely regulated the use of anonymous sources. When journalists largely missed the political, social, and economic discontent that fueled Trump’s election, newsrooms refocused coverage on under-reported issues and populations. Why should dealing with sexual harassment be any different?

In a 2014 cover story, Nieman Reports documented the lack of women reaching management and leadership roles in journalism—and the impact that has on coverage. In my Nieman Reports cover story this summer, I detailed the challenges women face in the newsroom when becoming mothers and how a lack of support and workplace flexibility may be a cause of women’s attrition. Women’s leadership at newspapers has remained between 32 and 39 percent for the past 25 years, with many newer news outlets also lacking gender and racial diversity. “It’s going to be really hard to move anything forward that fully addresses

sexual harassment with the demographic constructions we currently have in newsrooms,” says Lipinski.

The value of women at the top is not only to shape coverage, but also to shape culture. “If women are at the very top of the food chain they can exert influence, be role models, and provide encouragement and a place to turn,” says the Post’s Sullivan. “It could help create a culture where there’s less tolerance for sexual harassment. It’s not a panacea, but I think it would have an influence.”

Having more gender diversity among top management and more responsive formal reporting structures for harassment will only work if victims feel that their concerns are truly heard and acted on. According to the ABC News/Washington Post poll, 92 percent of women who have experienced harassment say they think men usually get away with it. That’s a big hurdle companies must overcome to create trust and make up for past experiences when grievances were overlooked or actively silenced.

Not surprisingly, sexual harassment in the workplace is negatively correlated with job satisfaction. Researchers at the University of Calgary meta-analyzed data from over 41 studies—with nearly 70,000 respondents—related to workplace sexual harassment to examine the consequences, which range from poor physical and mental health to withdrawing from work. The analysis, published in *Personnel Psychology* in 2007, found that toxic work environments stemming from harassment have lower productivity and morale, increased use of sick days, and higher turnover—for all employees, not just those experiencing harassment. This cost of harassment to businesses doesn’t even factor in legal fees or settlement costs if an employee takes action against a company.

Newsrooms “are under enough pressure in this day and age that we need to make sure that every single person in our organization can contribute and can be part of a really effective organization,” says the Atlanta Journal-Constitution’s Riley. “Anyone who is made to feel uncomfortable is not going to be able to do that. That’s just a common sense way to look at it.”

The mandatory 30-minute sexual harassment HR video has become a bit of a punch line as an ineffective way to deal with this problem. Former employment attorney Lynne Eisaguirre, whose company Workplaces That Work conducts workplace trainings, says the most effective instruction around sexual harassment is highly interactive and in-person. “We make participants practice doing an intervention with specific behavior, and then also to practice receiving a complaint,” says Eisaguirre. A 2015 study conducted by Fredericksburg, Va.-based University of Mary Washington researchers found that men thought their male peers wouldn’t support them in confronting sexist behaviors, and lacked experience in how to do so. Eisaguirre’s role-playing gives people specific tools so they know how to react in real-world situations.

Eisaguirre believes creating a “complaint-friendly environment” is critical, so people aren’t afraid to raise real issues with their bosses, and leaders also have a responsibility to intervene when they see or hear about a problem. “I get pushback on this,” Eisaguirre says. “People say, ‘If something’s just a rumor, I can’t do anything about that.’ Well, if you heard a rumor that somebody was bringing

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Leon Wieseltier’s “low-level lechery.” In late October, following the firing of Harvey Weinstein and in the wake of complaints about Wieseltier’s “past inappropriate workplace conduct,” the funder of a new magazine Wieseltier was to edit pulled the plug on the project. In an Atlantic piece called “Leon Wieseltier: A Reckoning,” Cottle writes about the literary editor’s behavior toward her and her female colleagues at The New Republic. Instead of each writing their own piece, Cottle’s former colleagues chose her to tell their collective story.

There was a group of women who didn’t all want to go out on their own and do individual stories. There was a safety in numbers sense to it, so they needed somebody to provide the framework.

My part was easy enough to do. The women [who told their stories about being put in uncomfortable situations by Wieseltier] did the heavy lifting. You had so many people willing to go on the record, which, if you’ll notice, even when these things are breaking, it’s a hard thing for people to put their names to. It just kind of happened that they all felt comfortable going together. The Atlantic did a lot of hand-holding and were really good about providing the opportunity for that.

Because part of my piece is devoted to almost a template of how this works sometimes, of how certain kinds of inappropriate behavior, especially the non-Harvey Weinstein kind, where it’s a little more subtle and a little more complicated, it was actually kind of useful. For every experience one person had, it fit into a category that 10 other people had had. I know it sounds really weird, but there were inappropriate categories like the touching, the talk about sex, or the teasing about your sex life.

Then of course, everybody felt self-blame, guilt, and complicity, and that was the most disheartening part of it, that even

once people understood the scope of what had happened, they still felt like, “Oh, well it must be my fault in some way,” or, “I should have done something differently.”

That was really important to spotlight, that everybody felt this way. That just can’t be. It can’t be 30 or 40 women’s fault. That’s not a reasonable interpretation of the situation.

The other kind of self-blame was, even if I was handling it or had figured out how best that I wanted to handle it, none of us were really thinking in terms of younger staffers or more junior staffers. So a lot of people wound up feeling, “Oh my gosh, I should have been thinking in terms of what was going on more broadly.”

You can feel bad that you didn’t think in terms of other people even as you’re trying to deal with it yourself, but under no circumstances should you be like, “Oh, well, this is my fault. I was asking for it. I brought it on myself.”

I’ve heard from every man I ever worked with at The New Republic. They’ve all been writing and tweeting, and I’ve gotten calls from them asking what they should have done or should be doing now. What should they have seen?

The question of what they should have seen is one that I obviously can’t answer. The question of what they could have done is also pretty tricky. There’s only so much you can do when the man who has the power to deal with this has decided not to. I don’t think anybody understood the full extent of it, so it’s not like the guys were standing around watching all of this every day. There were different degrees and different levels.

There is the irony that this became a heightened concern because of Donald Trump getting elected. You had all those women take to the streets in pink pussy hats to say, “Just because this happened doesn’t mean that it’s OK to be like that.” The great irony may be that he served as a catalyst for this sort of thing. ■

“The story that we published has triggered a conversation in our community about sexual harassment in the restaurant industry”



Brett Anderson
Restaurant critic and features writer, *The Times-Picayune* in New Orleans

His investigation into sex harassment at renowned chef John Besh's restaurants started in February when he received a tip: Lindsey Reynolds, who worked at the corporate office of the Besh Restaurant Group (BRG), alleged in her resignation letter that there was a culture of harassment. Anderson's investigation, with allegations by 25 current and former BRG employees including nine who were identified by name, was published in October, just as the Harvey Weinstein story broke. Besh, who denied the allegations but admitted to certain “moral failings,” stepped down days later.

When I originally did my reporting, I granted anonymity to everyone I talked to. I wasn't going to get people to speak to me freely about what they knew and what they experienced without that.

One source would lead to another. Every time I would speak with someone, I'd say, “You know, is there someone you think had experiences like this that would be willing to speak with me?” Lindsey Reynolds and a woman named Madie Robison were early to go on the record. When I started to ask other people whether or not they would consider letting me print their name with the allegations, I think it helped that they were with a couple of others.

I think by the time the first two women decided to go on the record, they were comfortable with the fact that I had a lot of other information and that it wasn't going to be just a story entirely hanging around their necks. My other sources understood that as well. I tried to tell them that what my reporting suggested was a pattern of behavior at the company.

The thing is about restaurants—it was widely known and accepted among people in the industry, and even people who cover the industry—that the workplaces could be coarse. I would remind myself and remind even my sources about how they had basically come to expect a certain type of treatment working at restaurants, and say, “You know, people who work in restaurants have all the same legal protections as people working everywhere else.” The restaurant owners and bar owners are supposed to create an environment where the employees are free of harassment from each other, but also, from customers.

Every single person I interviewed who had worked at places before John's restaurant, I asked, “Was what you experienced at the Besh Restaurant Group different than what you experienced elsewhere?” Every single one, except for one or two, said that it was a degree worse at Besh. That was a motivating factor in some of these women deciding to go on the record, I believe, where they felt that even though they understood and accepted that the restaurant business required you to have a high tolerance for certain coarse language and perhaps worse, they all believed that what they experienced at BRG was a degree worse than that.

The story that we published has triggered a conversation in our community about sexual harassment in the restaurant industry. Whether or not that's going to result in change, I have no idea, but I think it would be a ▶

Nondisclosure agreements impede the tackling of sexual harassment because they allow companies to settle claims without admitting wrongdoing or firing the perpetrator

a loaded gun into the workplace, would you look into it? I think you would.”

Media companies getting out in front of this issue are proactively looking at how to improve newsroom culture for everyone. In addition to hiring an outside law firm to investigate Lockhart Steele's behavior, Vox Media told staff it was addressing issues adjacent to workplace sexual harassment, such as a continued push for diversity and inclusion at all levels of the company, better on-boarding, mandatory trainings for employees and managers, tightening policies around alcohol at company events, and providing clarity to employees regarding consensual relationships among coworkers. CEO Bankoff said there will be an update on the status of their efforts in 90 days.

One impediment to tackling sexual harassment is the proliferation of nondisclosure agreements. Created largely to help companies protect intellectual property and trade secrets, companies are attempting to apply them to all experiences at a workplace, including bad working conditions or illegal abuses. In the media and beyond, employee severance packages and settlements are also now often paired with nondisparagement agreements, which prevents an employee from saying anything negative about his or her former employer. These types of agreements were widely used as part of settlements at Fox News involving Roger Ailes and Bill O'Reilly. These tactics make it much easier for companies to settle harassment claims with no press attention while typically admitting no wrongdoing, firing a perpetrator, or making any company changes.

“There is a corporate system in place, enforced through contracts and legal means, that has kept this epidemic of harassment hidden from the public,” says Sherman, a special correspondent for *Vanity Fair*. “There is a system of enablers that powerful men set up to protect this abhorrent behavior and also silence women from speaking out. There's still a lot of reporting to be done about the way corporate America enforces nondisclosure agreements and uses legal and HR departments to cover up sexual harassment in the workplace.”

Orly Lobel, an author and law professor at University of San Diego, explains that many of these agreements may not be actually enforceable in court, especially if the plaintiff is sharing information with coworkers or aiding an investigation. But often the order's enforceability may not be fully known until a company countersues.

It's a risk few harassment victims are eager to take, so nondisparagement agreements may effectively work as an intimidation tactic. "We've just seen this used as a tool to chill the speech," says Lobel.

Silicon Valley has come under scrutiny for its use of these agreements, and media companies deserve to come under scrutiny, too. "The use of these agreements is particularly egregious in newsrooms," says Lipinski. "Our job is to give voice to the voiceless, and bring forth abuses, not silence our own colleagues."

New York, California, and New Jersey are all now currently considering legislation to make it explicitly illegal to create nondisparagement agreements around harassment and discrimination allegations. This legislation would also nullify previous agreements, which could open up further waves of allegations. While doing away with the status quo settlement structure could make it much harder for individual women to receive payouts, Lobel says, "We need to be thinking about the public policy implications of this, and the public's right to know, coworkers' right to know, and the prevention aspect of [changing the law] and not just individual damages. We need to think about the broader picture of a safer and fairer work environment." Lobel believes legislative change, along with companies publicly announcing they will no longer use nondisparagement agreements, would go a long way toward rooting out abuse.

"It's really easy to fire someone," Valenti says. "It's not so easy to change the entire workplace culture."

Part of the hard work of challenging sexism and harassment involves male leaders willing to look closely at their own behavior. This can mean finding new ways to challenge business as usual. Are men given leadership titles for projects when it's women who are doing most of the heavy lifting? Is a dad who leaves work early for a kid's soccer game given a pat on the back, while a woman who has to stay home with a sick baby is met with an eye roll?

"Men need to take an active and conscious effort and make sure that the women and more vulnerable people in their workspaces feel valued and appreciated and know that their work matters," says Marin Cogan, a contributor to New York magazine who wrote a widely shared New York Times op-ed about workplace gender dynamics. "This is something male leaders should be thinking about every day. It's time for men to do this kind of emotional labor and think very carefully about this stuff."

The 2017 Organization Science study on men's psychological standing regarding gender issues also found that, while men often feel they aren't legitimate spokespeople for raising issues around gender injustice in the workplace, when they do speak up it can have a greater impact than when women do. The study concluded that for men to fully participate in gender parity initiatives in workplaces—like committees to address sexual harassment, efforts to recruit and retain more women, or advocacy work for better family leave policies—they have to be explicitly invited to participate. Otherwise, male participants in the study asked about volunteering for such initiatives felt it wasn't their place to get involved.

So, to all the media men out there who think it's time for change, consider yourself invited. ■

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missed opportunity if it didn't.

I think that the news-consuming public had read enough about harassment elsewhere that they were ready to be outraged by what my story unearthed. I also think there are a lot more waiters and waitresses out there than there are Hollywood actors and former Fox News stars, which isn't to take anything away from what those people have experienced. But I do think that one of the reasons people probably read my story and got to the end of it is that there's just a lot more former restaurant workers out there that are able to really empathize with what these people were saying. ■

"More accusers were willing to be named in public, enhancing the transparency of their claims"



Maryclaire Dale
Reporter,
The Associated Press

As an Associated Press reporter in Philadelphia, Dale covered a 2005 police complaint against actor Bill Cosby that prosecutors declined to pursue, citing insufficient evidence. Accuser Andrea Constand instead sued Cosby, and he agreed to a confidential settlement a year later after giving deposition testimony. When a new round of accusations surfaced in 2014, the AP petitioned to unseal documents from the 2005 lawsuit, unearthing Cosby's testimony and leading a new prosecutor to arrest him in Constand's case.

When comedian Hannibal Buress called Bill Cosby a rapist in a 2014 stand-up act, more women came forward to accuse

"America's dad" of sexual assault. Cosby's camp again dismissed the claims.

The "he said, she said" stalemate frustrated me. Cosby was not just a TV and comedy legend, he was an institution in his native Philadelphia. I knew of only one time he had been forced to respond to the allegations under oath—but the deposition, from an accuser's 2005 lawsuit, remained sealed after Cosby settled the case in 2006.

The AP had tried to have the case filings unsealed at the time, to no avail. We wondered whether to try again. The conversation around sexual assault had changed in the decade since.

More accusers were willing to be named in public, enhancing the transparency of their claims. Documents unearthed in the Roman Catholic Church, Penn State, and other cases revealed the astonishing breadth of the problem. And the public was starting to question enablers—lawyers, handlers, church and university officials—who had helped to keep abuse complaints hidden.

In late 2014, the AP petitioned the Cosby judge to unseal the decade-old filings in accuser Andrea Constand's case. Cosby's lawyers fought back. They said the deposition excerpts would "embarrass" the aging actor, prompting U.S. District Judge Eduardo Robreno to ask why Cosby would be embarrassed by "his own version of the facts."

Weeks later, Robreno unsealed documents that showed Cosby had repeatedly gotten quaaludes in the 1970s to give women before sex and had, over several decades, given a string of young women pills and alcohol before sexual encounters that he deemed consensual.

Cosby's testimony cut through the hazy cloud of accusations that threatened his 50-year career and legacy. A prosecutor filed criminal sex assault charges in Constand's case, leading to a trial that ended with a hung jury in June.

Cosby's retrial is set for April. ■

ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT FOR ME



News personalization could help publishers attract and retain audiences—in the process making political polarization even worse

**BY ADRIENNE LAFRANCE
WITH REPORTING BY ERYN CARLSON**



ILLUSTRATION BY
SÉBASTIEN THIBAUT



IT TOOK A terrorist attack for Google to enter the news business. On September 11, 2001, after hijackers crashed two commercial jets into the World Trade Center as well as a third plane into the Pentagon and another into a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, internet users turned to the search engine for information. Again and again, they typed in terms like “New York Twin Towers,” but found nothing about what had happened that morning. Google’s web crawlers hadn’t indexed “Twin Towers” since the month before, which meant every result that Google returned was, given the context, totally and painfully irrelevant.

Google quickly set up a special page for “News and information about attacks in U.S.,” with links to the websites of about four dozen newspapers and news networks, along with links to relief funds, resources, and phone numbers for airlines and hospitals. A link to this makeshift news page stayed there for weeks, just below the search bar on Google’s minimalist homepage. Within a year, Google had incorporated a news filter into its search algorithm so that timely headlines appeared atop a list of search results for relevant keywords.

A new era of personalized news products began, in earnest, as a reaction to horrific global news.

Today, a Google search for news runs through the same algorithmic filtration system as any other Google search: A person’s individual search history, geographic location, and other demographic information affects what Google shows you. Exactly how your search results differ from any other person’s is a mystery, however. Not even the computer scientists who developed the algorithm could precisely reverse engineer

it, given the fact that the same result can be achieved through numerous paths, and that ranking factors—deciding which results show up first—are constantly changing, as are the algorithms themselves.

We now get our news in real time, on-demand, tailored to our interests, across multiple platforms, without knowing just how much is actually personalized. It was technology companies like Google and Facebook, not traditional newsrooms, that made it so. But news organizations are increasingly betting that offering personalized content can help them draw audiences to their sites—and keep them coming back.

Personalization extends beyond how and where news organizations meet their readers. Already, smartphone users can subscribe to push notifications for the specific coverage areas that interest them. On Facebook, users can decide—to some extent—which organizations’ stories they would like to appear in their news feeds. At the same time, devices and platforms that use machine learning to get to know their users will increasingly play a role in shaping ultra-personalized news products. Meanwhile, voice-activated artificially intelligent devices, such as Google Home and Amazon Echo, are poised to redefine the relationship between news consumers and the news.

While news personalization can help people manage information overload by making individuals’ news diets unique, it also threatens to incite filter bubbles and, in turn, bias. This “creates a bit of an echo chamber,” says Judith Donath, author of “The Social Machine: Designs for Living Online” and a researcher affiliated with Harvard’s Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society. “You get news that is designed to be palatable to you. It feeds into people’s appetite of expecting the news to be entertaining ... [and] the desire to have news that’s reinforcing your beliefs, as opposed to teaching you about

“AN ALGORITHM ACTUALLY IS THE MODERN EDITORIAL TOOL”

—TAMAR CHARNEY
MANAGING EDITOR, NPR ONE

what’s happening in the world and helping you predict the future better.”

As data-tracking becomes more sophisticated, voice recognition software advances, and tech companies leverage personalization for profit, personalization will only become more acute. This is potentially alarming given the growth of websites—news-oriented and otherwise—inhabiting the political extremes, which on Facebook are easy to mistake for valid sources of news. When users can customize their news, and customize to these political and social extremes, civic discourse can suffer. “What’s important is how people use the news to have a discussion,” says Donath. “You may have friends or colleagues, and you read the same things in common. You may decide different things about it. Then you debate with those people. If you’re not even seeing the same news story, it leaves you with a much narrower set of people with whom you share that common ground. You’re losing the common ground of news.”

Information-filtering algorithms, whether those of tech giants or news organizations, are the foundation of personalization efforts. But journalists and technologists approach this info-filtering environment in fundamentally different ways. News organizations share information that is true and hopefully engaging. Technology companies like Google and Facebook enable the sharing of information that is engaging and hopefully true. Emerging technologies will only exacerbate the existing problems with algorithmically promoted junk information.

Still, algorithms have a place in responsible journalism. “An algorithm actually is the modern editorial tool,” says Tamar Charney, managing editor of NPR One, the organization’s customizable mobile listening app. A handcrafted hub for audio content from both local and national programs as well as podcasts from sources other than NPR, NPR One employs an algorithm to help populate



users’ streams with content that is likely to interest them. But Charney assures there’s still a human hand involved: “The whole editorial vision of NPR One was to take the best of what humans do and take the best of what algorithms do and marry them together.”

In an “Inside NPR” blog post about the editorial ethics driving NPR One’s personalization (co-written by Charney, chief digital officer Thomas Hjelm, and then-senior VP of news and editorial director Michael Oreskes), the so-called “secret sauce” behind the app is “an editorially responsible algorithm.” Metrics track listener behavior so that, over time, the app can offer content catered to individual preferences. Charney declined to describe exactly what data the NPR One app collects—“We’re a little proprietary,” she says—but she gave some examples of how the algorithm personalizes NPR content.

For instance, NPR One knows when you stop listening, which in the future can help producers decide how to keep listeners interested. It can also tell which listeners heard

a story that later had a correction appended to it, and deliver that correction to the top of those listeners’ queues. In at least one case, when a correction was significant, NPR One’s algorithm determined who had heard the original segment. NPR then emailed the correction to that list of users.

NPR One can apply that same principle to multi-part stories. If a listener misses the first or second part of a story, the app will be sure to offer the missing part to that listener, something those who listen to NPR on the radio often might miss. “Nobody thinks that’s what personalization algorithms are for,” Charney says. “But we can counter both the filter bubble and we can counter false narratives this way.”

Important news stories—both local and national—are presented to all users, with no options for personalization; the app will always provide the lead story of the day and other important stories selected by editors. So while NPR One enables listeners to choose the “non-essential” stories that are more particular to one’s interests—music reviews, for example, or stories about sports or interviews with artists—and decide on the level of depth they hear on certain topics, dialing up or down the frequency of updates, human editors still ultimately decide what you need to hear.

“You may not be interested in Syria. We’ll tell you if this big thing happened and you need to know about it, but we’ll spare you from the incremental news,” Charney says. “The ability to skim across some stories and to dive into other stories, that may be the power of personalization.”

The skimming and diving Charney describes sounds almost exactly like how Apple and Google approach their distributed-content platforms. With Apple News, users can decide which outlets and topics they are most interested in seeing, with Siri offering suggestions as the algorithm gets better at understanding your preferences. Siri now

“YOU’RE LOSING THE COMMON GROUND OF NEWS [WITH PERSONALIZATION]”

— JUDITH DONATH, RESEARCHER,
BERKMAN KLEIN CENTER

has help from Safari. The personal assistant can now detect browser history and suggest news items based on what someone’s been looking at—for example, if someone is searching Safari for Reykjavík-related travel information, they will then see Iceland-related news on Apple News. But the For You view of Apple News isn’t 100 percent customizable, as it still spotlights top stories of the day, and trending stories that are popular with other users, alongside those curated just for you.

Similarly, with Google’s latest update to Google News, readers can scan fixed headlines, customize sidebars on the page to their core interests and location—and, of course, search. The latest redesign of Google News makes it look newsier than ever, and adds to many of the personalization features Google first introduced in 2010. There’s also a place where you can pre-program your own interests into the algorithm.

Google says this isn’t an attempt to supplant news organizations, nor is it inspired by them. The design is rather an embodiment of Google’s original ethos, product manager for Google News Anand Paka says: “Just due to the deluge of information, users do want ways to control information overload. In other words, why should I read the news that I don’t care about?”

That is a question news organizations continue to grapple with. If reactions to The New York Times’s efforts to tailor news consumption to individual subscribers are any indication, some people do want all the news that’s fit to print—and aren’t sold on the idea of news personalization.

The Times has recently introduced, or plans to do so later this year, a number of customization features on its homepage involving the placement of various newsletters and editorial features—like California Today, the Morning Briefing, and The Daily podcast—that depend on whether a person has signed up for those services as well as readers

being able to choose prioritized placement of preferred topics or writers. Soon, the biggest news headlines may still dominate the top of the homepage, but much of the surrounding content will be customized to cater to individuals’ interests and habits.

The Times’ algorithm, drawing from data like geolocation, will make many of these choices for people. A person reading the news from, say, India might see news relevant to the Indian subcontinent in a more prominent place online than a person reading from New York City. The site already features a Recommended for You box, listing articles that you haven’t yet read, also including those suggestions in emails to some subscribers.

Then-public editor Liz Spayd discussed the changes in a March column, noting that she’d heard from several readers unhappy with the newspaper’s efforts to offer a more unique reader experience, and to document and share subscribers’ activity with them. “I pay for a subscription for a reason: the

judgment and experience of the editors and writers that make this paper great. Don’t try to be Facebook ... Be The New York Times and do it right,” commented one reader.

“Don’t try to be Facebook” was a common refrain among the commenters. The social network has had its fair share of issues with news curation in its attempts to become “the best personalized newspaper in the world,” as CEO Mark Zuckerberg put it back in 2013. To say nothing of the fake news that proliferates on users’ news feeds, the “trending topics” section had a very rough few months in 2016. First, news “curators” were accused of bias for burying conservative news stories; then, Facebook laid off the entire editorial staff responsible for writing descriptions of items appearing in the section, with some disastrous results, such as when a made-up story—claiming Megyn Kelly was fired from Fox News for being a supporter of Hillary Clinton—showed up at the top of the “trending” list. The story appeared on the blog USPostman.com, a website registered to an address in Macedonia, known for its robust network of information scammers, PolitiFact reported at the time. In January of this year, Facebook gave up on personalized trending topics altogether, filtering topics by users’ geographic regions rather than interests.

Even more troubling than Facebook’s trending topics woes was the revelation in September that the social network had sold upwards of 3,000 ads—totaling at least \$100,000—to a Russian firm connected to the spread of pro-Kremlin propaganda and fake news. The firm, posing as Americans in a myriad of groups and pages, sought to target U.S. voters during the presidential campaign and, while most of the ads didn’t specifically reference the election or any candidates, they “appeared to focus on amplifying divisive social and political messages across the ideological spectrum,” wrote Alex Stamos, Facebook’s chief security



officer, in a blog post. The fact that the topics of the ads were so wide-ranging—varying from immigration and gun rights to the LGBT community and Black Lives Matter—is suggestive of how damaging personalization can be and how it isn't confined to any particular party line. Soon after, Twitter announced it had found and suspended at least 200 accounts linked to Russian operatives, many of whom were identified as the same ad buyers active on Facebook.

Meanwhile, in May, Google briefly tested a personalized search filter that would dip into its trove of data about users with personal Google and Gmail accounts and include results exclusively from their emails, photos, calendar items, and other personal data related to their query. The “personal” tab was supposedly “just an experiment,” a Google spokesperson said, and the option was temporarily removed, but seems to have rolled back out for many users as of August.

Now, Google, in seeking to settle a class-action lawsuit alleging that scanning emails to offer targeted ads amounts to illegal wire-tapping, is promising that for the next three years it won't use the content of its users' emails to serve up targeted ads in Gmail. The move, which will go into effect at an unspecified date, doesn't mean users won't see ads, however. Google will continue to collect data from users' search histories, YouTube and Chrome browsing habits, and other activity.

The fear that personalization will encourage filter bubbles by narrowing the selection of stories is a valid one, especially considering that the average internet user or news consumer might not even be aware of such efforts. Elia Powers, an assistant professor of journalism and news media at Towson University in Maryland, studied the awareness of news personalization among students after he noticed those in his own classes didn't seem to realize the extent to which Facebook and Google customized

users' results. “My sense is that they didn't really understand... the role that people that were curating the algorithms [had], how influential that was. And they also didn't understand that they could play a pretty active role on Facebook in telling Facebook what kinds of news they want them to show and how to prioritize [content] on Google,” he says.

The results of Powers' study, which was published in *Digital Journalism* in February, showed that the majority of students had no idea that algorithms were filtering the news content they saw on Facebook and Google. When asked if Facebook shows every news item, posted by organizations or people, in a users' newsfeed, only 24 percent of those surveyed were aware that Facebook prioritizes certain posts and hides others. Similarly, only a quarter of respondents said Google search results would be different for two different people entering the same search terms at the same time.

This, of course, has implications beyond the classroom, says Powers: “People as news consumers need to be aware of what decisions are being made [for them], before they even open their news sites, by algorithms and the people behind them, and also be able to understand how they can counter the effects or maybe even turn off personalization or make tweaks to their feeds or their news sites so they take a more active role in actually seeing what they want to see in their feeds.”

On Google and Facebook, the algorithm that determines what you see is invisible. With voice-activated assistants, the algorithm suddenly has a persona. “We are being trained to have a relationship with the AI,” says Amy Webb, founder of the Future Today Institute and an adjunct professor at New York University Stern School of Business. “This is so much more catastrophically horrible for news organizations than the internet. At least with the internet, I have options. The voice ecosystem is not built that way. It's

being built so I just get the information I need in a pleasing way.”

Webb argues that voice is the next big threat for journalism, but one that presents news organizations with the opportunity to play an even greater role in people's everyday lives. Soon, we likely will be able to engage with voice-activated assistants such as Siri and Alexa beyond just asking for the day's news. We'll be able to interrupt and ask questions—not just in order to put things in context and deepen our understanding of current events, but to personalize them. To ask, “Why should this matter to me?” or even, “What's the most important news story of today—for me?”

Today, you can ask the Amazon Echo to read you the news—a bit like the way radio broadcasters simply read straight from the newspaper when radio was in its infancy. But technologists, journalists, and scholars believe that in the near future, artificially intelligent voice-activated devices will offer a genuinely interactive and personalized news experience. “Maybe I want to have a conversation with *The Atlantic* and not *USA Today*, so I'm willing to pay for that,” Webb says. “This has to do with technology but also organizational management because suddenly there are like 20 different job titles that need to exist that don't.”

The Echo's Flash Briefing comes with pre-loaded default channels—such as NPR, BBC, and the Associated Press—already enabled, but it's “very much on the consumer to decide” what they want to hear from the Echo, says Amazon spokeswoman Rachel Hass. Any web developer can include a site in the Flash Briefing category the Echo dips into for the news, but being selected as a default outlet by Amazon gives news organizations a huge competitive advantage. Research shows that most people don't change default settings on their phones, computers, and software—either because they don't want to, or more likely, they don't know how to.

“WE ARE BEING TRAINED TO HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH AI”

— AMY WEBB, FOUNDER,
FUTURE TODAY INSTITUTE

Much like a search engine, Amazon isn't focused on differentiating material from various sources or fact-checking the information the Echo provides. The Echo does, however, read a quick line of attribution during news briefings. “As Alexa reads out your Flash Briefing, she attributes each headline or news piece by saying ‘From NPR’ or ‘From The Daily Show,’” Hass explains. There's also tremendous incentive for news organizations to play nice with Amazon as a way to get cemented into the device's default news settings—a relationship that evokes the damaging dependency newsrooms have on Facebook for traffic.

Because Flash Briefings aren't limited to traditional news outlets, you could conceivably find briefings available from all kinds of sources—including full-fledged newsrooms and individuals. Even former Vice President Joe Biden now delivers daily news briefings, introducing various news articles of his choosing, which are available on Google Home as well as the Echo.

“There are already more than 3,500 Alexa Flash Briefing” skills, the term Amazon uses for the app-like command-driven programs created by developers to use on the Echo. For example, there's the skill Trump Golf, which offers updates on President Trump's golf outings whenever prompted by the command, “Alexa, ask Trump Golf for an update.”

“I suspect these devices are the most important thing to emerge since the advent of the iPhone in 2007,” says Kinsey Wilson, former editor for innovation and strategy at The New York Times, “because they open up spaces—principally in the home and in the car—where it allows for a higher, more informal degree of interaction.”

In some ways, voice seems like a natural extension of search. Devices like the Amazon Echo and Google Home will enable people to dip into search engines without having to type. More than that, though, these new devices are meant to be conversational.



“It's not so much asking them a bunch of questions but having a collaborative exploration of some topic,” says Alex Rudnick, computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon University. “This idea of, ‘Wouldn't it be really nice if you could call up a friend of yours who is very knowledgeable and just have a conversation with them?’”

The personalization element isn't just the heightened sense of camaraderie one might feel with a conversational robot versus a stack of broadsheets or a talking head on cable television. Personalization is rooted in the fact that devices like the Echo actively learn about the human user with every new interaction and adjust their behavior accordingly. This is the same personalization technique used by Google and Facebook—slurp up myriad individual data, then tailor services to suit—but it uses devices that are always listening—and therefore always learning.

Media organizations that want to create conversational news products for voice-activated devices will have to figure out how

to produce and package entirely new kinds of stories, perhaps including advanced tagging systems for snippets of those stories, and be sure their methods integrate with the operating systems these devices use. “The existing SEO methods that we have might need to be rethought completely from scratch,” says Trushar Barot, a member of the digital development team at BBC World Service. “There may be new methods that emerge that are native to voice recognition.”

Personalized voice assistants face potential obstacles. Sounding too much like a machine is one problem; sounding too much like a human is another. “It's very easy for people, psychologically, to start anthropomorphizing the device into a real entity and developing genuine human feelings about it,” says Barot. “Plus, the fact that it's a device that's in their home and it's learning more and more about their lives and potentially becoming much more intelligent about proactively offering you suggestions or ideas. That brings up challenging ethical issues.”

News organizations' use of voice interfaces raise a host of ethical concerns related to data collection, privacy, and security. We don't know precisely what data these devices collect about individuals (few people read company privacy policies) but, if smartphones have taught us anything, the rough answer is: Everything they possibly can. And there's not an easy answer to who, exactly, owns this data, but one thing's for sure—it's not (just) you. This data has immense value, not just to those generating, capturing, and analyzing it, but to a wide range of companies, tech giants and otherwise.

So what do newsrooms do with audience data? “There are potentially ways for newsrooms to use that personalization [data] in a useful way,” says the Berkman Klein Center's Donath. It largely depends “on what you think the mission of the newsroom is. Is it to inform people as well as to possibly have its own model of what's important

information that people should be aware of? Or is it much more of an entertainment model?” If the latter, that audience data is incredibly valuable for organizations to make sure they’re creating and distributing the type of content people want each day.

Amazon is considering offering developers raw transcripts of what people say to the Echo, according to a July report in *The Information*. Newsrooms will have to grapple with whether it’s ethical to use data from those transcripts as a way to make money, a move that would certainly enrage some privacy-minded consumers. For publishers, that could be an important revenue stream, but it could also creep audiences out and lessen trust, not enhance it.

What happens to a person’s perception of information, for instance, if the same voice some day is reading headlines from both *Breitbart* and *The Washington Post*? “What does that do to your level of trust in that content?” Barot asks. Plus, “there is a lot of evidence that people inherently trust or believe content or news or information shared by their friends. So if this is a similar type of dynamic that’s developing, what does that do for newsrooms?”

Loss of a sense of sources is a big issue, according to Donath: “What’s useful is knowing where something comes from. Depending on what your perspective is, it can cause you to believe it more or believe it less. When you see everything in this generic feed, you have no idea if it’s being reported by something right-leaning or left-leaning. In a lot of ways, the entire significance of what you’re reading is missing.”

These concerns certainly aren’t unique to voice technology. There’s reason to worry that personalization will only exacerbate existing trust issues around news organizations given the gaping partisan disparity found in a September 2017 Gallup survey on Americans’ trust in mass media. Though Democrats’ trust and confidence in

the media has actually jumped to the highest level it’s been in the past two decades, from 51 percent in 2016 to 72 percent this year, the opposite can be said for Republicans: only 14 percent of Republicans have a great or fair deal of trust in the mass media, which ties with 2016 as a record low in Gallup’s polling history.

Although some newspaper readers might like being greeted by name each time a major news organization sends a daily roundup of stories, news organizations run the risk of sounding inauthentic, the way campaign emails from politicians seem impersonal despite their attempts to the contrary.


According to Powers, news organizations should share with audiences that the content they’re seeing may not be the same as what their neighbor is seeing—and how they can opt out of personalization. “There needs to be more transparency about what data they’re actually collecting, and how people can manually turn [personalization efforts] on or off or affect what they see,” says Powers.

Perhaps most importantly, it’s essential for news organizations to remember that they can’t leave personalization up to algorithms alone; doing so will likely only narrow people’s news consumption rather than expand it, and could lead to the spread of misinformation. “You still need to have an actual human editor looking to make sure that what’s popular isn’t bogus or hurtful,” says Powers.

Personalization should be a way to enhance news decisions made by human editors, professionals committed to quality journalism as a crucial component of an open society. The news-filtering algorithms made by companies that refuse to admit they are even in the media business—let alone in a position to do great harm—aren’t bound to even the most basic journalistic standards. And yet they are the dominant forces filtering the world around us in real time. ■







**“A
MASS
SHOOTING,
ONLY
IN
SLOW
MOTION”**

**Newsrooms are moving
away from a focus on mass
shootings to tell more
nuanced stories about the
people and communities
marred by gun violence**

BY GLENN JEFFERS

TERENCE MCCOY WAS rummaging through clips when he came across the story of Kimi Reylander.

Reylander, 9, was shot and killed while visiting her great-grandfather's home in Irondale, Alabama, a small town just east of Birmingham. The culprit? Her brother Jaxon, then 3, who found a loaded handgun in a nearby bedroom and fired it.

Local authorities ruled the February 2016 shooting accidental. Still, a gun was fired and a child was dead. McCoy had found something.

"I had been thinking about how to write about gun violence, and it struck me that so much of the media narrative was focused on these horrific acts of terrorism or mass shootings," says McCoy, who covers poverty, inequality, and social justice for *The Washington Post*. "But when you look at the whole of gun violence in America, that's just a drop in the bucket."

Instead, McCoy wanted to tell a different story about gun violence, one about a family dealing with a set of events that led to Kimi's death: A great-grandfather who left his gun unattended, a grandmother who didn't see it on the dresser, a toddler who reached for the gun, and the little girl who stood in front of him.

McCoy spent weeks in Irondale, interviewing family members, including those in the home or nearby when the shooting occurred. "Everyone, to some degree, felt complicit in what occurred," McCoy says, "whether or not it was the mother who was thinking, 'I should've just been watching my kids,' to the [great-]grandfather who left it out, to the grandmother who said, 'How could I not have seen that gun?'"

The subsequent story ran in December 2016, detailing the family's struggles to recover from Kimi's death. There was no lone gunman firing into a crowd, no hail of bullets stemming from a turf battle or domestic altercation that escalated, no political strife leading to a shootout on a baseball field. It was just a mistake. A terrible, tragic mistake. And it gave McCoy pause.

"Gun violence is not unlike a pebble dropping into a pond," he says. "There is obviously a sudden impact, just because of the sheer act of violence, but it ripples, outward and outward and outward."

According to a recent Pew survey, nearly half of U.S. adults personally know someone who has been shot—either accidentally or intentionally. Thirty percent of adults say they currently own a gun, with the majority—67 percent—citing protection as the main reason to do so.

For many, losing a loved one to gun violence is a traumatizing, heartbreaking loss. It signals the beginning

of a long road back to some semblance of normalcy, often with no set timetable for recovery, if ever. It cuts across demographics, geography, and circumstance. It devastates parents and siblings. It leaves communities reeling, and it forces many to search for hard, uncomfortable answers.

But as McCoy mentioned, the conversation has shifted more toward mass shootings in recent years as a number of high-profile incidents have rocked the nation, including the Las Vegas shooting this fall that left at least 59 people dead; a former employee of an Orlando awning factory killing five employees and himself on June 5; a former Alaska National Guardsman opening fire inside Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport on January 6, killing five people; a 20-year-old naval station employee stealing a rifle and firing into a department store inside a Burlington, Washington mall on September 23, 2016, killing five people.

Of the most-read stories on *The New York Times* website in 2016—a year that saw real estate mogul/reality TV star Donald Trump become the 45th president of the United States—two of the top 11 stories involved gun violence: The Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida that killed 49 people and the sniper shooting in Dallas, Texas that left five police officers dead.

Mass shootings occur with alarming frequency. In 2013, *USA Today* released an interactive report, "Behind the Bloodshed," that tracked mass shootings between 2006 and 2013. According to the report, a mass shooting (which the FBI defines as four or more killed, not including the shooter) occurs an average of once every two weeks.

And if it wasn't mass shootings, the focus was on Chicago, which saw a 58 percent spike in homicides in 2016 from the previous year. The nation's third-largest city recorded 762 homicides last year, the most in Chicago since 1996, and became political fodder for Trump, who pledged federal action if local officials couldn't halt the violence.

But neither mass shootings nor one city's challenges with violence tell the full story of gun deaths in the United States. Despite their higher profile, mass shootings account for less than 1 percent of gun deaths. According to a *Washington Post* report, of the 12,000-plus gun-related deaths in 2015, only 39 occurred during a mass shooting.

"What we were hearing when we started the project was, 'Oh, [mass shootings] are increasing and they're growing in intensity,' and what we found is that these

happen, unfortunately, on a fairly regular basis, but they're not going up," says Meghan Hoyer, a Washington, D.C.-based data journalist for the Associated Press who worked on the USA Today report.

In fact, more than half of gun-related deaths are suicides, but newsrooms tend to underreport on those deaths for fear of inciting copycats, says Charlie Ransford, senior director of science and policy for Cure Violence. Based out of the University of Illinois at Chicago, Cure Violence advocates treating gun violence as a public health crisis and taking an epidemical approach to treatment. "Violence is contagious," Ransford says. "The reason people develop violent behavior is because they themselves have been exposed to traumatic behavior, just like someone exposed to a disease picks up the disease."

Unfortunately, the act of a mass shooting itself can result in copycat events, Ransford says. Research from Arizona State University supports that argument, concluding that mass shootings are more likely to occur within 13 days of a previous event. "The research is confirming that mass shootings, like other types of violence, are contagious," Ransford says. "We need to look toward reporters coming up with a code of conduct on how things should be reported in a way that's not going to make them more contagious."

**OF THE
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And despite the huge uptick, Chicago ranked eighth among large cities in homicides per capita in 2016, at 27.9 per 100,000 residents, according to The Trace, a nonprofit news organization that tracks gun violence. St. Louis, Missouri is first, with 59.3 homicides per 100,000 residents.

"What's happened in Chicago is that the increase that suddenly took place over the last few years became a critical issue for some to talk about the police, the fate of the poor, and the fate of the city," says Stephen Franklin, a former coordinator with Public Narrative, a Chicago-based nonprofit that connects neglected communities with media outlets to promote more in-depth news coverage. "Our crime rate is abhorrent in terms of large cities, but not in terms of the smaller cities where they have long-term crime problems."

A former foreign correspondent and labor writer for the Chicago Tribune, Franklin has spent years covering underserved ethnic communities. In 2010, he led a project for Public Narrative (then the Community Media Workshop) that developed guidelines to help journalists cover gun violence in a broader, more nuanced way. Since then, he's collaborated with Craig Duff, a professor at Northwestern's Medill journalism school, on a 2014 multi-part series on MSNBC examining violence in Chicago.

What Franklin sees is an inability to move past the same-day story and provide the kind of context that's needed when we talk about gun violence. One example is the daily homicide log. Many publications, including hometown papers the Chicago Tribune and Chicago Sun-Times (as well as neighborhood-centric site DNAinfo Chicago), track homicides as they occur. But they fail to go further in the reporting, sometimes reducing victims to mere statistics or worse, reinforcing stereotypes of lawlessness and violence in these communities.

"The feeling among a large group of black and Latino community leaders was that the reporting was shallow and harmful because it threw up stereotypes that the only time you hear about violence was in a black or Latino community," Franklin says. "When newspapers run a homicide log with pictures and the pictures are always of the black community and all you see are faces, the message this sends out to folks who don't know or don't care what's happening or have strong racist feelings is that it confirms this [stereotype] for them."

Brad Lichtenstein, a documentary filmmaker, felt that kind of coverage was needed 90 miles north of Chicago, in nearby Milwaukee. Much like Chicago, Milwaukee was geographically segregated along lines of race and income. A former New Yorker who moved to Milwaukee in the early 2000s, Lichtenstein noticed the high rate of homicides in Milwaukee, the nation's most segregated city, and that many of the killings disproportionately took the lives of African-Americans.

Yet it was only after the 2012 mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, that Lichtenstein had an epiphany.

"My heart bled, like so many other people, but at the same time, I thought about the number of mostly black young men who were losing their lives to gun violence



Jaxon Fuller, 4, killed his sister in an accidental shooting

PREVIOUS SPREAD: Benny Estrada reacts to the news that a young Chicago man he had mentored has been killed

every year in Milwaukee,” says Lichtenstein, president of 371 Productions, a multiplatform production company in Milwaukee. “I was thinking that it’s like a mass shooting, only in slow motion.”

Lichtenstein reached out to Eric Von, a longtime friend who was a popular talk-show host with WMCS 1290-AM, who helped him develop a media project. For the next two years, 371 Productions would produce weekly radio segments that delved past the same-day stories of violence to deeply examine not only who the victims were, but also the issues plaguing the community that led to the murders.

Lichtenstein hired radio producers and forged partnerships with other media outlets, including the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel; WNOV 860-AM, a black-owned radio station; and National Public Radio affiliate WUWM 89.7-FM. Von made inroads with the community and youth groups that could help story producers contact families. The Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism joined in, developing longform pieces on trauma and background checks. Finally, on January 13, 2015, the Precious Lives Project launched.

A 100-part weekly series, Precious Lives extensively covered youth violence. Stories ranged from the emergency-room doctors who treated the victims to the chaplains who performed the services and comforted the families. Some stories looked at logistics, such as the legal cost to taxpayers when someone is shot. Other stories searched for solutions, such as how similar-sized cities dealt with issues of gun violence.

Some segments just told a human story. A multi-part segment followed a youth basketball team coping with the death of a star player, 13-year-old Giovonnie Cameron, and how it affected his friends and teammates.

Stories routinely checked back in with the families of shooting victims. One particular story profiled the Rev. Leondis Fuller of Word of Hope Ministries, who counsels fathers who have lost children to gun violence. Fuller himself had lost three sons, and Precious Lives returned to the man whose sons the Journal Sentinel had reported on.

“Because we were committed to revisiting it every week, we could revisit people,” says Emily Forman, a former producer on Precious Lives and a health reporter for WFYI 90.1-FM, the NPR affiliate in Indianapolis, Indiana. “We could go from talking to a family to the beat cop to the faith leader. You could draw connections between people, even in completely different parts of the city, so you could see how people knew each other and that violence isn’t discrete. It radiates.”

Forman and another producer, Aisha Turner, would typically work with Journal Sentinel crime reporter Ashley Luthern on the stories. Often, two or three of the writers would travel into predominantly black neighborhoods, sit across from family members, and listen as these people relived some of the worst days of their lives. “My sense of what it means to be a reporter really shifted,” says Turner, who had worked as a producer for the PBS NewsHour prior to joining the project. “It was less about me telling people’s stories and more figuring out what story people wanted help telling.”

“IT WAS LESS ABOUT ME TELLING PEOPLE’S STORIES AND MORE FIGURING OUT WHAT STORY PEOPLE WANTED HELP TELLING”
—Aisha Turner
Precious Lives producer

One way to tell that story was to flesh out who the victim was as a person, Turner says. She recalled the story of Za’layia Jenkins, 9, who died when a stray bullet from a nearby shootout struck her in the head. Turner interviewed Za’layia’s mother and great-aunt, who were planning a community garden near the murder scene. They regaled Turner with stories about a tomboy who loved to play football with her cousins. Za’layia liked makeup and art and was really sassy.

“One of the things her mom said was, ‘I just don’t want people to forget her name,’” Turner says. “There’s a real desire for people to honor their loved ones in a public way. As a reporter, you’re taking on that responsibility. That sense of responsibility I feel becomes about painting a fuller picture of their loved ones and the community they live in.”

But this kind of intense reporting often took a toll on the reporting team. The tight turnarounds were relentless. That created enough of a “pressure cooker” environment. “I didn’t always fully process what I had heard,” Forman says. “I got better about that. After 50 interviews, you learn something about gun violence. I had to make sure I created space to decompress or maybe just talk about it with [Luthern] or Aisha.

“You have to let the emotions of what people are saying totally wash over you to understand what they’re trying to say and what their intentions are and it’s your job to translate that,” Forman says. “So you really had to open your mind and heart and that could be harsh. You just have to check that.”

But for Turner, a young African-American woman from the East Coast with no ties to Milwaukee, the constant reporting on dying African-Americans added to the strain. “This is the hardest part to deal with,” she says. “That tension of what it means to report on the destruction of black bodies every day. It’s tough. The moments when [Emily and I] couldn’t support each other, I would say, ‘I can’t come in today. I can’t be around white people. I need to find black people and be around the kind of spirituality that can come from a sense of community.’ It required more emotional honesty in a workplace than I’ve ever had to have before.”

The project ended in December 2016 with the final installment recapping the death of Laylah Petersen, a 5-year-old who was shot and killed in November 2014. As the story ended on the final assailant’s sentencing, Turner was left asking the question: After two years, have we learned anything?

Lichtenstein thinks so. The project brought solutions to Milwaukee. There were new violence-curbing models from other cities for officials to study. The Office of Violence Prevention had a new director in Reggie Moore, a well-respected community leader and founder of the Center for Youth Engagement. People from other areas of the city were talking, asking what they can do. Yes, it was all anecdotal, but Lichtenstein thinks his friend Eric Von, who died last September of a heart attack, would have liked seeing the project’s impact. “Precious Lives was at the table for a lot of conversations,” he says. “We reached a lot of people.”

But Precious Lives reached those people because



producers had the additional time, the partnerships, and the resources to report out those in-depth stories. But many journalists wonder what can be done when none of that is available.

“The answer is, as a journalist I’m working on one story, but I write down the next five stories I want to follow from that,” says Franklin, the former Chicago Tribune foreign correspondent and labor writer. “My hope is that, in this kind of reporting, if you’re a small staff or a busy staff, you come together and say, ‘Here’s what we need to look at. Guns, drugs, the march back from prison, joblessness.’ It’s not impossible.”

It may not be impossible, but it can be very difficult, even for large organizations, says Jessica Ravitz, a senior enterprise writer for CNN Digital based in Atlanta. Back in September 2015, the cable news network held a town hall meeting at the Newseum in Washington, D.C. and invited both survivors of gun violence and family members of victims to tell their stories.

The town hall was a cross-platform event intended to reach as large an audience as possible. News anchor Brooke Baldwin would handle the video segment while Ravitz, enterprise writer Wayne Drash, and digital news writer Emanuella Grinberg would draft short profiles on the participants for CNN Interactive.

With less than two hours before the taping, the

attendees began arriving at the Newseum’s Knight Studio. That was all the time the reporters had to talk to the victims. “We had people floating into this room,” Ravitz says, recalling the town hall. “We each would grab a person and, for five minutes, just get a sense of who they were and why there were there. It was grueling, one horrifying story after another.”

CNN posted the package shortly after, which included the video segment, profiles, and portraits of several attendees, but the final product seemed like a missed opportunity. “We all left that just kind of wrecked,” adds Ravitz. “Each person had a story that needed to be shared.”

One positive takeaway was that Ravitz met representatives from Everytown for Gun Safety, a New York-based advocacy group calling for “common-sense” gun legislation. The group helped CNN put together the town hall, and Ravitz and Drash asked the group to help them get in contact with some of the attendees. As the organization started reaching out, Drash and Ravitz began to brainstorm some possible story ideas. One thing they kept noticing in their research was that, oftentimes, reporters interviewed the parents of gun violence victims, but not the surviving children.

“It was such a rare thing to hear from the siblings,” Drash says. “They have as much a real voice in it as the parents and, in some ways, it fades.”

Among the stories told by the Precious Lives Project in Milwaukee is how this youth basketball team copes with losing a star player to gun violence



One such voice was Christine Mauser, 31, an executive assistant from Beaverton, Oregon. Until meeting with Ravitz in March 2016, Mauser had rarely spoken about her brother, Daniel, one of 13 students killed during the shooting at Columbine High School back in April 1999.

Mauser was only 13 at the time, attending a nearby middle school in Littleton, Colorado, when the shooting occurred. Following the death of her brother, Mauser watched as her father, Tom, became an outspoken lobbyist and advocate for gun control, later penning a memoir. It was Tom Mauser who passed Ravitz's information to her, and she liked that the stories would focus on siblings rather than the usual retelling of history.

The two met at Mauser's home and sat down. Then, an odd thing happened: Christine Mauser opened up.

She talked about life after Daniel's death: How she hated becoming an only child and loved it when her parents adopted baby sister Madeline. How, back in her single days, she cringed when dates asked about Columbine. How she keeps Daniel's copy of "The Catcher in the Rye" nearby.

She even mentioned how, when she was younger, she thought she would die, just like her brother.

She found the interview "therapeutic ... in a certain way," she says. "When you talk about things like that

A vigil in memory of the Pulse nightclub shooting victims is held in El Salvador. Coverage of mass shootings, which account for less than 1 percent of gun-related deaths, dominate headlines

with people, not a lot comes up. It's a subject matter that makes people uncomfortable. So, people aren't going to ask you certain questions about it. It's interesting to break down and say things that I probably never say to people, even about basic things, like the fear that follows you around after such an event. It was nice to chat about those things. It's not obviously pleasant, but it's nice to get that out and acknowledge some of the things that were happening."

Mauser became one of four siblings interviewed for "The forgotten victims of gun violence," a multimedia package that CNN ran last September. And like Mauser, each of the stories focused on how each sibling has moved forward from the violent loss of their sister or brother to find peace.

But what has surprised Drash is that these initial reports have opened the door to more stories that relate to violence but expand on the conversation. One story he wants to pursue focuses on a family in Maine whose daughter was killed during a home invasion. The gun used in that crime was also used a month earlier in a murder committed by another assailant. Apparently, the gun had been obtained illegally, probably through a "straw purchase" where a person who cannot legally own a gun has a companion buy it on their behalf, Drash says.

“WE NEED TO SEND A MESSAGE TO OUR AUDIENCE THAT... YOU CAN LOOK TO US TO HELP YOU COME UP WITH SOLUTIONS”

—**Stephen Franklin**
former Chicago Tribune reporter

“It gets to the issue of guns being sold outside of any pawn shop or online or anything like that,” he says. “We really can’t forget about these stories. They’re not going away anytime soon and too often it’s just kind of the rip-and-read stories that we do in journalism.”

Tell that to Peter Nickeas.

Since September 2011, Nickeas has worked on the breaking news desk for the Chicago Tribune. For the first three years of his tenure, Nickeas worked part time covering overnights, a shift that saw him scouring the city in the wee hours of the morning, driving from crime scene to crime scene to cover shootings.

Nickeas estimates he went to 250 crime scenes a year for those first three years, most of them shootings. Of those, the victim was dead at the scene about 20 to 25 percent of the time. If he got there quick enough, Nickeas would talk to neighbors still lingering behind the police tape. Oftentimes, there was another shooting to cover, so he had to leave. If Nickeas saw the opportunity to write about the neighborhood or the victim or expound on a conflict, “we kind of turned off from the rest of the city and just focused our efforts on that and catch up later in the night,” he says. “But I’d go to 10 or 12 crime scenes before we could talk to enough people or get enough of an understanding to pop out one of those stories.”

Ten-hour shifts stretched to 16 just out of necessity, he says. If he didn’t write the story then, it wouldn’t get out. There was always more to cover. “Then it’s like it never happened, so what are you doing?” Nickeas says. “I feel a sense of purpose and responsibility to what I cover and if I’m going to cover it, I’m going to do the best that I can.”

The pace has lightened for Nickeas since switching from the overnight shift back in October 2014. Days gives him the chance to spend more time in the neighborhoods. He can talk to people, grab lunch with folks, making inroads rather than constantly reporting. “You spend enough time with people and you start to get close and know them,” he says, “like with Benny and Jorge.”

The story—written by Nickeas, E. Jason Wambsgans, and 2012 Pulitzer Prize winner Mary Schmich—chronicled the lives of two former gang members, Jorge Roque and Benny Estrada, as they tried to maintain the peace in Little Village, a predominately Hispanic neighborhood on Chicago’s West Side. Once members from rival gangs—Benny was a Latin King back in the day, Jorge a Gangster Two-Six—the two men work together to quell tensions between the factions and diffuse escalations after shootings.

The story took nearly two years to build out, Nickeas says, going back to July 2015 following an overnight shooting in the neighborhood. The shooting led Nickeas to reach out to Father Tom Boharic of St. Agnes of Bohemia, a neighborhood Catholic church, to learn more about the church’s role in the wake of shootings. Father Tom explained: They’re all volunteers who work with the kids. Each has their own operation, but they support one another. “Nobody takes credit for anything,” Nickeas says. Father Tom passed along a few names, including Pastor Vic—aka Victor Rodriguez of La Villita Community Church—Benny, and Jorge.

The first time Nickeas and Wambsgans met Benny and Jorge, they barely spoke a word. “We sat down for lunch and, for three hours, we just answered questions,” Nickeas recalls. “All kinds of stuff. It allowed them to get a sense of who we were, what we were about, what we were trying to accomplish, how we conducted ourselves.”

Over the following months, Nickeas and Wambsgans would follow the men through Little Village, observing and talking, but mostly listening. He recalled Pastor Vic calling the gang culture “a generational curse.” Much like the way children follow their parents into certain professions like joining a fire or police department, gang members were often generational, with sons following their fathers into the life. “Me and Jason used to sit in Little Village in the middle of the night during overnights and talk about that, how trauma begets trauma,” Nickeas recalls. “And when Pastor Vic used that same analogy... our minds were blown.”

Meanwhile, news continued to break in Chicago, which cut into the time Nickeas could spend in Little Village, but he continued to visit the neighborhood and talk to the guys in between assignments. He was in Little Village in July 2016 when he heard of a vigil later that night for a kid shot to death over the weekend. Nickeas walked into the church, and for the first time, he wasn’t stopped by anyone or asked if he was a cop. They knew he was the Tribune guy. He was cool. “Somebody from the community vouched for us,” Nickeas says. “It was a definite step forward.”

Nickeas convinced his editors to move him off his duties on breaking news to work on this story. He spent the fall reporting out and started writing last December. It was then that Schmich came in to work with Nickeas, helping him frame the story and build the narrative.

“Pete and I worked together very easily. We quickly came to an understanding of what he delivered and what I brought,” Schmich says. “Little Village is an extremely important story to tell and we don’t cover it well historically. We wanted to explain the good of the neighborhood, and the bad, and bring it to life.”

By February, the story was done, with the audio and video components completed by April. It was then a matter of getting it on the budget.

“I’ve never worked on something like that for so long. I’m really glad [my editors] gave me the time to do that,” says Nickeas, adding that, if he can find the time, he’d like to do more. “I probably have two or two and a half years of story ideas in a list right now.”

Finding ways to tell these broader, nuanced stories has helped move the conversation away from stigmatizing communities and toward examining the societal conditions that lead to these tragedies. But Franklin urges newsrooms to continue down this path, to not just chronicle the deaths and honor the deceased, but to help mitigate the violence.

“We need to send a message to our audience that you can hold us accountable for telling you stories accurately and fairly and you can look to us to help you come up with solutions,” he says. “I can’t think of a better way to send out this message than to take one of the most critical issues in our community and then to focus on it and say, ‘Here’s what going on. Here are the reasons.’” ■

**NIEMAN
WATCHDOG**

A look at news outlets bringing innovation and new audiences to stories on climate change

BY MICHAEL BLANDING





**COVERING
CLIMATE
CHANGE**

**WITH
URGENCY
AND
CREATIVITY**

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HE ASSIGNMENT WAS simple: find out what energy companies knew about climate change, and when they knew it. InsideClimate News (ICN) reporter Neela Banerjee was initially skeptical they'd find any significant evidence that fossil fuel companies knew about the dangers of global warming. "At first, we thought, this was ridiculous," she says. "We are not going to find anything." As the nonprofit news organization's team began to work through congressional testimony and talk to climate scientists, however, they found mention that oil giant Exxon has not only been involved with climate change research, but had actually published studies in peer-reviewed journals in the 1980s.

One Exxon scientist, Henry Shaw, had even published studies as far back as the late 1970s. When Banerjee and her colleagues tracked down his research, they discovered Exxon had fitted out one of its supertankers with sophisticated equipment to monitor carbon dioxide in the ocean and the atmosphere at a time when few scientists were studying global warming at all. Though Shaw had passed away, the reporters discovered document after document showing how Exxon's scientists had agreed that emissions from fossil fuel companies were warming the planet, putting humans at risk. "It was astounding," Banerjee says.

InsideClimate News published its findings in a nine-part series, "Exxon: The Road Not Taken," in fall 2015, detailing the extent of Exxon's scientific research, as well as how the company covered it up after it turned in the 1980s to suddenly denying climate change existed. The story earned ICN a nomination for a Pulitzer in Public Service and it was a winner or a finalist for practically every other environmental and investigative award last year.

Despite the urgency of climate change as an issue, in-depth stories like the one produced by ICN are a rarity. A veteran of The New York Times and the Los Angeles Times, Banerjee joined ICN out of frustration at not being able to pursue in-depth investigations on the topic. "Top management in the newsroom don't give a hoot about cli-

mate change: 'It's depressing. It's boring. It's not sexy,'" she says. "They'll tell you it's the most important beat on the planet, but unless it's wrapped up in politics and who's up who's down, they don't care."

Statistics bear her out, in part. Aside from PBS, network broadcast news has virtually stopped covering the topic. A study published by Media Matters for America in March found evening newscasts and Sunday shows on ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox devoted only 50 minutes combined on climate change last year—despite such important climate-related stories as the signing of the Paris climate agreement, several extreme weather events, and the presidential campaign—during which there were no debate questions about climate change.

"Coverage is nowhere near where it should be for something that is so central to understanding how we can live, work, play, relax in a 21st-century society," says Maxwell Boykoff, author of the 2011 book "Who Speaks for the Climate?" and a University of Colorado professor who has been tracking news coverage of climate change for 15 years. "Television has very much shirked its responsibility, and that is very worrisome."

Major newspapers, while better, have been uneven over the past decade. According to research by Boykoff and others, coverage in the five largest U.S. newspapers decreased from an average of nearly 400 stories a month by 2007 to less than half that five years later. While coverage has rebounded to about 300 a month over the past two years, coverage of climate change is still just a small fraction of the overall news budget, says Boykoff, mostly spiking around political events such as President Trump's recent decision to pull out of the Paris accord, rather than in-depth coverage of how countries around the world are adapting to changes in climate, or how it is affecting the world's poorest citizens.

"The coverage since Trump has taken office is as high as it's been, but it's stunning how much of it is pegged to his activities, worries, and threats," says Boykoff. "It hasn't enhanced productive discussion on these issues. Instead, it's been filled with

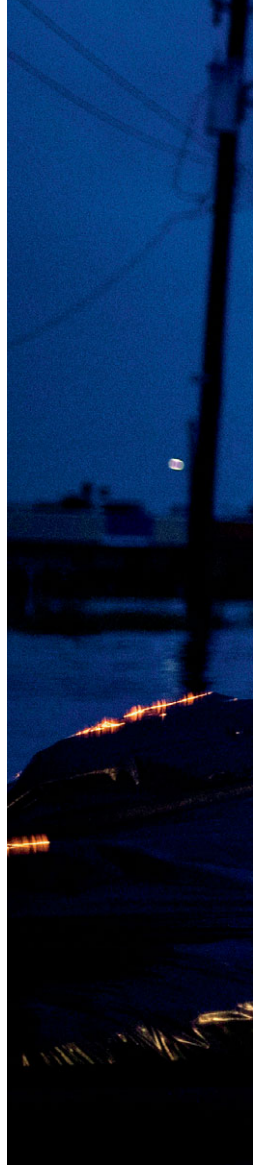
"Coverage is nowhere near where it should be for something that is so central to...

how we can live, work, play, relax in the 21st century"

**—Maxwell Boykoff
University of Colorado professor**

A Houston resident on an air mattress awaits rescue from a flooded street following Hurricane Harvey

PREVIOUS SPREAD: A man wades through flood waters after Hurricane Irma hit Jacksonville, Florida



PREVIOUS SPREAD: SEAN RAYFORD/GETTY IMAGES
ABOVE: ADREES LATIF/REUTERS



fear and woe and worry.” Case in point: a 7,000-word cover story in *New York* magazine in July called “The Uninhabitable Earth,” which envisioned an apocalyptic worst-case scenario of what climate change could wreak in the next century, complete with mass extinctions, famine, disease, and war. The story was criticized as too alarmist even by climate scientists and those who work in climate politics, including one who fretfully called it “climate disaster porn.”

It’s no wonder then that Americans are woefully undereducated on the topic. A 2016 study by the Yale Project on Climate Communication and George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication found only two-thirds of Americans even believe climate change is happening. Just over half believe it is caused by humans. And only 15 percent are aware that more than 9 out of 10 scientists agree on both points.

The dearth of coverage can be explained, at least in part, by the difficulty in covering

an issue that defies most journalistic conventions, says Bud Ward, who has reported on the issue for more than 20 years and is editor of *Yale Climate Connections*, published by the Yale Project. Climate change is often perceived as an abstract concept, he says, lacking a timely news hook: “It affects only polar bears I’ll never see, or it will only take place in 2150 or beyond.” Just as crucially, since nearly all scientists are in agreement on the problem, the issue often lacks clearly defined sides. “The villain is us, or villains are everywhere.”

The science behind the phenomenon, meanwhile, often lacks headline-grabbing revelations. “Science’s goal is to incrementally advance fundamental understanding on very basic questions,” says John Wihbey, an assistant professor of journalism and new media at Northeastern University who recently collaborated with Ward on a paper about climate change coverage for *Oxford Research Encyclopedia*. “If they [scientists] can collect data, test a hypothesis, and

show something new ... they’ve done their job.” By contrast, he says, journalists’ goal is to inform as many people as possible in as accessible a way as possible. “They are both dedicated to truth, but the importance of publicity and the scope of the audience is just very different.”

That discrepancy creates an inherent difficulty for science writers in making the topic feel fresh and newsworthy. “You can write that sea ice is at an all-time low, but a month later, it will still be at an all-time low,” says Seth Borenstein, a veteran beat reporter on climate change for the *Associated Press*. “The same goes for the monthly global temperature. At some point, you are reporting the same thing again and again.” Borenstein frequently looks for fresh angles in the data, going back to past studies to see if current reality matches predictions, or searching for significant anniversaries—such as the moment when more people alive have never felt a cooler than average month—to create news hooks.

When considering climate issues, Borenstein says, newer journalists will make the mistake of pitting scientists against political experts or think tanks. “That is like the doctor telling you you have cancer, so you go to the dentist for a second opinion,” Borenstein says.

The problem of false balance is one that has dogged climate change since global warming first started becoming an issue in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In part due to lack of data—and in part due to intentional obfuscation by fossil-fuel companies and right-wing think tanks—reporters have struggled to give fair representation to all perspectives. Says Wihbey, “How do we cover this as a political issue that seems to have two sides, but where there seems to be overwhelming scientific data accumulating on one side?” Oftentimes, they settled for a “he said, she said” story, giving equal weight to both.

That started to change in the mid-2000s, especially after an influential paper Boykoff co-authored with his brother, Jules, a political

scientist, entitled “Balance as Bias,” published in the journal *Global Environmental Change* in 2004. The Boykoffs analyzed more than 600 stories selected at random from *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. Despite the International Panel on Climate Change’s release of a scientific consensus that humans contributed to global warming, they found that more than half of the articles gave equal weight to human-caused and natural-caused explanations for the issue. “In other words,” the Boykoffs wrote, “through adherence to the norm of balance, the U.S. press systematically proliferated an informational bias.”

When the study was repeated a few years later, the problem of false balance had largely gone away—both as the evidence supporting man-made climate change grew stronger and as journalists grew savvier in their reporting.

That has made it all the more surprising that the issue of false balance has once again

reared its head in the last six months, as the presence of climate change deniers in high positions in the presidential administration has once again put journalists in a quandary. Recent statements by Environmental Protection Agency administrator Scott Pruitt, Energy Secretary Rick Perry, and President Trump himself questioning the science have been echoed by far-right media sites such as Breitbart, Infowars, and *The Daily Wire*, and put new pressure on journalists to include dissenting views.

That has made it more crucial than ever that journalists are able to separate fact from opinion, says Emmanuel Vincent, a project scientist at the University of California, Merced, who launched the website *Climate Feedback* three years ago as a forum for scientists to weigh in on the accuracy of media coverage. “Rick Perry said that climate change is due to the oceans, and a journalist may just let it go and say that’s his opinion, but it contradicts reality,” he says. “It should be the job of the journalist to say that.”



BELOW: CLAUDIO VARGAS/REUTERS
OPPOSITE: DAVID BUTOW/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES



The resorts in Acapulco receive attention after tropical storms like Manuel in 2013 that destroyed homes, below, in nearby Agua Caliente



“When you go to one of these resort towns, you forget about the people

who are washing your dishes and changing your sheets”

—Jason Margolis
Radio journalist

One commonly held misconception about climate change science is that it can only predict trends in weather patterns and can't be tied to specific events. That's no longer true, says Heidi Cullen, chief scientist at Climate Central, a nonprofit partnership of scientists and journalists, and a Columbia Ph.D. who was The Weather Channel's first on-air climate expert. “The science has evolved and the models have gotten better,” Cullen says, “so we now have these peer-reviewed methodologies that can attribute individual extreme weather events to climate change.”

That development can help journalists in search of news hooks that bring the effects of climate change home to their readers. In 2012, Climate Central launched a program to train local meteorologists in how to accurately report on climate change and created Surging Seas Risk Finder, an interactive website at which users can enter their zip code to see the projected effects of rising sea levels in their area.

A more extensive recent multimedia project by The Texas Tribune and ProPublica brought the effects of climate change down to an even more local level. Published last December, “Boomtown, Flood Town” details the devastating impact that stronger and more frequent rainstorms are having on the city of Houston, months before the devastation wrought by Hurricane Harvey in August. The story used weather data and statistical analysis to show that in the past 28 years, the Houston area has been hit

by eight storms. Five of those storms are thought to have a one in 100 chance to occur in a year, including spring storms in the past two years that together led to the deaths of 16 people and required thousands of high-water rescues.

“Work by scientists has shown that the frequency of these storms is clearly going to be worse because sea levels are rising,” says Texas Tribune and Reveal reporter Neena Satija, who wrote the story with fellow Tribune reporter Kiah Collier and ProPublica's Al Shaw. As readers scroll through, a data visualization dynamically zooms in on a map of Houston, which gradually lights up with colored dots showing where flooding occurred in those two storms—more than a third of which are outside the city's official flood zone, expected to be flooded only once every 100 years.

As the story continues, it weaves in personal stories of residents affected by the floods, showing readers where their homes are located on the map—such as the home of a woman whose two granddaughters were trapped atop tables as dark floodwaters swirled around them during the infamous “Tax Day” flood of 2016. At the same time, it demonstrates how policy decisions can exacerbate the effects of climate change. Runaway development in Harris County where Houston is located has replaced acres of prairie grass, formerly protected by switchgrass, which can have roots as deep as 15 feet, with impervious paved surfaces that



Months before Hurricane Harvey flooded Houston in August, The Texas Tribune/ProPublica's "Boomtown, Flood Town" examined the impact more frequent and bigger rainstorms are having on Houston

impede drainage. By showing those areas of development on the map along with the areas affected by flooding, the visualization helps make apparent the political decisions behind the problem.

Despite those clear associations, the public officials the team interviewed are largely in denial about the effects. The former head of the flood-control district, according to the story, “flat-out disagrees with scientific evidence that shows development is making flooding worse,” and Houston still has no plans to take climate change into account. Since the story was published, residents of Memorial City, a neighborhood particularly hard hit by the flooding, have used it in their lobbying efforts to improve the city’s flood control infrastructure.

As Hurricane Harvey was bearing down on the Gulf Coast in late August, the reporters wrote a follow-up story, warning that the city wasn’t ready for the potential catastrophic consequences of the third superstorm in as many years. Unfortunately, meteorologists’ worst nightmares came true, as almost two feet of rain fell on the city overnight, stranding dozens of residents and causing at least five storm-related deaths in one of the worst natural disasters in Texas history.

Tying climate change to other issues, such as urban development, is one way to make the issue more accessible to a broader range of readers.

Stories by Indian journalist Stella Paul show just how far-reaching the impacts of

climate change can be. While researching AIDS in India in 2012, she noticed two cities that had a significant jump in the number of women working in the sex trade in the southern city of Hyderabad.

Investigating that rise, she discovered that many of the women had recently come to the city from agricultural areas decimated by drought, often after their husbands had committed suicide. Paul interviewed more than 50 women for the story she wrote about the issue for Reuters, shedding light on an unknown consequence of climate change that was hidden in plain sight. “The death of farmers from suicide had been covered very widely, but there was a story right next to it that wasn’t covered at all,” she says.

After that experience, Paul began searching for other stories at the intersection of climate change, gender, and human rights. Through an online network of women activists posting from Africa, South America, and other regions, she began to uncover more issues that had remained under the radar. One recent story details an increase in women being sexually assaulted in Guatemala because they are forced to walk farther to fetch water. Efforts by international NGOs to provide clean water to the villages took on an added urgency from the attacks. “It wasn’t just a health issue, it was a security issue,” she says.

By exploring such topics, Paul says, she is able to create new interest in both climate

change and human rights issues. Finding stories like these sometimes just takes a shift of focus in applying a climate change lens to whatever beat a reporter is currently on. As one example, she remembers a journalist at a workshop in Bhutan, who was struggling to find a business journalism angle on the country. “But Bhutan is completely reliant on tourism, and if the glaciers melt, they won’t have enough hydroelectric power,” she says. “A lot times reporters aren’t even aware of the stories they have when they are sitting right on them.”

One organization that has recently put more effort into funding climate change stories is the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, which has sponsored more than 50 projects looking in-depth at the effect of climate change on lives and livelihoods around the world. One project over the past year for publications including National Geographic looked at the way Bangladesh is adapting to rising sea levels—including “floating hospitals” in low-lying areas where permanent hospitals are no longer possible. In another story it funded this spring for The New York Times, reporter Kai Schultz looks at the island nation of the Maldives, where a green tax on resorts has fallen prey to government corruption, leaving guesthouse owners—and tourists—unprotected from rising seas. Despite the \$3-a-night tax paid by tourists at guesthouses, residents on one island have been forced to construct their own makeshift seawall out of pieces of

concrete and broken tiles to protect themselves from the surging waves.

In addition to funding articles, the Pulitzer Center's efforts have focused on outreach to bring climate change stories to more diverse constituencies. To date, it has formed partnerships with 35 colleges and universities, ranging from liberal arts schools to large state colleges, as well as high schools and middle schools in St. Louis, Chicago, New York, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and North Carolina to design curricula around climate change topics. "They are more or less neutral spaces where you can engage people who have maybe not made up their minds," says Jon Sawyer, executive director of the Pulitzer Center.

For future grants, the center is working in a component that gives additional funding for efforts to reach new audiences with innovative techniques, such as data visualization or short videos for social media. "There is a lot of disinformation and distortion out there, with large segments of society being inundated with sources telling them climate change is not an issue," Sawyer says. "Show us how a piece might end up on Fox or right-wing radio and have some credibility."

Sawyer is not the only journalist working to find unconventional ways to tell climate change stories in order to reach a broader audience. After writing about climate change for 15 years, radio journalist Jason Margolis was feeling frustrated that he was only reaching those who were already convinced by the science. "I wanted to try and hit that sweet spot where people could still be persuaded to listen," he says. Through a yearlong Knight-Wallace Fellowship at the University of Michigan, he developed new angles on the story, taking as his inspiration comedians like Jon Stewart and John Oliver, who are able to tell hard-hitting news stories in an entertaining way.

The stories he has produced in the past few years for Public Radio International address the topic of climate change with a breezy, even quirky sensibility. One features a climate activist and self-dubbed "eco-tainer" in Indianapolis, who emcees a monthly game show called "Ain't Too Late Show" that has the audience in stitches at the same time it teaches them climate facts. Another follows the story of a composer who created a classical music concept album that follows a drop of water from snow pack to ocean to atmosphere as a way to draw attention to climate-induced water shortages. He's clearly struck a nerve: The album, which includes lyrics from ancient texts in 10 different languages, debuted at number 1 on

Billboard's traditional classical album chart.

Several of Margolis's recent stories are set in Mexico, where Margolis took an extended trip. Among his stops was the legendary, if faded, resort town of Acapulco, which was ravaged by tropical storm Manuel the previous fall. Many of the interviews he'd arranged with resort owners were lackluster—for them, the storm was a dramatic event from which they quickly recovered.

Walking down the beach with his fixer, however, he discovered a village where residents were still recovering from the damage. "When you go to one of these resort towns, you forget about the people who are washing your dishes and changing your sheets," he says. "After the storm, this hotel was up and running five minutes later, and these people's lives were destroyed. It's a good reminder that if you have money, then even with the worst of climate change, you can pay your way out of it." Despite the heaviness of the topic, Margolis still keeps the tone conversational as he talks to a community leader who has vowed to stick it out in his hometown, which dates back 400 years, despite the fact that many of its houses are now buried with silt that overflowed from the nearby river.

A similar balance between serious subject matter and engaging delivery has been the hallmark of "Years of Living Dangerously," the television series on the National Geographic Channel (previously on Showtime). The show follows an unusual hybrid model, bringing in actors and other celebrities to investigate serious climate-related issues. In the inaugural episode, Harrison Ford travels to Indonesia to investigate deforestation from palm oil plantations. In later episodes, "Dawson's Creek" alum Joshua Jackson explores coral bleaching, Jessica Alba talks with clean energy entrepreneurs, and—in one of his few appearances post-"Late Show"—David Letterman charmingly examines India's

transition to a solar-based economy.

"There is always a risk bringing in Hollywood actors that you will turn some people off," says co-creator Joel Bach. But that's outweighed, he says, by the huge amounts of additional attention they can draw. Still, Bach and co-creator David Gelber—both former producers of "60 Minutes"—are careful not to position the stars as experts on the subject matter. "They are really proxies for the viewer, and there to learn along with the audience," Gelber says.

Bach and Gelber created the series after struggling to cover climate change at "60 Minutes." "I had this sense that, my God, this really is the biggest story out there, and '60 Minutes' wasn't covering it the way we wanted to," Gelber says. In addition to the star power, the producers focused on high production values, shooting episodes in a highly cinematic fashion. Despite the shiny surface, the show doesn't sacrifice journalistic rigor, tackling complex scientific and economic concepts in naturalistic on-location interviews and trying to focus on solutions, rather than just fill the screen with doom and gloom. They hope their show can be an antidote to the almost total lack of coverage of the issue on network news. "I mean, God damn it," Gelber says. "Twenty years from now, people will look back at NBC, CBS, and ABC and wonder what the bleep were they thinking."

Whether the nightly news is covering it or the current presidential administration is supporting it, there are still plenty of stories out there on climate change for enterprising journalists to discover, says Yale's Ward. In addition to exploring how individual communities are affected by and adapting to climate change, there are legitimate policy debates about the best solutions—whether to support technologies, such as natural gas and nuclear, and how to best support and incentivize a switch to renewable energy that can drive down the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

While climate change is perhaps *the* global issue, it is an intensely local one, with effects from climate change felt on agriculture and business from coastal cities to rural farms. The place to look for stories is close to home as well, says Northeastern's Wihbey. "The more you bring scientists and journalists together, it's all to the good," he says. "In any given city or region, there are going to be just a handful of climate scientists and just a handful of journalists who cover the environment. I would think any small organization can provide some event space and a lunch and just say, 'Hey, we want to bring you guys together to talk on an informal basis.'" ■

**"The more you
bring scientists
and journalists
together, it's
all to the good"**
—John Wihbey
Northeastern University professor



**NIEMAN
STORYBOARD**

Put Journalism in the

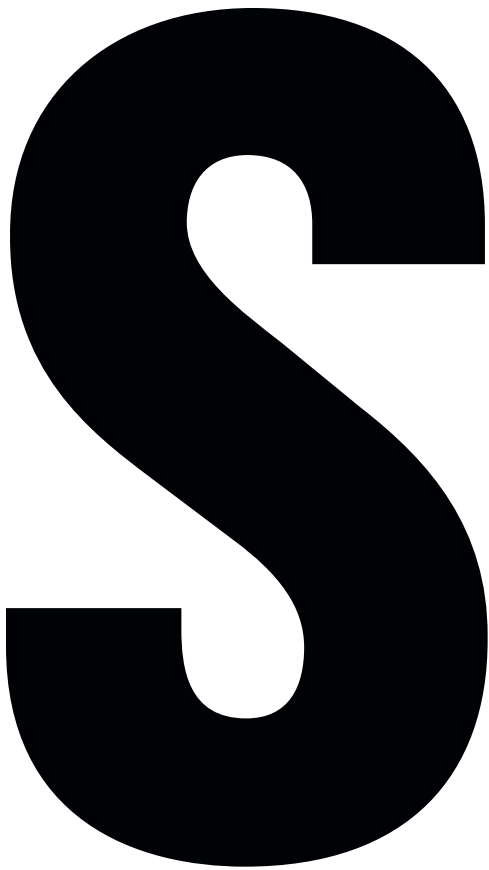
How the People's Archive of Rural India is documenting the lives and

BY SHALINI SINGH



Hands of Communities

labors of some of the country's poorest, most marginalized populations



AUD UR REHMAN had been standing in line at the bank for eight hours before he called his wife and cousin, complaining of chest pains. It was the third consecutive day that Rehman, owner of a computer repair shop, had arrived at the Bank of India branch in central Delhi well before dawn, hoping to exchange his 500 and 1,000-rupee bills, rendered useless just eight days before, when India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced demonetization of the two notes.

Rehman waited hours each day, only to be turned away after the bank ran out of cash or the counters closed before he made it to the front of the line. On the third day, the 48-year-old left the bank empty-handed once again and rushed himself to the hospital after reportedly suffering a heart attack. He later died, with doctors speculating that the strain of standing in line, coupled with a lack of rest and food, brought on the attack.

On November 8, 2016, the Indian government announced that currency notes of 500 rupees (about \$7.50) and 1,000 rupees (about \$15) would cease to be legal tender. It was part of an effort, Modi said, to curb corruption and encourage Indians to start using

formal credit systems. The bills accounted for over 85 percent of the banknotes in circulation—in a country where 90 percent of all business transactions are cash and upwards of 230 million people, 18 percent of the population, are unbanked, according to a 2015 PricewaterhouseCoopers India report.

Implemented with no warning, demonetization left many Indians in a panic. For days, people stood in lines snaking for blocks outside banks and ATMs. Severe cash shortages brought much of the economy to a halt. Many unbanked vendors, small businesses, and farmers were unable to buy provisions, causing shortages of food and basic goods, and service providers—from taxi and rickshaw drivers to barbers and doctors—were forced to refuse services. Dozens of people like Rehman died, whether from collapsing while waiting in long lines or because hospitals refused to help patients trying to pay with old banknotes.

The national Indian media, with a few exceptions, examined how the country's billionaire club had shrunk, the toll demonetization took on the real estate market, and what urban professionals should invest in

now. Few turned their lens on those who, in some ways, demonetization hurt the most: rural Indians.

That's where the People's Archive of Rural India (PARI) came in. It was PARI that chronicled the plight of small farmers and traders, laborers and poor migrants, domestic help and other impoverished groups in the wake of the demonetization announcement. PARI told the stories of people like Varda Balayya, a 42-year-old farmer from Telangana who—seeing no other way to escape his financial woes after demonetization quashed his plans to sell some of his land to pay off debts—mixed pesticide in a meal of chicken curry, fatally poisoning himself and his father.

On the same day India introduced demonetization, America chose Donald Trump as its next president, an outcome the mainstream media and major pollsters completely missed. One reason the election result came as a surprise: the disconnect between those living in rural communities and those living in cities. "Urban folk need to better understand those communities," says Robert Jensen, journalism professor at the University of Texas at Austin, who has long



“Captain Bhau” returns to the scene of a daring raid he led during India’s fight for independence from British rule. PARI brought his story to a new generation PREVIOUS SPREAD: PARI features Senu Devi in a video about how rising waters and floods are threatening her village

used “Everybody Loves a Good Drought: Stories from India’s Poorest Districts,” by Palagummi Sainath, PARI’s founder, to teach his classes about reporting from India’s poorest districts. “And people living in rural areas also need to better understand the forces that are undermining their ability to live decent lives.”

PARI may provide one model for doing just that. “I know nothing of its kind, says Arlie Russell Hochschild, author of “Strangers In Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right.” “PARI could provide a model to be adopted around the world.”

India is a nation of 1.3 billion people, two-thirds of whom—some 833 million—live in rural areas, a mosaic of ethnic and religious minorities dispersed across 29 states. The country is home to more than 780 languages (though only 22 are officially recognized) and many more dialects, with some spoken by millions and others by just a few. Sainath founded PARI in 2014 to document the everyday lives of everyday people in rural India.

“Worldwide, there is a retreat from the rural in the economy and an almost eclipse

of the rural in the media,” says Sainath, the former rural affairs editor at *The Hindu*, an 139-year-old English-language daily. “We have full-time fashion correspondents, design correspondents, glamour correspondents, you name it, but we don’t have a full-time poverty correspondent, not one. There’s no one full-time on the beat of rural poverty, full-time on the beat of agriculture, full-time on the beat of employment. There is one newspaper in Kolkata which had the privilege of appointing the first full-time golf correspondent. The statistical negligibility of golf in the Indian population is beyond my mathematical ability to compute.”

Sainath began his journalism career in 1980 after graduating with an M.A. in history from Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. Despite being from one of India’s largest cities, Chennai (formerly Madras), in southern India, Sainath built his career on a commitment to reporting on rural Indians. In the early 1990s, Sainath covered some 62,000 miles, including many on foot, to report on the increasing distress of farmers devastated by droughts, floods, and misguided govern-

mental policies. That work led to his 1996 book, “Everybody Loves a Good Drought,” now used as a teaching tool in over 100 universities in India and abroad.

With PARI, Sainath seeks to bridge the urban-rural divide. (Disclosure: I am a founding trustee of CounterMedia Trust, the nonprofit that owns PARI.) “In the archival sense, we’ve been called ‘a Smithsonian from below,’” says Sainath, because of the focus on documenting traditional ways of life, some already vanished. “Here it is not ‘white man queries native.’ We shift focus from celebrity-led or marketing-driven journalism, from the lives of the elite, to the lives and labor of ordinary people and communities. We understand journalism as having a social role. We are independent, not neutral.”

PARI does not accept donations from governments or corporations, so to keep the site going Sainath and a core group of donors regularly contribute funds in addition to money donated by users of the site. Eight journalists are paid a monthly stipend to work full-time out of a small office near Mumbai. This team is supplemented by a

network of about 125 photographers and 90 writers across India, 10 full-time fellows, and nearly 1,500 citizen-journalist volunteers. Samyukta Shastri, a young college graduate, reports, photographs, and helps out with administrative work because she wants to believe that “utopia is possible.”

The PARI site is structured by categories. Things We Do is about the vast world of rural Indian labor—farmers, woodcutters, blacksmiths, and people like Karukavel Nadar, who climbs nearly 5,000 feet throughout the course of his day, scaling trees to tap them for sap to make palm molasses and fermented palm wine. Things We Make is about rural arts, crafts, skills, and traditions, such as schools of sculpture and weaving, many of which are dying out.

One recent PARI project, Foot-Soldiers of Freedom, sought to preserve the history of India’s freedom fighters—rural Indians, most of them now well into their 80s and 90s—who fought for independence from British rule. Two people whose stories are chronicled are Demathi Dei Sabar, a member of the Sabar tribe who, as a teenager in 1930, attacked a British officer with a stick

The Faces project is an effort to capture the facial diversity of ordinary Indians, something that is not reflected in mainstream media

after he shot her father during a raid on their village, and Ramachandra Shripati Lad, known as Captain Bhau (“Elder Brother”), a founding member of the armed wing of the *prati sarkar*, revolutionaries who, from 1943 to 1946, formed an underground government separate from the Raj in the state of Maharashtra.

“The whole history of the *prati sarkar* was dead until PARI revived it,” Deepak Lad, grandson of R.S. Lad, says his grandfather, now 95, told him. “That great chapter in our history was erased. We had fought for independence, then the years passed by and our contribution was forgotten. [PARI] restored us to the consciousness of our society.”

Another unique PARI effort focuses on unsung women. The Grindmill Songs

Project is a collection of thousands of songs from the women in Maharashtra’s villages, sung over generations during household chores, especially while at the grindmill, which is used to make flour from grain. The songs offer insights into women’s daily lives, but also into village life and culture, religion and mythology, and social and political issues, including gender, class, and caste.

In one song, a woman sings of Brahmin women, the highest of the four Hindu castes, having to do the menial chores typically performed by Dalits, the lowest caste. The database has 110,000-plus song lyrics, nearly 40,000 of which have been translated into English and/or French. Close to 30,000 have been digitally recorded.

“One of our mandates is to bring the lives

Capturing India’s diversity: With the Faces project, PARI aims to photograph Indians from all 640 districts



MOHINI DEVI, farmer
Matela, Uttarakhand



SACHINBHAI, student
Kalej, Gujarat



OHAME, hunter-gatherer
Jarawa Tribal Reserve,
Andaman and Nicobar Islands

LEFT TO RIGHT: ARPITA CHAKRABARTY, GURPREET SINGH, MADHUSREE MUKERJEE, PURUSOTTAM THAKUR, ANJORA NONOHA, NAMITA WAIKAR

of rural Indians in their voices and words,” says PARI’s managing editor, Namita Waikar, who is overseeing the project. “That is exactly what these women are expressing: their stories handed down through generations.”

The Faces project is an effort to capture the facial diversity of ordinary Indians. The goal: photograph at least three people—one adult male, one adult female, and a child/adolescent—from each of India’s 10,000-plus blocks (a block is the most basic administrative unit) across 640 districts. So far, images of more than 600 faces, taken by some 125 photographers, have been posted online. “We’d started looking at the faces of ordinary Indians early into PARI’s existence, because their faces never appear in the media and therefore in public consciousness,” says Sainath. “That space is reserved for the elite—the privileged, film stars, celebrities, and the like.”

This chronicling of Indian diversity has taken on a new urgency since many urban Indians are unaware of how diverse their country actually is. As thousands of young people from regions like the northeast of India move to places like Delhi, Bangalore,

and other large cities, attacks on them—beatings, molestations, rapes, and even murders—have been on the rise. The attacks on students from the northeast begin with taunting them over their Chinese features. Then this escalates into physical violence sometimes. And in some cases, death.

Among the most prominent recent cases was that of Nido Tania, a 20-year-old student from Arunachal Pradesh, who was murdered because of his east Asian features by a shopkeeper and his friends in a Delhi market in 2014. Racially-motivated violence “has risen a lot in a period when there is a great deal of consciously promoted stereotypes of what is Indian or who is an Indian,” explains Sainath. “Faces shows us there’s no one face that is ‘typically Indian.’”

Anyone with a camera is encouraged to participate and take photographs—with the subject’s informed consent. Along with a photo, participating amateur photographers are asked to upload various details about the photograph’s subject: their name, occupation (or parents’ occupation), age, where the photo was taken, and a short quote. Along the way, PARI is building a list of little-known

occupations—like snake-catcher or face reader—offering further insight into the daily lives of rural Indians.

“What’s going on in India is a giant de-skilling of the countryside,” Sainath says. “We’re taking these people and telling them to drive auto rickshaws. The occupational diversity, linguistic diversity, you name it, it’s there. None of this is ever reflected in your media. Millions of genres of songs and music are disappearing. That was the idea of the People’s Archive of Rural India. How do we start capturing at least fragments in our lifetime?”

Many photographers, often students from upper-caste backgrounds, are engaging with Indians they otherwise would never encounter. Nine students of the Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan spent their holidays this past May and June shooting faces for PARI in the states of West Bengal and Himachal Pradesh. “The image I had of rural folk and what I have now is completely different because I learned about their lives—illiteracy, child marriage, especially among girls, nutrition issues,” says Arnab Kumar Sen, a 23-year-old



RAIBARI MAJHI, farmer
Koyba, Chhattisgarh



S.K. KARMA
Rupa, Arunachal Pradesh



KOTTAVARAYAN RAJENDRAN,
auto rickshaw owner/driver
Kanchipuram town, Tamil Nadu

A PARI mentor finds an opportunity to teach—and to learn

Storytelling is a two-way street at PARI, with professional journalists mentoring locals with no background in reporting. This summer I mentored a PARI fellow, Stanzin Saldon, a Buddhist woman of indigenous background, on a reporting trip in Leh in northern India's Ladakh region.

We were first introduced over email by PARI's managing editor, who said Saldon had studied medicine and been a W.J. Clinton Fellow at the American India Foundation but had never done any reporting. We spoke on the phone and finally met over coffee in Delhi in the winter of 2016 to discuss her story ideas from the region. This was the



From left: Reporter Shalini Singh, PARI fellow Stanzin Saldon, Tsering Angmo (queen of Henasku), and friend Fayaz Ali in the village Henasku, outside of Kargil

master's student in mass communication, who contributed photos of faces from the Hooghly district of West Bengal.

PARI staffers empower people to tell their own stories, without a journalist as intermediary. Jayamma Belliah, an indigenous woman from a village in the Chamarajanagar district, in the southwest state of Karnataka, had never used a camera before Jared Marguiles gave her a lesson in photography. Marguiles, with support from the 2015-2016 Fulbright Nehru Student Research Grant and the University of Maryland, helped Belliah take photographs of her daily life over the course of six months.

Living on the fringes of the forested Bandipur National Park, a tiger reserve, she produced a photo essay that sheds light not

just on relationships between humans and wildlife, but on the unique socio-economic realities—such as prescriptive approaches to wildlife conservation—faced by rural poor living on a wildlife reservation. Among other images, Belliah shot pictures of her two nieces, who, if they hope to continue their education, will have to live in a distant hostel during the week since there is no high school nearby. She also shot the treehouses where, during harvest season, groundnut farmers spend each night, guarding their fields against elephants and wild boars.

Purna Das was a largely unknown poet and fisherman before a PARI story on him, “The Poet-Singer of Dhinkia,” a video of Das singing a protest song he composed, made him something of a legend among very poor

communities. The song rails against South Korean steelmaker POSCO, which had leased from the government a 2,700-acre plot in the area to build a \$12 billion steel plant—something farmers and others vehemently opposed due to the harm the project could do to the environment and the land it would take out of agricultural use. The song—with lyrics such as “why are you looting our land by giving false promises of jobs” and “POSCO will destroy the shelters of the people and the paddy”—became an anthem of the protest movement. In March, POSCO scrapped its plans, in part due to protests and in part due to regulatory hurdles.

Indian news anchor and consulting editor at the India Today group Rajdeep Sardesai says PARI serves as a “reminder” to the mainstream press: “I view PARI as a daily wake-up call. In terms of challenges, for niche sites, including PARI, is how to dovetail your concerns to a wider audience.”

Though PARI's readership is still mostly made up of journalists, academics, and activists, the site is beginning to extend its reach by sharing its content with around 30 district newspapers in the state of

PARI is mainly read by journalists, academics, and activists but its reach is growing through sharing stories with popular news sites

first time I was acting as an editor or mentor; I had to help shape someone else's ideas that would turn into full-length stories in the coming months.

I didn't choose the topics, people, or settings for Saldon's stories. I just asked her to keep to PARI's mandate—everyday lives of everyday people—which she did. I found Saldon had a natural flair for picking general interest subjects, as I helped her link the local flavor to a broader context. For instance, her story on how an abandoned village in Kargil, in the conflict-ridden state of Kashmir, became a tourist museum would have wider interest if we contextualized Kargil as the region in which the last India-Pakistan war took place in 1999.

A few months later, PARI's editorial chief Sharmila Joshi and I dug into our savings and

excitedly made plans to travel with Saldon to help build her confidence in reporting and for us to get to know a new region in our country.

While Sharmila helped Saldon with scheduling, writing style, reporting discipline, and formats that suited PARI, I worked with Saldon on interviewing people, especially on sensitive issues and overcoming initial apprehensions. Huddled around bonfires in the cold nights, during long drives through vast stretches of mountainous landscape, we had informal chats covering everything from religious philosophy to our love lives. We discussed how to work around Saldon's hesitancy to ask local women their ages or full names, details needed for her stories. I pointed out the advantage she had over a city

reporter: Speaking to people in their own language and hence being able to more easily establish a rapport.

Even before I arrived in Leh, Saldon had produced a multimedia piece about 62-year-old Tsering Angchuk, a farmer from the village of Sneyimo (population: 1,100). Tsering travels from village to village with his portable loom, weaving his signature fabric called "snamboo." Saldon captured a smiling Tsering at work and wrote about their conversation over the local salty tea. She painted his love for the loom like that of a writer in solitude doing what he or she does best. "Tsering pours some hot Ladakhi tea for me and a small wooden bowl of chaang (local beer made from barley) for himself; a few kittens jump into his lap as soon as he sits down.

He enjoys being alone in the winters. This is when he can concentrate on what he really loves—weaving."

Among the stories Saldon reported during our collaboration were a heartwarming tale of two intercaste women opening a tailoring shop in an old market, a piece about the feminist struggles of a local woman hailing from a royal lineage, and a photo essay on a women-run market in Kargil.

As a reporter, I found it illuminating to also look at stories through a collaborative lens instead of in a competitive, regimented format. And since our first meeting in Leh, Saldon has gone on to make news herself—for, in spite of protests from family members and local officials, marrying a Muslim man. I am already proud. —Shalini Singh



Jayamma Belliah is among the PARI contributors empowered to tell their own stories. Her photo essay for PARI examines life on the edge of a tiger reserve

Karnataka and several popular Indian news sites, including Scroll and The Wire. Other sites modeled on PARI are starting to appear, too. PARI has inspired the Janaavishkaara People's Participatory Portal in the state of Kerala, and, outside of India, a South African people's archive of township jazz and a people's archive in Nova Scotia are in the works.

Inspired by PARI's idea, the Antigonish County Adult Learning Association in Nova Scotia has been engaging adult learners in developing media projects for educational and community development purposes. "A website is slowly being developed where we also build a collection of stories of rural living in Nova Scotia, where depopulation from rural areas is an ongoing serious concern," says Carole Roy, professor at St. Francis Xavier University.

As for PARI, "We are going far beyond making [tribal peoples] and Dalits the subjects of the stories," Sainath explains. "Now we are making them the authors. The idea is to take journalism and put it back in the hands of communities. People telling their own lives, documenting their own lives." ■

Death, Nationality, and the “Newsworthy” Image

“Death Makes the News” examines the narratives conveyed by photographs taken in the U.S. vs. abroad during times of tragedy

BY JESSICA M. FISHMAN

In “Death Makes the News: How the Media Censor and Display the Dead,” published in November by NYU Press, social scientist Jessica M. Fishman probes a double standard in the U.S. media regarding images of death in the U.S. versus elsewhere. Her research included an examination of 30 years of photojournalism and interviews with more than two dozen editors and photojournalists working at the Los Angeles Times, The New York Post, The New York Times, the Philadelphia Daily News, The Philadelphia Inquirer, The San Diego Union-Tribune, ABC News, NBC News, CNN, and the Associated Press. Fishman’s examination found that images of corpses from other countries are much more likely to be published than such images of dead Americans. Whereas the magnitude of a tragedy in a foreign nation has a direct bearing on the likelihood that an image of death will be published in American newspapers, the reverse is true for tragedies in the U.S. She writes, “When news cameras document foreign tragedy, it is argued that these kinds of ‘unsettling’ images should be shown precisely because they harness the horror, but pictures documenting American bodies are actually condemned for being disturbing.” Fishman, who holds a joint appointment at the University of Pennsylvania’s Perelman School of Medicine and Annenberg School for Communication, hopes her work will foster discussion about why U.S. editors decide as they do. An excerpt:

Excerpted from “Death Makes the News: How the Media Censor and Display the Dead,” by Jessica M. Fishman, published by NYU Press 2017. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

ALTHOUGH NEWS EDITORS AND audiences tend to have faith that there is value in bearing witness to foreign tragedy, fantasizing about the potential benefits of seeing these images, we do not imagine that the domestic depictions could have positive effects. Instead, we expect that pictures, which happen to reveal domestic deaths, will cause great harm and should not be published.

When reporting on Hurricane Katrina, photojournalism, in general, was treasured. However, the pictures of the dead were specifically dismissed. Similarly, in news coverage of the September 11th terrorist attacks, photojournalism was generally given an esteemed position, elevated above the role of words. But the images of the fatalities were again dismissed as un-newsworthy, even though the words reporting on death were prioritized. When death is the subject at hand, the value we otherwise place on documentary pictures is often inverted.

U.S. news media regard Americans’ demise as the most newsworthy. Several studies of U.S. news have reached this conclusion after finding that, when Americans die, the news media are more likely to report on the event and give the story more prominence. But these conclusions were reached by studying the use of words, and measured things like the frequency and size of headlines and the length of copy. The pictures have not been a focus. How we literally view the world—what we do and do not see—may also be dictated by nationalistic impulses. Quite possibly, the geopolitical chauvinism shaping the use of words also influences the use of pictures. If the same

editorial bias influences how editors select pictures, the news images would be less likely to focus on the foreign than the domestic death. But does photojournalism follow the same formula? To address this question, we examined three decades of news coverage in four large U.S. newspapers to track how often postmortem pictures reveal American bodies. Nationality does powerfully influence which images are judged newsworthy.

But in contrast to the words that focus on American victims, the pictures mostly refuse to focus on them. Among news coverage of current events, only 30 percent of photographs documenting a death depict an American victim. Even though most news stories report on American tragedy, 70 percent of the pictures documenting fatalities do so by depicting another country’s loss of life. In a heavily lopsided way, editors judge pictures of dead foreigners to be most newsworthy.

Every day, photo editors have to make decisions not only about which images to run but also about how to run them. They have to choose which are worth publishing large, and which should appear on the front page or home page. For this reason, we also assessed the size and placement of American and foreign corpse images. We also judged whether the corpse is cropped closely, or appears in an image’s background because the perceived distance of the subject serves as another measure of prominence. For each of these measures, our team found that the foreign corpse photograph is used more prominently than the American corpse photograph. The foreign pictures run larger and are more likely to be placed on the front page or home page. In addition, the vast majority of photos depicting American corpses place the body in the distance, but foreign corpses are typically revealed close up or at midrange.

Just a few months prior to Hurricane Katrina, on December 26, 2004, an undersea megathrust earthquake triggered a series of devastating tsunamis along the bordering coasts of the Indian Ocean. With a magnitude between 9.1 and 9.3, it was the third-largest earthquake ever recorded on a seismograph, and over 227,800 people died,



Nationality does powerfully influence which images are judged newsworthy



Following a domestic tragedy, U.S. media often publish images featuring symbols of America's strength, such as a flag that survived Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans

making this earthquake one of the deadliest in recorded history, as well as the deadliest tsunami in history.

Given that the hurricane and tsunami were both large-scale natural disasters occurring just a few months apart, it is useful to compare the photojournalism generated. For this purpose, we examined how large, respected newspapers covered the first two weeks. By taking a close look at the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, and *Los Angeles Times*, we found instructive patterns quickly emerging that again illustrate the role of nationalism.

The *Boston Globe*, for example, used corpses to clearly illustrate the horrors of the Indian Ocean tragedy, but not the loss of life during the domestic disaster. In fact, during the first fourteen days of Katrina coverage, the *Boston Globe* included no photographs of corpses or even body bags in the stories detailing the nearly two thousand deaths. Instead, the photojournalism documented survivors, emergency officials, and the newly reformed landscape. The images most suggestive of death included photographs of thoroughly concealed corpses made invisible by closed coffins. Photojournalists covering Katrina had documented American corpses, and these images were made available by wire services, but they were widely rejected by editors.

By contrast, during its first fourteen days of tsunami coverage, the *Boston Globe* published eight photographs of corpses, in

addition to four photographs of body bags. The *Washington Post* included ten pictures of visible corpses in just the first seven days of its tsunami coverage, but was relatively reluctant to show the Americans killed by Katrina. Even though corpse photographs were much more likely to appear in the coverage of the tsunami, the coverage of the domestic tragedy included more pictures.

Tragedies enlarge the role of photojournalism—increasing the number of photographs that run and the prominence they are given—and this is especially true when the threat is domestic. But during American crises, photojournalism's role grows, as the value of certain pictures diminishes. When covering catastrophe abroad, a much wider range of images is permitted.

In times of trouble, when a nation is responding to a crisis, such as a large terrorist attack or a major natural disaster, the news acts as much more than just a vehicle

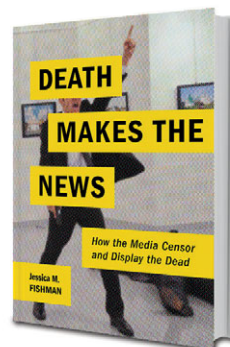
for conveying facts. As many social scientists have observed, the news favors storytelling, promoting narratives that help articulate a nation's identity. They tell stories reinforcing the group's ideal sense of who they are collectively.

With a narrative arc that reflects a sense of progress, restoration, and redemption, the storytelling by American news media during a crisis is saturated with the "language of civic renewal." Reporters queue this narrative when announcing the presence of a major American tragedy that, in their

common refrain, has "shocked" the nation. Bystanders, commentators, and reporters themselves share their astonishment at the magnitude of the death and destruction. Eventually, the reporting turns to talk of a nation united in "mourning." And ultimately, the narrative portrays a nation ready to emerge stronger.

Meanwhile, photojournalism offers its brand of affirmation. In coverage of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the same types of images fueled photojournalism. The cameras again captured many homemade signs declaring, "America will overcome." Journalists, like those in *Time* magazine, elaborated on such sentiments: "So much that was precious has died, but as though in a kind of eternal promise, something new has been born. We are seeing it in our nation and sensing it in ourselves, a new faith in our oldest values, a rendezvous with grace." *Newsweek's* headline boldly announced, "We Shall Overcome." The photojournalistic coverage of 9/11 also resembled that of the Oklahoma City bombing as cameras documented the massive wreckage. There was no shortage of pictures recording the damage to the World Trade Centers. In addition, the cameras zoomed in on first responders, especially the firefighters, who were heralded as heroes. The cameras also locked on ordinary citizens supporting one another in tearful embraces.

In news coverage of major international tragedies, the corpse is shown because it is considered part of an editor's noble pursuit to reveal the magnitude of loss. There are few words or pictures communicating about a triumphant national destiny. In contrast to the domestic coverage that revels in the heroes, whether in the form of teachers (like those responding to the Newtown massacre), firefighters (as was the case with the 9/11 Twin Tower coverage), or other first responders, news coverage of foreign crises habitually neglects the role of the hero, along with other staples of the redemptive narrative. In reporting on tragedy abroad, there is a notable absence of flags and other signs of a nation's strength. There is also no place for talking about another country's "great land" or a nation that "prevails"—sentiments that are commonly shared in news coverage of domestic tragedy to signal the nation's glorious calling. In the accounting of foreign tragedies, a dire narrative unravels. In this context, certain positive attributes may seem like mostly American traits because, through words and pictures, we build national narratives distinguishing ourselves from others. ■



"Death Makes the News: How the Media Censor and Display the Dead" by Jessica M. Fishman (NYU Press)

1954

Richard Dudman died in Blue Hill, Maine on August 3 at the age of 99. He worked at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch for more than three decades beginning in 1949. He covered wars and revolutions around the world, from Cuba and Guatemala to the Middle East. He was in Dallas when John F. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963 and witnessed the president's assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, being killed by Jack Ruby two days later. He was Washington bureau chief when he retired in 1981, covering the assassination

attempt of President Ronald Reagan on his last day at work. Dudman also was among three journalists ambushed by Viet Cong fighters and held for more than a month in Cambodia in 1970.

1966

Wayne Woodlief died on August 12 at the age of 82. He was a longtime Boston Herald political columnist, with stints as the newspaper's Washington correspondent and political editor. He covered every U.S. presidential campaign from 1968 to 2004.

1968

Gerald Grant died September 20 in Syracuse, New York at the

age of 79. Grant was education editor at The Washington Post before pursuing his doctorate in the sociology of education at Harvard in 1972. He taught at Syracuse University and wrote several books about education reform.

1977

Hennie van Deventer is the author of "Laatoes - Kykweer van 'n kanniedood-koerantman" ("Late Vintage - Review by a Die-Hard Newspaperman"), published this summer by Naledi. The book, van Deventer's 18th, is a collection of essays and profiles of people van Deventer got to know during his 36-year-long newspaper career in South

Africa, including one chapter on his Nieman year.

1992

Deborah Amos is the recipient of a 2017 Courage in Journalism Award from the International Women's Media Foundation. Amos, who covers the Middle East for NPR, has reported from conflict zones around the world for nearly four decades, including covering the Tiananmen Square massacre, the first Gulf War, and the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

2000

Stephen Smith is the new education editor at The Washington Post, a position

“Loyalty, fair play, and all those old-fashioned things”

Pippa Green, NF '99, reflects on the apartheid-era career of her late father, Michael J. Green, NF '68

Michael J. Green, NF '68, former editor in chief of the Daily News and Sunday Tribune, died in Durban, South Africa on August 30. He was 87.

My father's old colleague Harvey Tyson, a retired editor, wrote to me after my father's death: "He lived as a gentleman who practiced loyalty, fair play, and all those old-fashioned things throughout his working life."

My father always said he would have loved to study music but his parents could not afford to send him to university.

Instead, just 17 years old, he began working as a reporter at The Argus, a Cape Town daily. The following year, 1948, when the apartheid government came to power, marked the beginning of a period—which lasted most of the rest of his career—when press censorship laws became increasingly stringent in a bid to stop reporting on the effects of racial oppression. Later, as the top editor at the Daily News in Durban and then the Sunday Tribune based in the same city, he frequently ran into trouble with the government.

In 1974, my father was in charge of the Daily News on the day it ran a story about a banned rally—broken up by the

police—celebrating the new independence of former Portuguese colonies Mozambique and Angola. The next night, as editors did in those days, Daily News editor John O'Malley and he attended a wine-tasting at a beachfront hotel. "We had barely sipped the cabernet sauvignon," wrote my father in his memoir, when three uniformed policemen appeared and arrested O'Malley. When they established that O'Malley had been away that day, they arrested my father. In the subsequent trial, O'Malley was acquitted and my father cautioned.

A decade later there was an incident involving Pravin Gordhan, then an anti-apartheid political activist, today one of the first post-apartheid cabinet ministers to be axed for standing up to corruption in

President Jacob Zuma's administration. In the apartheid era, Gordhan was frequently harassed by the white government. In the mid-1980s, he was jailed without trial under a State of Emergency. He was tortured both physically and psychologically, to the extent that he was admitted to a hospital under police guard. Two Daily News reporters happened to see him at a window in the hospital and informed his wife, who badgered the police until they confirmed he was there. When the paper reported this, it was threatened with prosecution. It was a crime to report on the condition of detainees. When my father told the police they themselves had confirmed the news to Gordhan's wife, the investigating officer replied: "Ah, yes. But did we confirm it to you?"



Michael J. Green, center, in 1974 with John O'Malley, right

he assumed in August. Smith had been the city editor at The Boston Globe since 2011.

2004

Masha Gessen's "The Future Is History: How Totalitarianism Reclaimed Russia" is the nonfiction winner of the 2017 National Book Award.

2006

Charles Sennott is co-founder of Report for America, a partnership between the GroundTruth Project (of which Sennott is founder and CEO) and Google News Lab. The program, similar to Teach for America, will place emerging journalists into local newsrooms across the country for a term of service.

2007

Craig Welch is the recipient of a Society of Environmental Journalists Award for Reporting on the Environment in the outstanding beat reporting, large market category. Welch won for his environmental reporting for National Geographic, with judges noting that "Welch's stories showed how the mastery of a beat can produce compelling, cutting edge journalism."

2012

Tyler Bridges was a fellow for the fall semester at the Harvard Kennedy School's Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy, where he wrote about the role of conservative bloggers in debunking mainstream news stories. Bridges is a New Orleans-based freelance journalist who reports on Louisiana politics for The Advocate.

2013

Katrin Bennhold has been named the Berlin bureau chief for The New York Times. Bennhold has been a correspondent for the Times

since 2004, based first in France and then in London.

Alexandra Garcia is among The New York Times journalists who won a News and Documentary Emmy in October for "The Forger." The short film tells the story of Adolfo Kaminsky, who created false passports that helped save thousands of children from the Nazis and other people around the globe from major conflicts of the mid-20th century.

Karim Ben Khelifa's virtual reality project, "The Enemy," was at the MIT Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts, through December 31. Participants in the immersive experience encounter combatants on opposing sides of conflicts in Israel and Palestine, the Congo, and El Salvador.

Souad Mekhennet is the recipient of the 2017 Daniel Pearl Award, presented by the Chicago Journalists Association for her work investigating Islamic extremism as a Washington Post national security reporter and author of "I Was Told To Come Alone: My Journey Behind the Lines of Jihad."

Truong Huy San was featured in the PBS documentary series "The Vietnam War," directed by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick.

2014

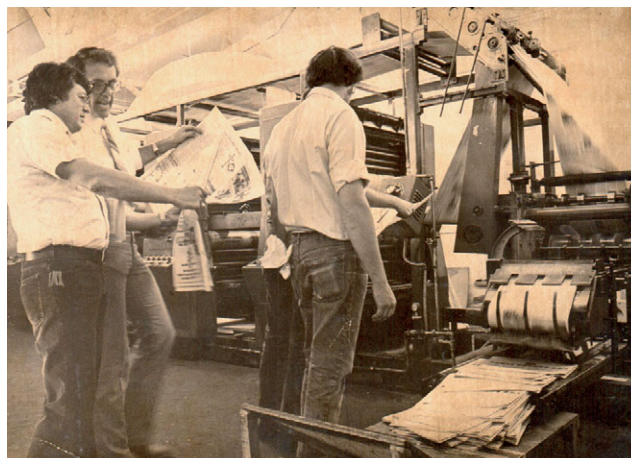
Flavia Krause-Jackson is the new London-based U.K. government team leader at Bloomberg News, leading British political coverage.

2015

Wahyu Dhyatmika has been named editor in chief of Tempo Magazine, which is based in Jakarta, Indonesia. Formerly, he was executive editor.

A seeker of truth and justice

Tim Giago, NF '91, recognized for his contributions to independent Native American journalism



Tim Giago, left, holds the first issue of the Lakota Times

The Native American Journalists Association (NAJA) honored **Tim Giago**, NF '91, with the 2017 NAJA-Medill Milestone Achievement Award. Giago was the founder of the Lakota Times, the first independently owned Native American newspaper in the U.S. In presenting the award, Northwestern University journalism professor Patty Loew said, "He has never wavered from his reporting on Native sovereignty, treaty rights, and environmental destruction and serves as a model for all of us in Native media." These remarks are adapted from the talk he gave at the award ceremony in September:

I chose to become a journalist because of two words: truth and justice.

Forty years ago, most of the newspapers on Indian reservations were owned by tribal governments. And reporters working for those tribal newspapers were not free to contradict or criticize their tribal governments.

The only way to get freedom of the press was to start our own independent newspapers. With that in mind, I started the Lakota Times on the Pine Ridge Reservation in 1981. Within five years, it was distributed on all nine reservations in South Dakota.

As editor of the Lakota Times, I decided I would attack the violence between the tribal government and the American Indian Movement on the reservation with editorials. The windows of my newspaper were shot out twice. In 1982, my paper was firebombed. Three weeks later, someone put a bullet through my windshield, right past my head. The next day I wrote an editorial calling people cowards. Though we were an independent paper, the tribal president proclaimed that from then on, any attack on the newspaper would be considered an attack on the Oglala Sioux tribe itself. The attacks stopped.

After all of this, I determined that we needed an organization to support Native American media so, in 1984, I was a founder of the Native American Press Association, which later became the Native American Journalists Association.

When the Lakota Times became a national newspaper in 1992, we changed the name to Indian Country Today. It's ironic and very sad that this week the paper is shuttering its doors.

With the passing of the child I raised called Indian Country Today, all of us elders in this profession pass the mantle to this new generation of Indian journalists to stand up for our rights and the rights of our sovereign nations.



The Full Story Of Black Life

Everyone suffers if news outlets don't cover the many dimensions of a people

BY LOLLY BOWEAN

THE VERY FIRST time I viewed a William H. Johnson painting, the work moved me so deeply, I immediately declared him my favorite artist.

I was barely a teenager. I didn't have a sophisticated, refined eye and I knew little about how to judge composition, understand brushstrokes, or even evaluate the skills displayed in artwork.

But when I looked at Johnson's painting, "Café," it was easy to love. The reason was simple: the couple portrayed in his painting looked like people I knew. They looked like people who could be my relatives, neighbors.

Johnson's work was the first time I saw an image of black people hanging in a respected museum. It is also the first time I remember seeing a celebration of everyday black life in such a grand way. I started to hunger for more images and stories like it.

I didn't exactly have Johnson's work in mind when I started working as a freelance correspondent and intern for my hometown newspaper. I was still a teenager, yet at the time, I was compelled by one mission: I wanted our local news to accurately depict our local black community. I wanted to see people, like my classmates and neighbors, have their stories told.

I remember strongly feeling that the only time I saw black people on the television

news or even in the newspaper was because of tragic circumstances. I wasn't alone: my classmates at my majority black high school, Austin-East in Knoxville, Tennessee, often agreed. As a result, we viewed the news and reporters with suspicion.

When we got the chance to meet the editor of the local paper, The Knoxville News-Sentinel, we asked him why the only time we saw reporters in our community was when something terrible occurred. He responded by offering us internships and welcoming our fresh story ideas.

I went to work and I remember having little competition from the senior, experienced reporters. It seemed like few of them had interest in covering festivals and other events in our community. I also felt that fewer wanted to examine the issues like poverty, joblessness, and the systemic inequality that affected our side of town.

During my year at Harvard, I spent a lot of time reflecting on my personal mission as a journalist and how I have crafted a body of work devoted to presenting a more balanced and nuanced view of black life.

At Harvard, I studied under Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Sarah Lewis and I was reminded of the deliberate efforts of scholars, philosophers, and politicians who used both photographs and print media to essentially dehumanize African-Americans in order to justify slavery in the mid-1800s.

Sitting in African-American history courses, I reflected on the Kerner Commission report in the late 1960s that indicted the mainstream media for its failure to depict the fullness of black life and for overlooking the systemic failures affecting black people and highlighting solutions.

Adequately covering black life isn't just about making sure we accurately record history—although that's a significant reason.

It's also important that we cover marginalized communities responsibly so that we don't promote further isolation, disinvestment, and continue to perpetuate stereotypes.

This is true for the Latino community, the Muslim American community, the LGBTQ community, and so many other historically voiceless people. They deserve to have their stories told.

They deserve to see themselves in our news pages. Our industry can't afford to make the same mistakes we have in the past.

I think there are consequences to journalism that empowers only one type of narrative. This reporting is used to justify heavy-handed policing, discrimination, and even policies that end up reinforcing inequity. One-sided reporting can devastate a minority

community and stir feelings of resentment by othering one group of people.

It is also unjust for our audience. It fails to expose them to the beauty and brilliance of communities they may not understand or feel comfortable accessing on their own. They miss out on seeing and learning about people they should want to know.

I believe journalism must provide a bigger portrait of our communities and show the dimensions, the layers, and many aspects to the lives of our neighbors. Journalism should help people understand—because understanding helps to conquer fear and helps evoke compassion and empathy. Understanding leads us to sound policy decisions and so much more.

How do we do this? One way is to make sure our newsrooms reflect the communities that we cover. Even the Kerner Commission report pointed out that hiring one or two black reporters isn't enough—news organizations have to do better when it comes to placing minorities in decision-making roles.

That advice was published in 1968. We still have a lot of work to do.

But this is why I often turn back to black artists like Johnson to find inspiration. When I reflect on Johnson and other black artists of his era, I am reminded that they labored to depict a community that wasn't considered "valuable." Mainstream collectors didn't invest in images that portrayed black families. Too often, African-Americans couldn't afford to buy the work.

Still these artists were committed to telling stories that were important. That's all I'm trying to do.

Artists, like Elizabeth Catlett, Romare Bearden, and Henry Tanner, who are celebrated now, devoted their talents to capturing a community that was under-resourced, marginalized, and suffering the pain from racist policies and segregation.

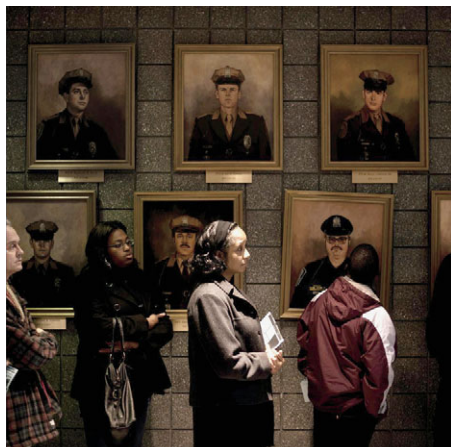
Yet they created paintings, sculptures, photographs of residents that captured not just pain, but joy and striving and progress—the many dimensions of a people.

Those images are easy for me to embrace—they are people who look like the residents I live next to and go to church with. This is the same thing I've tried to do with my own work, especially in Chicago.

It's work that reminds our readers that communities are more than just the problems there.

Communities are people. ■

Lolly Bowean, a 2017 Nieman Fellow, is a general assignment reporter at the Chicago Tribune



The Nieman Foundation's Instagram account (@niemanfoundation) offers a look at what's going on at Lippmann House and beyond. Clockwise from top left: An image from Nieman Fellow Andrea Bruce's Our Democracy project, Curator Ann Marie Lipinski introduces the 2018 fellows at a reception; and Wynton Marsalis backstage at the foundation's Pulitzer Centennial celebration

NiemanReports

From the Archives

At a time when high-profile cases of rape and sexual assault continue to make the news with depressing regularity, the need for fair, ethical, and hard-hitting reporting on the crime is more important than ever. "Covering Sexual Assault," the Winter 2017 cover story, examines how reporters should approach covering the subject—and, in turn, inform debate about how to prevent the crime and the institutional failures that often accompany it.

Opinion: Mexico Journal

2017 Nieman Fellow Marcela Turati is writing dispatches, in English and in Spanish, about what it's like to be a journalist in her native Mexico, one of the most dangerous—and deadliest—countries in which to be a journalist today.

NiemanLab

The Future of Voice

Is voice AI the biggest technology revolution that the news industry is missing? That's the argument of Knight Visiting Nieman Fellow Trushar Barot, the apps editor for BBC World Service/Global News, who writes that the potential of AI-driven voice interfaces—such as Google Home and Amazon Alexa—is potentially bigger than the impact of the iPhone.

Preserving Digital Journalism

Some might say the internet is forever, but considering the innumerable works that have disappeared from the online sphere over the years, that's often not the case for journalism. Nieman Lab takes a look at what NYU professor Meredith Broussard is doing to build effective, automated tools to help news organizations preserve their big data journalism projects long-term.

NiemanStoryboard

Notable Narrative

Storyboard highlights "Seven Days of Heroin," The Cincinnati Enquirer's riveting portrait of the human face of the opioid epidemic. A writer and editor discuss how the newspaper organized 60-plus reporters, photographers, and videographers to document the impact of heroin over the course of a week in the Cincinnati area, counting 18 deaths and 180 overdoses along the way.

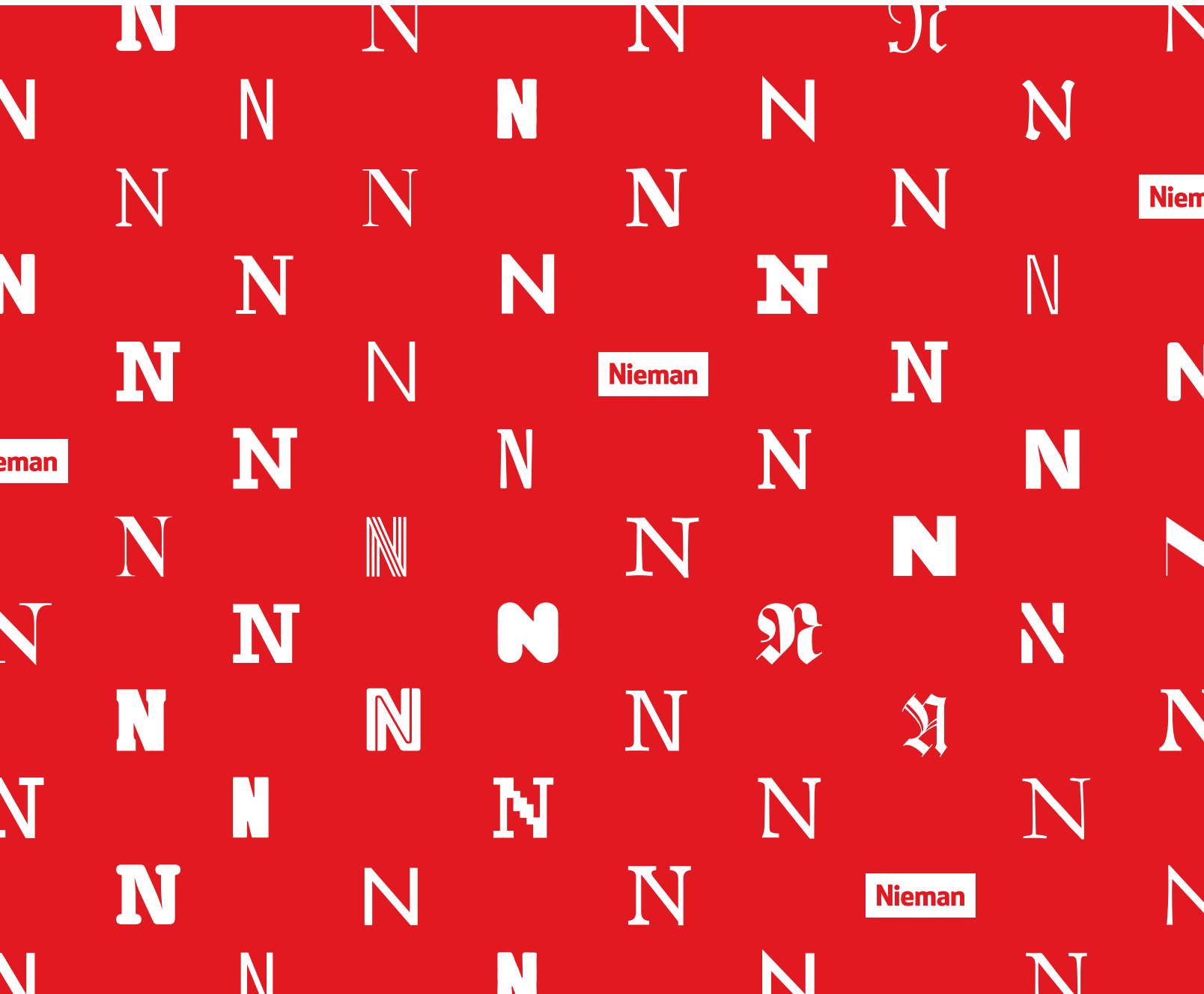
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#NOWWHAT? STOPPING SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE NEWSROOM

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