

NIEMAN REPORTS

Nieman

**COVERING
ADDICTION** 

**Questions the Media
Should Ask and
Recovery Stories
That Need To Be Told**

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Periodicals postage paid at
Boston, Massachusetts and
additional entries

SUBSCRIPTIONS/BUSINESS
617-496-6299, nreports@harvard.edu

Subscription \$25 a year,
\$40 for two years;
add \$10 per year for foreign airmail.
Single copies \$7.50.
Back copies are available from
the Nieman office.

Please address all subscription
correspondence to:
One Francis Avenue,
Cambridge, MA 02138-2098
and change of address information to:
P.O. Box 4951, Manchester, NH 03108
ISSN Number 0028-9817

Postmaster: Send address changes to
Nieman Reports P.O. Box 4951,
Manchester, NH 03108

Nieman Reports (USPS #430-650)
is published in March, June,
September, and December by
the Nieman Foundation
at Harvard University,
One Francis Avenue,
Cambridge, MA 02138-2098

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Ronald Hiers is among the many Americans who were once addicted to heroin or other opioids. Their stories need to be told

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“There’s One Doctor for the Whole Province”

The stories behind two of Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist Lynsey Addario’s remarkable images

SINCE THE LATE 1990S, photojournalist Lynsey Addario has covered conflicts and humanitarian crises around the world, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Darfur, and South Sudan. Working for *The New York Times*, *National Geographic*, *Time*, and other outlets, she has also photographed feature stories on human rights issues, including documenting the oppression of women living under the Taliban prior to September 11, 2001. The recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship “genius grant,” Addario was a member of *The New York Times* team that won a 2009 Pulitzer for *International Reporting* for their coverage of America’s military and political challenges in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and, in 2011, she was one of four *Times* journalists who went missing in Libya from March 16 to 21 before being freed by the government.

Addario, whose 2015 memoir “*It’s What I Do: A Photographer’s Life of Love and War*,” delivered the 36th annual Joe Alex Morris Jr. Memorial Lecture at the Nieman Foundation in January. She told the story behind a number of her photographs, including two excerpted here:

In 2007, I was working with Elizabeth Rubin for *The New York Times Magazine*. She wanted to do a story on why there were so many wounded, why so many civilians were getting killed in Afghanistan if the U.S. military had some of the best technology in the world. We asked to go to the heart of the war, which was in the Korengal Valley.

I remember we went to the public affairs officer in Jalalabad. Elizabeth and I said, “We’d like to go to the Korengal Valley.” He looked at us up and down and said, “It’s not

really a place that’s fit for women.”

We were like, “Why not?” He said, “There’s no place for you to sleep, and there’s no place for you to go to the bathroom.” We’re like, “Where do the men sleep, and where do the men go to the bathroom?” He got flustered and he said, “OK, just come back tomorrow.”

At that point, women were not allowed on the frontlines, but there were no rules for journalists. Of course, we went back, and he said, “OK. The commander has accepted to take you guys on.” We flew in to Camp Blessing and we watched a battle unfold that night, that first night, in the tactical operations center, the TAC.

Every day, on six-, seven-hour-a-day patrols through the mountains, we were under fire very often. At the end of the mission, we were sent on Operation Rock Avalanche, which was a battalion-wide operation. We literally were airlifted onto the side of the mountain into the heart of Taliban territory. It was where the troops had not gone. We had to jump out of Blackhawks in the middle of the night. Everything was through night vision goggles. We had to walk for six days with everything on our backs—food, water, warm clothing, sleeping gear, camera gear, everything.

It was October, at about 7,000 feet. Then on the sixth day, we were ambushed, we were hit from three sides. There were three soldiers who were shot. These are two of the wounded.

IN 2010, I was doing work on maternal health in Sierra Leone and other countries with a high rate of women dying in childbirth. I traveled to document some of the clinics. Often a woman has to walk for six

to 10 hours when she’s in labor. This is ... at the Magburaka Government Hospital. When I met Mamma Sessay, she had been pregnant with twins. She was totally coherent. She was telling me how she had been in school studying. Her father pulled her out of school at 16 so she could get married and have children.

She had delivered the first baby in her village. The second baby wouldn’t come out. Mamma Sessay’s sister, who was a midwife at the hospital, sent an ambulance to her, but to get to that ambulance Mamma Sessay had to take a canoe across a river and take the ambulance six hours on bumpy roads while she was still pregnant with the second baby. She was scared and exhausted by the time I met her. She was in the hospital. She delivered the second baby. It was almost completely unresponsive because it had been inside her at this point for about 12 hours.

The midwives were paying so much attention to the baby that they forgot about Mamma Sessay. She started bleeding. Of course, I’m not a doctor. I’m a photographer. I had photographed a lot of women giving birth. I said, “I think she’s bleeding a lot.” I was actually doing video, as well, while I’m shooting this.

You can hear my voice saying, “I think she’s bleeding.” The midwives were mopping up the blood. They were talking to each other and trying to bring the other baby back to life. Mamma Sessay was losing consciousness.

At that point, I went to try to find the doctor. I said, “Isn’t there a doctor?”

They laughed and they said, “There’s one doctor for the whole province.”



Wounded in an ambush in 2007 in Korengal Valley, Afghanistan, Specialist Carl Vandenberg, right, and Staff Sergeant Kevin Rice, left, walk to a medevac helicopter

I said, “Where is he?”

They’re like, “I don’t know.”

I went and he was in surgery. I put on scrubs and went into the surgical ward. I said, “I think there’s a woman dying.”

He’s like, “I’m in surgery.”

I went back and I said, “Maybe you should take her blood pressure. I don’t know.” It was 60 over 30. They picked her up and they carried her to the doctor. By the time she got there, Mamma Sessay died.

I went back with the family for the burial.

Time magazine ended up publishing the story across eight pages. One of the board members at Merck, the pharmaceutical company, saw it. Moved by the story, the company put aside \$500 million to fight maternal death and started Merck for Mothers. ■



Relatives weep over Mamma Sessay before her burial in the village of Mayogbah, Sierra Leone, the day after her death in 2010 from postpartum hemorrhaging. Her face is covered with powder to ward off evil and prepare her for the afterlife

2018 Knight Visiting Nieman Fellows Named

Nine journalists and media executives have been selected as Knight Visiting Nieman Fellows for 2018

Announcing the new cohort, Nieman Foundation curator Ann Marie Lipinski said: “Each of these visiting fellows has a project that will not only advance their own work but can be of service to their colleagues and journalism more broadly. We’re excited to welcome them to Harvard and look forward to supporting their research.”

The 2018 Knight Visiting Nieman Fellows:



Soutik Biswas, India correspondent and features and analysis editor for BBC News, will explore how fake news is spread via WhatsApp and other mobile means and will examine digital and non-digital methods and tools to counteract fake news in India.



Erik Borenstein, director of strategy and development at *The New York Times*, will explore the relationships between media companies and “stars” of the profession to identify approaches to growing audiences and deepening engagement.



Azad Essa, a journalist with Al Jazeera and co-founder of the South African news portal *The Daily Vox*, will investigate innovative, cost-effective, and sustainable ways in which online news sites can reach rural audiences in South Africa.



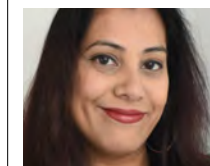
Mark Frankel, social media editor for BBC News in London, will research how journalists can best uncover and report on stories sourced from audiences on “dark social” apps, message boards, and other private, invitation-only platforms.



Cynthia Hua, a San Francisco-based freelance journalist who previously worked at Facebook and BuzzFeed, will explore new approaches to measuring success for online video news, including using nuanced metrics that focus on intentional and repeated consumption patterns.



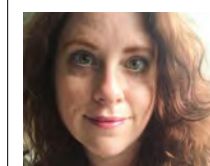
Jonathan Jackson, a cofounder and, most recently, head of corporate brand for Blavity, will build a framework for a comprehensive study of black media, focused on digital properties, social influence, and the impact of a burgeoning black creative class.



Shaheen Pasha, assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, will research prison education programs. Her goal is to create a model for university journalism programs to partner with prisons in creating journalism curriculum for inmates.



Alexandra Smith, growth editor for WhereBy.Us, a platform that helps people connect and engage in their cities, will survey if and how events—used as a local news outlet strategy—are successful as a tool for audience growth, brand engagement, and increased revenue.



Ashley Catherine Woods, founder and CEO of Detour, a Detroit-based local news startup, will examine financial models for local journalism based on the psychology and practices of influencer and relationship marketing.

OPPOSITE AND ABOVE: LYNSEY ADDARIO/GETTY IMAGES REPORTAGE

Frederik Obermaier: “I think one outcome of leaks like the Panama Papers or the Paradise Papers is that nobody can feel safe anymore in tax havens”

Süddeutsche Zeitung investigative journalist Frederik Obermaier on coordinating global reporting projects, parsing complex documents, and influencing how companies conduct business

IN EARLY NOVEMBER, close to 400 journalists in nearly 70 countries published dozens of stories about the offshore financial dealings of some of the world's wealthiest individuals and biggest corporations. The stories drew on the Paradise Papers, a leak of 13.4 million documents associated with a Bermuda-based law firm.

Just as the Panama Papers had been in 2016, the Paradise Papers were leaked to Frederik Obermaier and a fellow reporter at the Munich-based newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) was a key partner in both projects, managing and analyzing massive amounts of data and coordinating communication between journalists.

After the Pulitzer Prize-winning Panama Papers stories were published, there was an uptick in circulation at Süddeutsche Zeitung. Where Obermaier, a 2018 Nieman Fellow, feels a deep impact from the project is in reader engagement. He gets a lot more emails now, many expressing appreciation for the level of reporting the investigation represented. One reader gave thanks by buying a classified ad: “Paradise Papers, thanks to everyone involved in the investigation and the publication.”

Obermaier spoke at the Foundation in November. Edited excerpts:

On Panama vs. Paradise papers. The Panama Papers data was from [law firm

Mossack Fonseca], an offshore service provider that was set up by a German and by a Panamanian. The data we received was quite ordered. There was a folder for each offshore company. We went through all the documents in each folder and thereby got the whole history of an offshore company. All internal conversations, all their documents, everything scanned, everything was fine. An investigative journalist's dream.

The Paradise Papers consisted not only of data from one offshore provider but from two, plus the company registries of 19 tax havens. It was basically only a chaotic bunch of data. We had to find order. That was quite difficult. It was not that easy to find the story and to be sure that we had everything.

What was good for us, from a storytelling perspective, was that the Panama Papers mainly focused on individuals whereas the Paradise Papers brought up the topic of multinationals like Nike, like Apple. That made it easier for us to tell the story because we had a big fear that some readers might consider it as more of the same.

Mossack Fonseca was already considered a shady company before we published the Panama Papers. Appleby, the [Bermuda law firm] in the middle of the Paradise Papers, was considered a good guy.

The deeper we went into the data, the more obvious it became that they are not as good as they claim to be. They, internally,

were well aware that they had certain problems, but until the Paradise Papers were published, nobody outside Appleby knew what was going on.

We thought the Paradise Papers would be like a hundred journalists working on it, but in the end it was nearly 400, and the more media outlets ICIJ involved, the more we found. The excitement really grew. For example, the Queen's offshore investments was a story that came up only some weeks before publication. U2 frontman Bono's investment in Lithuania actually became a good story, when we learned that there is an ongoing investigation.

On working with ICIJ. ICIJ's expertise is really big. I think there is no media outlet worldwide that has its experience on how to process data, what you need, how to speed up things, how to share it.

That said, the whole process of working with ICIJ takes some time. In the case of the Panama Papers we started by approaching the director, Gerard Ryle. He came to Munich, had a first look at the data. Then the data team from ICIJ came to Munich. For the Panama Papers, they stayed nearly a week in Munich and ran the data through their systems to assess it and find out what data format is it, how could they open it. Some of it was encrypted.

Then you have still some months until they would invite the first partners. You have to run an optical character recognition program over documents so afterward you can search for words in them. In the case of the Panama Papers, that took us several months and it was dozens of servers that were working 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Usually you meet several times with ICIJ. You then invite a core team of trusted media outlets. That's normally the partners where ICIJ knows that they have the capacity to do preliminary research without knowing if it will ever become a project.

After that, you have a big meeting, where everybody who is invited to the project can take part. That was both times in Munich. That's about 100 people, where you do a first presentation. Then ICIJ starts explaining how they would make the data accessible,

“**The Paradise Papers ... was basically only a chaotic bunch of data. It was not that easy to find the story**”



Frederik Obermaier on the Paradise Papers: “It helps to deal with some hundreds of journalists because it encourages you to go on”

what the security measures are, what the emergency plans are, what's a possible publication date, knowing that it could later be postponed. That's then basically a two-day meeting where you set up groups for who is focusing on what.

On parsing complex documents. For each story, we went to numerous experts, because it's not like you show it to an expert and he's like, “Yeah, cool. That's illegal, that's legal. Here you go.” It's more like, “Well, I'm sure on that part. That looks shady, but on that part I have no idea why they put that sentence, for example, in a contract. Ask my colleague who is working in Amsterdam. He worked in that field.” In the end, I would guess we approached about a hundred experts.

On the impact. The pessimist in me says there's not that big a change, because we do see people that we saw in the Offshore Leaks in 2013. Then we saw them in the Swiss Leaks in 2015. Then we saw them in the Panama Papers and then again in the Paradise Papers. You see them in every leak, and these are the names we now search in everything we get because there's a high chance you will find them again.

The optimist sees that there is a certain fear now. Already in the Panama Papers we've found, for example, emails where they referred to previous ICIJ investigations.

Employees of Panama Papers law firm Mossack Fonseca, for example, informed their customers that they would have a “state-of-the-art” data center and that all communication is encrypted to “the highest possible security standards.” The firm also promised other clients that all the sensitive data is safe and that it will never leave Panama.

I think one outcome of leaks like the Panama Papers or the Paradise Papers is that nobody can feel safe anymore in tax havens. If you do hide something, I think now you realize that there's a certain risk of a leak. If you do that business, you have to be very, very careful.

You do see the mechanisms already. In the Panama Papers we found guys who insisted on not putting their names in documents. One of them was called Harry Potter. They use these code names. One of my favorite lines comes from an email to “Winnie the Pooh”: “Regarding my meeting with Harry Potter...” You do see they are disguising, but I think that there's always a way to find out if something is leaked.

On the value of collaboration. It helps to deal with some hundreds of journalists because it encourages you to go on. I normally have, after several weeks, reached a point of frustration where I would put a case aside and run the risk of forgetting it. If you then have a partner in Sweden or Spain who is

asking, “Hey, I saw that you posted three months ago that you found that name. Did you follow up with that, because I had a look in the data, and I found this and that?” Then you get new energy to go on.

On maintaining secrecy. Everybody is aware of the risk and nobody wants to be the one putting the life of colleagues in danger, and furthermore, nobody wants to be the one ruining the whole project. If you are the one speaking too much and thereby make the investigation public, you have 300 or 400 investigative journalists all around the world who will never work with you again.

The investigative journalism community is, in these times, very close. Everybody knows everyone, and everyone knows these rumors going on about colleagues who are not that good at keeping secrets, and you don't want to be one of them, so that helps a lot.

The ICIJ continually sends weekly or monthly reminders out, stating warnings like “Please be aware of encryption. Here, again, if you need help, please inform us. We will set up a meeting with our IT guys to help you. If you do have problems, let us know.”

Then there are reminders of what to do when you lose your cell phone, your laptop, and stuff like that, so that in your mind, you constantly hear the voice of the head or the deputy head of ICIJ, Marina Walker Guevara, reminding you to be careful. ■

Photographing Massacre Survivors As Individuals, not Statistics

Anastasia Taylor-Lind, NF '16, creates a makeshift studio in a Rohingya refugee camp

HOW DO YOU photograph something you can't see? This was the question I asked myself last September when Human Rights Watch (HRW) assigned me to cover the Rohingya crisis for them. My brief was to travel to the Bangladesh-Burma border with a team of investigators who were collecting evidence of crimes against humanity being committed by Burmese security forces against the ethnic Rohingya, a largely Muslim minority, in Northern Rakhine State in Burma. My job was to find a way to visually represent the brutal and systematic violence being waged against the Rohingya without witnessing any of it myself.

No photojournalist has photographed the violence inside Burma—not the massacres, the deportations, the rapes, or the burning villages. There is no legal way into the region other than on occasional highly orchestrated propagandistic state tours.

The team of investigators, led by Peter Bouckaert, HRW's director of emergencies, collected eyewitness testimonies from massacre survivors. They recorded fastidious interviews describing events that had taken place days or weeks before. As a photographer, I couldn't show anything they talked about because I wasn't there when

it happened. But Bouckaert believed that powerful portraits of the survivors could add weight and emotional impact to HRW reports and might impact an audience more than words alone.

Creative freedom like this is rare in editorial photography and the freedom to work for 28 days in the field even rarer—most of my editorial assignments are around a week long. Given creative freedom to develop the story as I saw fit, enough time to do it in, and a budget that backed this up—hiring translators and drivers, and staying in a hotel for a month isn't cheap—I knew this was a rare and precious opportunity as a freelance photojournalist.

As our team trawled through the chaos of Kutupalong refugee camp—a sprawling and apocalyptic informal city of tents occupied by over half a million desperate, hungry, and traumatized Rohingya who had been driven from their homes—the researchers interviewed massacre survivors and I made simple and delicate formal portraits using natural light bounced from a soft gold reflector. I photographed against a piece of black fabric I'd bought in the camp. Studio portraits of a kind. The way I'd likely photograph a member of my family, or a friend for an author's portrait, or a person of note



Shamina Yasmin and daughter Sharmin are survivors of a Burmese army attack

on a typical freelance assignment. I wanted to represent my sitters as I would someone who had never seen violence, as an individual rather than the statistic they had become after crossing the border from Burma.

It is a failing of photojournalism as a medium that it coerces us to represent survivors of mass violence at their most desperate and vulnerable. Informed by the powerful traditional photojournalism being made by my colleagues of refugees wading through monsoon floods, children clamoring for food aid, and the hideous reality of daily survival in the camps, I focused all of my time on making portraits. ■

ABOVE: ANASTASIA TAYLOR-LIND OPPOSITE: ALLEN FREDRICKSON/REUTERS

Digging Behind the Jobs Numbers

Amy Goldstein, NF '05, finds synergies between her beat and her book

IN OCTOBER 2015, I found myself in a neon blue rental car in Janesville, Wisconsin, driving slowly every several hours past a red brick Georgian revival in a historic district called Courthouse Hill.

The house belonged to Representative Paul D. Ryan, who at the time was vacillating over whether to become Speaker of the House of Representatives. My Washington Post editors had sent me to write about the Republican congressman's relationship with the old union town where his family goes back five generations—and to keep an eye on his house in case any sudden activity there might hint at which way he would decide.

The only activity I ever saw while casing the stately house was the congressman's wife, Janna, hanging a large, fuzzy black spider on their front door for Halloween. She eyed my conspicuous little car crawling by, so I got out, and we exchanged pleasantries, but I learned nothing of her husband's plans. In fact, I knew less about Ryan's political calculations than a run-of-the-mill congressional reporter. But I knew a lot about this small city in southeastern Wisconsin. By then, I had been working for four years on a close-up of what happens when good jobs go away, focusing on this community that had lost the nation's oldest operating General Motors assembly plant two days before Christmas of 2008, in the midst of the Great Recession.

The October days I spent on assignment just before Ryan became House Speaker were part of an interplay over a half dozen years between my longtime day job and my first book. During the recession of late 2007 through mid-2009, I was covering a broad social policy beat, and I wrote a couple of stories about what the terrible economy was doing to ordinary people. In southwest Florida, I found residents falling out of the middle class and onto welfare rolls. In South Carolina, I found food pantries strained by a huge influx of clients and dwindling donations.

Such reporting experiences instilled in me a sense that something profound was changing in the United States. And yet I was noticing that most of the plentiful journalism about the recession was trained on the macro view: unemployment statistics and political disputes over federal policies toward the auto and banking industries. A 2009 Pew Research Center study found that only 5 percent of stories on the economy were about its effects on average Americans. I became obsessed with telling this story. And because it seemed larger than even the Post could accommodate, I made a decision without precedent in my long, stable career: I would find a way to do it on my own.

Eventually, I lined up a foundation grant, a return to Cambridge—this time as a fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study—and a leave from my job. I got started in 2011. Several months in, it became clear that what I had euphemistically and nervously been calling “the project” was a book-in-waiting, and I asked the Post's executive editor if he might be open to not paying me for a second year. He was. Still, during the time out of my newsroom, I tried to keep its interests in mind. In August 2012, when GOP presidential candidate Mitt



A closed GM plant in Janesville, Wisconsin represents the loss of many good jobs

Romney picked Ryan as his running mate, I immediately contacted the editor of the Post's Outlook section and wrote a piece about the clash between the congressman's conservatism and his hurting hometown's needs. Months later, when I published (with my Post editors' permission) a lengthy freelance piece in ProPublica on job-retraining as I saw it in Janesville, I provided my newspaper a streamlined version to run. And on it went until I was chatting with Janna Ryan about her Halloween decorations.

By the time my book came out last spring, the Post had granted me a remarkable three years of leave time, and I had stitched together a patchwork of support and/or affiliations from two foundations, three universities, and a pair of think tanks. I also had been around my newsroom to cover the initial meltdown of HealthCare.gov; take a long look back at Hillary Clinton's role in health reform in the 1990s, and co-write a chapter for a group-reported Washington Post biography of Donald Trump. My publisher, Simon & Schuster, gave the Post first dibs on a book excerpt. Two days before the publication of “Janesville: An American Story” (the paperback was published January 2), nearly 4,000 of its words appeared in the Sunday paper, along with lovely, moody pictures of the town made by a freelance photographer the Post had hired. The symbiosis had come full circle. ■

Identifying Mexico's Missing Persons

Sandra Barrón Ramírez, a 2017 Knight Visiting Nieman Fellow, is designing a universal standard to organize information about missing persons in Mexico

In February 2015, Justicia Cotidiana (“Everyday Justice”) hosted a hackathon for

journalists, developers, and designers in Mexico City, Mexico. It was there that I first heard the term “black figure” to refer to the disparity between the number of persons the Mexican government has officially recorded as missing and the actual number of missing persons.

The official police database of missing persons in the state of Coahuila that year had some 600 people. The database of a local NGO had double that number. Similarly, Mexico's official register of missing persons in 2017 listed 33,513 missing persons

while human rights activists maintain that the actual number is much higher.

I wondered: How can we begin to demand justice if we can't name all of the missing?

Inspired by the hackathon as well as The Guardian's The Counted project tallying people killed by police in the U.S., I set out on a mission. I soon learned that there are many databases and they are often specific to how a person is presumed to have disappeared, whether by human trafficking, criminal violence, or state forces, the latter having long

been a serious issue throughout Latin America.

For example, if a woman disappears and the family goes to the police, the authorities might say, “Oh, she just ran off with her boyfriend.” That goes into one database. But if it were an instance of sexual trafficking—which would go into another database—the police, who are often in collusion with human traffickers, might still label it a runaway case. If the family believed the police could be involved in the disappearance, they might not even report their

daughter missing.

While a single missing persons database used by local, state, and federal police, NGOs, activists, journalists, and academics would be ideal, it's not a realistic goal in Mexico. Instead, I have developed what could be a universal standard. What I call the Unlocated Persons Data Standard will create a path toward transparency and better sharing and analysis of data.

As a Knight Visiting Nieman Fellow in 2017, I researched various parameters and methodologies and interviewed

Harvard and MIT professors, journalists, activists, and experts in digital development, history, public health, law, and human rights. With input from NGOs and activist groups, I designed the standard based on international human rights law terms and methodologies, federal and local descriptions of crimes, and forms used by civil society organizations.

The standard I've come up with contains eight categories including details about the missing person's life and disappearance, genetic

information and DNA samples, and possible perpetrator(s).

The Unlocated Persons Data Standard aims to organize information so it is easier for all to reference and crosscheck.

For example, I recently spoke with Mirna Nereyda Medina Quiñónez, a mother searching for her missing son in the northern state of Sinaloa. She heads up Las Rastreadoras, a group of mothers who search clandestine graves for their missing relatives. In July, she found some of her son's remains, and she asked that they be subject to DNA testing. This painful

process took a month and half. If the standard I am suggesting had been in use, the authorities might have realized sooner that they already had some DNA-tested samples from her son.

My next step is to partner with a human rights organization that will use the standard as they document cases. Perhaps there is an organization that will support further development of the standard, but hopefully this is the first step toward creating transparency and demanding justice for all missing persons in Mexico. ■



**“THEY’LL
ONLY
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Despite political, financial, and sometimes physical threats, incisive investigative work is getting done across Africa

BY CHRIS CARROLL

THE FIRST TACTIC

the people hoarding money, power, and secrets will try is to befriend you. You join their side; they join yours. Everyone benefits. Perhaps you gain a new advertiser and the unpleasant story your newspaper has been poking around is conveniently forgotten. If you resist efforts to co-opt you, then a series of downward steps begins, a hierarchy of persuasion. Bribes are offered in amounts that can dwarf a journalist's salary in the developing world.

If that fails, too, the threats start, with the promised consequences ramping up and up. Violence is the last thing anyone actually wants, so before that final step, those in power will pressure your advertisers, your distributors, and your bank to starve you into submission.

"They'll only kill you if the denial of revenue does not bring you down," says Dele Olojede, who for two years published a groundbreaking newspaper based in Lagos, Nigeria. "Luckily for me, I guess, cutting off revenue did bring us down. I'm still alive."

From 2009 to 2011 Olojede published Next, the sleek Mario García-designed, social-media savvy, muckraking newspaper the Pulitzer Prize-winning Olojede had dreamed up while working for Newsday.

The paper's mission was to relentlessly investigate and bring to light corruption in Olojede's homeland, and it had worked only too well. There was rot, Olojede says, in the nation's bloodstream, and the paper uncovered it everywhere. The exhilaration for a time obscured the fact that the threads of Next's downfall were woven into its brash, idealistic founding.

"In a way, we were doomed from the start, but the extent to which we were doomed wasn't clear to us," Olojede says. "We were basically going after the people, or their associates, on whose advertising we depended, which was a contradiction in our mission."

The traditional tension between media organizations' editorial and business sides that investigative projects tend to stir up isn't remotely unique to Africa, as anyone who's covered news in a small town knows. But in terms of consequences, there's a difference between angering the biggest car dealer in town and angering your country's de facto president for life.

Journalism in Africa is an undeniably risky business, and harassment, beatings, and even murder are all in the arsenal of those who resent scrutiny. Since 2014, at least



ABOVE: Nigeria's oil industry is the subject of Next's award-winning series on corruption that led to charges against government officials

PREVIOUS SPREAD: Angered by reporting on South Africa President Jacob Zuma's business dealings, demonstrators call for his resignation

29 journalists have been killed and scores imprisoned for their work in countries throughout Africa, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

It's more typical to try to simply bog down bothersome reporters and publications. This neutralization is often easily accomplished in post-colonial nations where civil society is commonly stunted by despotism, poverty, and warfare, and private sectors squirm under the thumb of oligarchs. "It happens here and in other countries in Africa, says Joel Konopo, an investigative journalist from Botswana. "You are forced to choose between having a profitable newspaper or having a serious newspaper with no money."

It's worth noting that Africa—a vast continent of 1.2 billion people, tremendous linguistic and cultural diversity, and nearly 60 countries with governments that range from democratic, like South Africa's, to brutally dictatorial, as in Eritrea—resists sweeping generalizations. But while local realities differ, African print newsgatherers are subject to the same litany of forces shaking up journalism worldwide: falling circulation, shriveling advertising revenue, confusion over how to monetize internet traffic, and a focus on cheaper, faster, more vacuous clickbait content.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: JOAO SILVA/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX
ABOVE: FRÉDÉRIC SOLTAN/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

"It's very difficult to support long-form investigative journalism in the same publications and on the same publishing schedules as the digital popcorn journalism," says Chris Roper, former editor in chief of South Africa's Mail & Guardian who now helps manage the nonprofit foundations African Network of Centers for Investigative Reporting (ANCIR) and Code for Africa, which supports data journalism on the continent.

The combined pressures have progressively reduced the scope for the time-consuming, expensive, and often nerve-wracking reporting that truly matters. "The stresses put on investigative units and the business models of newspapers are immense and growing," Roper says. "For reasons of not compromising your business model or not compromising yourself ethically, investigative journalism will increasingly become removed from the business model."

The new models on the rise in some ways mirror what's taken place in the United States and elsewhere with nonprofit newsrooms like ProPublica and the Center for Public Integrity. But in Africa, they're popping up with a frequency that bespeaks an added urgency, focusing on everything from government corruption to mapping-based environmental data journalism. Traditional newspapers are partnering with foundations like ANCIR for expertise and financial help, and journalists working solo or in small groups are creating their own web-based distribution platforms to insulate themselves from the nexus of business and politics.

From illegal cronyism and nepotism to human rights abuses, offshore accounts, and environmental destruction, incisive investigative work is being done throughout the continent. With tenacity and innovation that sometimes belies their lack of resources, journalists are uncovering the stories that the powerful want to keep buried.

DIRTY OIL, NIGERIA

Next's triumphant last gasp began in April 2011, with a story it would have been hard to imagine in any other Nigerian newspaper at the time. Following its example, more outlets today, some of them staffed with journalists who started their careers at Next, take a hard look at the activities of business and political elites. At the time, the relentless investigative focus was "a shock to the system," Olojede says. The six-part series on corruption in the country's vast oil sector implicated top

officials in "a magic wave of a pen [that] effectively transferred hundreds of millions of U.S. dollars—possibly billions—in public assets to private individuals without a public tender."

The problem, in the eyes of the authorities, wasn't damning assertions, but that Next was printing and posting online the documentation for its reporting about back-channel payments, bribes from major international companies, and the theft of public money. Government and oil company representatives angrily denied the paper's allegations, arguing among other things that Next had started with a "jaundiced view" of an industry they said was benefiting the country as a whole. But Next kept publishing. "We had the document trail; we had recordings, audio, and video," says Musikilu Mojeed, the paper's former investigations editor and current editor in chief of Premium Times, an online newspaper based in Abuja, Nigeria's capital city. "We went undercover and pretended to form a sham company. We met with agents of an office of the oil and gas ministry and were offering them bribes, and they accepted. The evidence we had was overwhelming."

The investigators called themselves "Nexters." Many weren't journalists at all when they were hired in 2008 from a pool of 13,000 applicants, publisher Olojede says. "We decided not to rely on newsrooms in the country because by then they had been so damaged by corruption."

The editors—a group with broad international journalism experience—put the hires through a six-month boot camp financed with some of the millions of dollars in loans Olojede had secured. They drilled the new hires on the basics of reporting and writing, and hammered them with the ethics of independent journalism—no bribes, favoritism, or misconduct allowed. It was modeled partly on what Olojede had soaked up in j-school at Columbia University and later at Newsday, where his series on the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide won the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting. "We trained the hell out of them and made them proud to be there," he says.

Next had attracted public attention and made powerful enemies before, but the oil ministry series was different. The public was transfixed, hanging on each new revelation, and the authorities were looking for someone to punish. As the paper went to press, managing editor Kadaria Ahmed was detained for questioning and investigative editor Mojeed and the rest of the investigative team hid out in a hotel to avoid the police.

The high-flying Next was already struggling with unexpectedly low revenue, and now a final exodus of advertisers began. In September 2011, the printing presses stopped. Then, in a bittersweet development, the paper began winning accolades for the coverage, including Mojeed's Editor's Courage Award from the Forum for African Investigative Reporters (FAIR) that November. He points to recent arrests and charges against oil ministry officials as vindication of Next's risky reporting. "Everyone is covering it now," he says. "But then we were alone, and we really took a risk."

Nexters have brought their investigative zeal to new posts. At Mojeed's current web publication, Premium

"The stresses put on investigative units and the business models of newspapers are immense and growing"

—CHRIS ROPER

FORMER EDITOR IN CHIEF OF SOUTH AFRICA'S MAIL & GUARDIAN

Times, a reporter and the publisher were arrested in 2017 for the paper's investigation of the Nigerian Army.

Next's fall proved two things to Olojede: Commercial newspapers, with their high fixed costs and reliance on advertisers, are fatally hamstrung all over Africa. And secondly, swashbuckling investigative journalism that calls powerful leaders to account is doable, and the public hungers for it. "I think the future is bright even as the traditional media dies on the continent."

SHOOT TO KILL, BOTSWANA

The way the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) told it, troops had intercepted two gun-toting men in July 2012 carrying tusks from a poached elephant as they prepared to escape in the dark across the river that separates Botswana and Namibia. When confronted, the men made moves as if to shoot and were gunned down. A pair of Namibian poachers had been stopped, safeguarding the nation's precious natural heritage—not to mention the lucrative safari and big game hunting industries that top government officials have direct stakes in.

That's where it might have ended, except that almost four years later, a pair of journalists at the INK Centre for Investigative Journalism, a nonprofit founded in 2015 in the capital, Gaborone, began pondering a British filmmaker's interview with the country's environmental minister, Tshekedi Khama. In it, the official, who is the younger brother of Botswana President Ian Khama, boasts that even if poachers tried to surrender, they'd be shot.

"This was something that was not spoken of in Botswana, although many of our citizens think the government does have a right to kill poachers," says Ntibinyane Ntibinyane, a former editor at the Mmegi newspaper who founded the INK Centre with erstwhile Botswana Guardian editor Joel Konopo. "We wanted to find out: was the government following a policy of extrajudicial killing?"

They'd still be wondering if they worked at their old newspapers, Ntibinyane says. Surviving in business and investigating alleged human rights abuses by the country's first family are mutually exclusive goals. "The problem with a country where the government is the biggest player in the economy is that the government is also the biggest advertiser by far through state-owned companies. That is how they can stop you."

But with a multi-year donation from the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, as well as United States governmental funding through the U.S. Embassy in Gaborone, the INK Centre didn't need to please advertisers or politicians. The two spent months working sources in the Botswana Defence Force to document incidents in which poachers had been killed, and then went into the field for several weeks to visit the killing sites and family members of Namibians who'd been shot.

Working with investigative reporter Tileni Mongudhi from The Namibian, a newspaper based in Windhoek, Namibia, Ntibinyane and Konopo uncovered "several apparent inconsistencies" with the government's story of the 2012 killing. The guns the men were carrying, including a puny .22-caliber rifle, were too underpowered

"Every Thursday I would call every province in South Africa until I could get their data on mines. It was nonstop pestering"

—MARK OLALDE
OXPECKERS CONTRIBUTOR

to hunt elephant; the tusks reportedly found with them were not freshly removed, and no elephant carcass was located; although the men supposedly acted threateningly, one had been shot in the back of the head. The victims' families, meanwhile, claim they were simply fishermen.

When it was over, the reporters had documented a number of killings that looked suspiciously like extrajudicial executions by the military, and found evidence that around 30 Namibians and 22 Zimbabweans had met that fate in recent years. The Botswana government said it has not been involved in any extrajudicial border killings and said all BDF actions were "within the constraints of the prevailing statutes."

The donations that support INK are a sword that cuts two ways, freeing its journalists from business concerns and government manipulation but opening them to accusations of outside control, and even of being funded by the U.S. government to destabilize Botswana.

The smear campaign by government supporters is one that few take seriously, Ntibinyane says. "We do stuff that challenges power and exposes corruption and betrayal of public trust. This has caused the government so much discomfort, hence the tired propaganda that we are CIA spies." To guard their independence, however, INK uses donations from governmental sources solely to fund educational programs for aspiring investigative journalists—not for the projects themselves—and refuses corporate funding, he says.

The INK Centre is beginning to lay the groundwork for investigations of reported poaching deaths on borders with other nations, Konopo says. If the funding model they've chosen has some minor drawbacks, there's no other way the work can get done. "We exist in an environment that is planned to make investigative journalism fail and prevent the truth from emerging," Konopo says. "We do what we can do, and it is always a struggle."

DIGGING IN DUNG, SOUTH AFRICA

A president under investigation for suspicious ties to foreign business magnates, with the financial dealings of his children and family woven throughout the growing scandal.

That's the skeletal outline of an explosive narrative on "state capture"—powerful business interests and corrupt officials colluding to take over institutions, line

their pockets, and subvert democracy—that the non-profit amaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism in Johannesburg has followed keenly since its principals split off from the Mail & Guardian newspaper in 2010. The vast body of work centers on ties between South African president Jacob Zuma and the Guptas, an extended clan led by several Indian businessmen who immigrated to South Africa in the 1990s.

"We've focused on two privileged families... to show how a tiny elite is managing to corner an extraordinary set of business opportunities by doing very lucrative deals with the state," says Stefaans Brümmer, a founding partner of amaBhungane Centre for Investigative Journalism. (The name is isiZulu for "dung beetle;" the center's motto is "Digging dung. Fertilizing democracy.")

Last June, the center was putting out stories at a furious pace based on thousands of leaked emails—they've dubbed the series #GuptaLeaks—that appear to show how the family, among other things, lavishly bankrolled the president's children, worked to bring officials under their sway, and were casually racist toward African subordinates. A lawyer for the family has blasted the email release as a political move and says the family denies any wrongdoing or under-the-table payments to officials.

It's far from the center's first scoop on the family. In an investigation that concluded in 2016, it linked them to a mysterious company that seemingly had to be paid millions of dollars before telecom contracts could be signed with state transport company Transnet. "We went in search of this company called Homix, which as we dug became more and more obvious was a front for the Guptas that leveraged their influence," says Sam Sole, the other founding partner at amaBhungane.

Like Brümmer, he is a veteran investigative reporter and editor who'd previously written for the Mail & Guardian and wanted to focus solely on investigative journalism rather than being on call for daily stories.

Transnet denies wrongdoing, responding to the series that it was "confident in [our] processes." Zuma, meanwhile, has steadfastly denied the acceptance of illegal payments and other corruption allegations and insisted in March before the South African parliament that the Guptas have no influence on his governing decisions.

The relentless string of corruption scandals prompted the ruling African National Congress to seek a no-confidence vote to recall the embattled Zuma; the motion was defeated by narrow margins in early August.

Illegal miners enter an abandoned gold mine in South Africa. Oxpeckers' investigation exposed a litany of problems associated with such mines



KIM LUBROOK/EPA/REDUX

Such politics aren't the center's immediate concern, Brümmer says. "We don't measure our success by saying, 'Oh well, we've claimed another scalp,' because one almost never claims a scalp. Our success is in the fact that we have mapped out what state capture is really all about... In that way, we've had a lot of traction, and now it's not just our story, but it's society's story."

Formerly funded mainly by the Mail & Guardian newspaper, amaBhungane is turning increasingly to South African society itself for sustenance. Although the center now relies on a number of large donors like South Africa's Millennium Trust and the Open Society Foundation for South Africa, over 10 percent of amaBhungane's budget comes from crowdsourcing—small direct donations from readers who value their work. (The stories, meanwhile, are given away to select outlets.)

The total was expected to be higher by the end of 2017; the #GuptaLeaks investigations had money pouring in as of early June, as readers registered their approval of the center's work by opening their pockets. "The public now counts as one of our bigger donors and, of course, if one can get that to over 50 percent then so much the better, because the bigger that is, you're not only more independent but your perceived independence is boosted," Brümmer says. "We are big on independence."

HOLES IN THE MAP, SOUTH AFRICA

The problem had festered in plain sight for decades. From diamonds and gold to coal, mining has long been one of the pillars of South Africa's economy, and the result is a landscape scarred by thousands upon thousands of abandoned, un-remediated mine sites, many of them leaching poison into the water and toxic dust into the air.

But until an innovative investigative journalism outfit took on the problem using new ways of storytelling, no one knew the extent of it, or the fact that the environmental degradation is grinding on unabated.

"At least 60 billion rand [\$4.6 billion] has been put up by mining companies for rehabilitation, but we've shown it is not being spent, and in fact no large mines have been closed in South Africa since 2011," says Fiona Macleod, founder of Oxpeckers Center for Investigative Environmental Journalism. (Oxpeckers are birds that have a symbiotic relationship with rhinoceros, eating parasitic bugs off their hides.) Like the founders of amaBhungane, Macleod had been a reporter at the feisty Mail & Guardian in Johannesburg and wanted to be in charge of her own investigations while focusing on environmental data journalism.

"I realized the whole media landscape was changing, and we needed to incorporate new media in that mission, so we started off with a geojournalism platform in 2012, combining data and mapping as a means of telling stories in an accessible format," she says. The idea behind geojournalism is to serve up huge quantities of environmental data to readers through maps to make it tangible and build traditional investigative stories from the mapped evidence.

Macleod's first big push was PoachTracker, which focuses on rhino poaching. Investigative stories about how,



Fisherman Samati Samati, afraid he might be mistaken for a poacher and killed, says he hid from the Botswana Defence Force in a swamp along the Botswana-Namibia border

where, and why rhino poaching occurs are accompanied by mapped data. PoachTracker also has a partnership with Asian journalists investigating the use of rhino horns in traditional Chinese medicine.

Oxpeckers' new app, #MineAlert, developed with support from the Open Society Foundation for South Africa and Code for Africa, is even richer in data, with detailed information on many mines nationwide, along with functionality that allows trusted users to crowdsource more data.

Freelance journalist and Oxpeckers associate Mark Olalde compiled most of the data, making liberal use of South Africa's relatively robust open records law, the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA). Olalde, a recent grad from Northwestern University's Medill journalism school, was doing an internship at The Star, a Johannesburg newspaper, when he became fascinated by zama zama miners—small-timers who move into large abandoned mines to support themselves at great risk. Soon he was going from mine to mine gathering data and stories.

Not only were mining companies not bothering to close and clean up huge mines, he found, but the government had access to billions of dollars to begin cleanup

"We exist in an environment that is planned to make investigative journalism fail and prevent the truth from emerging"

—JOEL KONOPO
FORMER BOTSWANA GUARDIAN EDITOR

that were going unused. South Africa's Department of Mineral Resources didn't respond to Olalde's requests for an explanation of its practices for overseeing mine closures. Out of the hundreds of companies involved, many refused comment, while others attempted to shift blame to other companies or complained about unrealistic requirements of the law.

The 21-month investigation was shortlisted for a Global Editors Network Data Journalism Award, and Oxpeckers' and Olalde's data is being used by the South African parliament as it revises laws governing mine closure.

Much of his time was spent wrangling information from South African provinces, Olalde says. "I set up something called PAIA day, and every Thursday I would spend a day calling every province in the country until I could get their data. It was nonstop pestering. They would answer the phone and say, 'Oh, you again,'" Olalde says. "There was a sense that it's kind of wasting our time to ask the government for anything—if we want to get anything from the government we have to get it in other ways. But sometimes you can get it if you ask enough."

TRAIL OF WEALTH, ANGOLA

The reporting was both critical and balanced, but Rafael Marques de Morais was on his own. Instead of a pat on the back for hard-hitting coverage of national elections in 1992 intended to end a decades-long war in Angola, he learned the price of crossing the regime of Angolan President José Eduardo dos Santos. "I was sent to the military by my own newspaper," he says. "However, the military found out it didn't want me either."

Returning to the capital, Luanda, he opted to buck the Angolan government's efforts to limit independent voices. "There's always been a deep need for investigative journalism in this country," he says. "It's just me. I cannot set up an infrastructure, so I decided to focus on two subjects only: human rights and corruption."

But first he had to find ways to gather information. Over the years, Marques de Morais learned to quietly cultivate the well-meaning and the disgruntled within the regime to gather information. He also discovered, in a country where open records laws are toothless, that public presidential decrees were a rich font of

information about how Angola's vast national resource wealth becomes personal wealth. "If you read the presidential decrees, in the big contracts, there is invariably someone from the regime or the presidential family involved, and it became my obligation to expose this," he says. Dos Santos' government has never admitted to any wrongdoing.

Marques de Morais has been called a political activist and a traitor, beaten up several times, and jailed for 40 days in 1999 after writing an article critical of the president. Though he was convicted, the sentence was suspended after the Open Society Justice Initiative (Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, among other donors, helps Marques de Morais fund his ad-free investigations) and the International Centre for the Legal Protection of Human Rights argued his case before the United Nations Human Rights Committee.

His local knowledge drew Marques de Morais to the attention of Kerry Dolan, a journalist for Forbes magazine whose beat is the world's wealthiest people. Tipped off that she needed to include glamorous presidential daughter Isabel dos Santos on Forbes's list of Africa's wealthiest, Dolan went looking for ways to quantify her wealth. "I initially reached out to him as a source, for what he knew about Isabel," she says. "As I began talking to him, I realized, 'Oh no, he knew a lot and he had done a ton of reporting, and we should work on the story together.'"

Paired up with an international publication with global reach, Marques de Morais was no longer alone on his mission. After a year of his on-the-ground reporting while Dolan worked international sources, the dual-by-line story hit newsstands in August 2013. It revealed how Isabel dos Santos had piled up billions in assets from Angola's diamond, oil, and telecom industries, among others—transferred by edict in a developing country with stratospheric levels of poverty, malnourishment, and infant mortality. A dos Santos representative told the pair that allegations of illegal wealth transfers between her and the government were "groundless and completely absurd."

The article laid out what it called "a tragic kleptocratic narrative," winning the 2014 Gerald Loeb International Award and sparking fury among the government and its supporters. "It was so well reported there was nothing they could do," Marques de Morais notes. Still, the government found other ways to go after him, including prosecution for criminal defamation in conjunction with a 2011 book that documented hundreds of cases of murder and torture in conjunction with Angola's diamond industry. Although convicted, his sentence was suspended in 2015, the same year he won the Index on Censorship Freedom of Expression Award.

Now, dos Santos representatives are taking a new tack. Recent emails to an international business reporter from a Portuguese PR firm representing dos Santos lobbed a now-familiar charge at his website, Maka Angola, denying wrongdoing on the first daughter's part and accusing him of political attacks.

"Now they have started referring to me as 'fake news,'" Marques de Morais says. ■

A photograph showing two individuals from behind, wearing dark hooded sweatshirts. They are standing in a room with large, patterned curtains. The person on the left has their arm around the person on the right. They are looking out a window where bright light is visible through sheer white curtains. The overall mood is somber and mysterious.

**As Russia promotes
disinformation abroad, it
is cracking down on the
independent press at home**

BY ALISA SOPOVA

HOW INDEPENDENT RUSSIAN NEWSROOMS KEEP REPORTING

IN MARCH 2017 Elena Milashina, a reporter for Russia's leading independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta, was tipped off by a source about the suspicious death of a man in Chechnya. Through her reporting, Milashina, who had been covering Chechnya for more than a decade, learned that the victim was tortured to death in a secret detention center.

Extrajudicial detentions are widespread in this North Caucasus republic, which for centuries has fought for independence from Russia. So Milashina wasn't surprised to get a tip about an illegal detention and murder. What was unprecedented about this case was the reason for the arrest: The man was gay.

"Usually people are detained on the grounds of terrorism or drugs," she says. "So I was very careful about checking this information."

Milashina spoke to sources in the police, the Chechen leader's administration, the Russian secret service (FSB), and the prosecutor's office, and she talked to local activists. They all pointed to an orchestrated campaign of anti-gay repression in Chechnya. Since February 2017, about 100 men had been detained and at least three had been killed. Milashina published the first story without direct evidence from survivors.

Novaya Gazeta partnered with the Russian LGBT network to launch a hotline for those affected, and people started reaching out. Days later, the paper printed a story, co-bylined by Milashina and Irina Gordienko, based on the evidence of a few gay men who had fled persecution in Chechnya. All of them reported being beaten and tortured at the same secret detention center in the city of Argun.

Milashina's reporting caused global outrage. Follow-up stories were published in Western media outlets, including The Guardian, The New York Times, and The Washington Post.

The response in Chechnya was outrage of a different sort. Fifteen thousand people gathered at a mosque in Grozny, the Chechen capital, and encouraged retaliation against the staff of Novaya Gazeta, with clerics declaring, "We promise that the true instigators will be subjected to retribution, wherever and whoever they are, without the statute of limitations." The newspaper's editorial board condemned the statement, saying, "It is obvious to us that this resolution is pushing religious fanatics to massacre journalists." Milashina fled Russia out of concern for her safety.

Novaya Gazeta wasn't the only Russian outlet to cover the scandal. Despite threats of death, persecution, and "Allah's retribution" from Chechen authorities, a number of mid-sized newsrooms published evidence of the detentions and interviewed survivors. Yet major government-controlled media, like TV stations Channel One and Rossiya-1 ignored the story—with one exception. A terse article in tabloid daily Komsomolskaya Pravda, headlined "Gays for Export," presented the torture reports as a concocted Western provocation against the nation.

The way the persecution of gay men in Chechnya was—or wasn't—covered in Russia is a vivid example of

the country's polarized media landscape. Independent news outlets uneasily coexist with state propaganda mouthpieces, each offering sharply different pictures of the country and each speaking to starkly different audiences. While independent journalists report on purges in Chechnya and mass protests across Russia's biggest cities, the much more widely read state-controlled media report on growing GDP, President Vladimir Putin's achievements, and Western conspiracies against Russia.

"The choice is very simple," says Milashina. "If you want to be a journalist, you work for [independent business news outlet] RBC or Novaya Gazeta. If you want to be nothing of the sort, go to the federal media," as Russia's government-run outlets are called.

While independent outlets and online platforms still publish important stories, and the murder rate for journalists has fallen in recent years, Russia remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world to be a reporter. Newsrooms are routinely ordered to remove editors who displease the state. Sometimes the government orders the sale of troublesome outlets to Kremlin-friendly owners or pressures advertisers to withhold business. Starting in 2016, foreign ownership of media outlets has been limited to 20 percent. As a result, Pearson and Dow Jones sold their stakes in business daily Vedomosti ("The Record") to a Russian owner.

Since 1992, 58 journalists have been killed in Russia, including two in 2017, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. In October, Tatyana Felgenhauer, deputy editor of the Ekho Moskvy radio station, was stabbed in the neck by an intruder in the station's Moscow studio. Another Ekho Moskvy reporter, Yulia Latynina, left the country after an arson attack on her car. Russia ranks 148th out of 180 countries on Reporters Without Borders' press freedom index.

During the early 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian journalism enjoyed a period of relative freedom. Reporters dug into newly opened archives and chronicled the crimes of Soviet leadership. Around the same time, journalists were routinely targeted for assassination. The most notorious case since Putin became president in 2000 was the murder of



LEFT: Russian President Vladimir Putin's appearances on TV are widely viewed across the nation. Here, students at the Sevastopol Presidential Cadet School watch a live broadcast

PREVIOUS SPREAD: Ilya and Nohcho are among the gay men from Chechnya who were tortured as part of an anti-gay campaign

A memorial in St. Petersburg pays tribute to murdered Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya



PREVIOUS SPREAD: JAMES HILL/CONTACT PRESS IMAGES LEFT: PETER KOVALE/TASS VIA GETTY IMAGES ABOVE: ALEXEI PAVLISHAK/TASS VIA GETTY IMAGES

Anna Politkovskaya, Novaya Gazeta's special correspondent and a human rights activist. An outspoken critic of Russian policies in Chechnya, Politkovskaya was shot in her apartment building in downtown Moscow on October 7, 2006. Unlike earlier murders of journalists, Politkovskaya's assassination was well-investigated, with six perpetrators sentenced to prison terms. Who ordered the killing is still unknown.

Television remains the dominant medium in Russia. Channel One and Rossiya-1—two of the three major channels with nationwide reach—are controlled by the state, while the third, NTV, is owned by state-controlled oil and gas company Gazprom. Though the internet is less tightly controlled than traditional mass media outlets, the Kremlin is increasingly working to muzzle independent online outlets. A 2014 law forces popular bloggers to register with media watchdog Roskomnadzor, essentially equating any blog with more than 3,000 daily readers with a news outlet and rendering it liable to restrictions. Legislation also allows authorities to blacklist websites without explanation and, after the growing influence of alternative platforms became evident in 2017, the Kremlin is thwarting anonymous messaging services, such as Telegram, and banning virtual private networks (VPNs), which help users get access to blocked websites.

NOVAYA GAZETA'S REPORT ON GAY REPRESSION IN CHECHNYA CAUSED GLOBAL OUTRAGE

All this is in addition to the elaborate network of state-sponsored troll farms that deluge online spaces with fake news. A study by the Oxford Internet Institute found that, in a sample of 1.3 million accounts regularly tweeting about Russian politics between 2014 and 2015, some 45 percent—585,000—were Russian bots. Meanwhile, both Facebook and Twitter reported in September that numerous accounts linked to Russian operatives sought to influence political discourse during the 2016 presidential campaign. Twitter announced in 2017 that it had banned Sputnik and Russia Today (RT) from advertising on the social network, based on Twitter's findings that the two media firms had attempted to interfere with the election on the Russian government's behalf. Also in late October, Paul Manafort, President Donald Trump's former campaign chairman, was charged with tax fraud and money laundering



Alexei Venediktov, chief editor of Russian radio station Ekho Moskvy, often speaks out for freedom of the press

in connection with an investigation concerning Russia and attempts to influence the 2016 presidential election.

State-controlled media, such as Channel One inside Russia and RT abroad, including RT's YouTube channel, which has 2.2 million subscribers, produce content difficult to distinguish from legitimate news. Channel One regularly featured comments from "American political expert" Greg Vainer—until he was correctly identified as Russian businessman Gregory Vinnikov, who is accused of fraud in the U.S. In early 2016, RT coverage of the alleged rape by Arab migrants of a teenage Russian-German girl living in Berlin caused a diplomatic scandal before it was proved to be false.

"Propaganda in the state media is extremely efficient," says Tatyana Lokshina, Russia program director and senior researcher at Human Rights Watch. "It's not an old-school Soviet propaganda, which was gray and dreary. There is a persuasive story being told and experts commenting on it. And a viewer buys this story because he has a complete illusion that he is dealing with high-quality information. He doesn't know that the story is not true, and the experts are not the real experts in their fields."

The reach of the state-controlled media far outpaces that of independent outlets. An independent outlet might have an average monthly audience of five to eight million; Channel One has 250 million. Still, in addition to Novaya Gazeta, online TV channel Dozhd, the Meduza website, and Ekho Moskvy radio station continue to expose corruption, human rights violations, and Russian proxy wars abroad. And, while these outlets struggle to avoid state pressure, reporters are increasingly using YouTube, encrypted messaging services like Telegram, and good old-fashioned email newsletters to disseminate news and information.

During Putin's time, control over the mass media has mostly been exerted by administrative and financial

means. Increasingly, independent media have been targeted with restrictive legislation intended to curtail dissent and negative reporting about the Kremlin. In the summer of 2016, Putin signed legislation that, though aimed at terrorism, includes policies limiting free expression. The law requires Internet service providers to retain, archive, and provide authorities access to users' communications data.

Pressure is brought to bear on media owners, forcing them to change editors and editorial policy or to sell their companies to businessmen with close ties to the Kremlin. In journalistic slang, this process is known as *razgrom*, from the word "pogrom," signifying defeat or violent destruction.

One of the first *razgroms* in the Putin era happened to NTV, once the most popular independent TV channel. In 2001, NTV was handed over to Gazprom-Media, the subsidiary of oil-gas giant Gazprom, which has close ties to the Kremlin. Journalists protested with rallies and open letters. Staff seized the studios and broadcast their occupation live. The mutiny failed, however. NTV, once famous for political satire and independent investigations, began churning out bland Russian cop shows, occasionally interrupted by news and talk shows transmitting the Kremlin line.

"We believed it was possible to turn the tide by protesting," says Simon Saradzhyan, former deputy editor of the Moscow Times newspaper and founding director of the Russia Matters Project at the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center, which provides analysis of Russian politics. "But since then, it has happened so many times that it became clear it isn't."

Pavel Kanygin, a special correspondent for Novaya Gazeta, is one of the very few journalists consistently and deeply investigating Russia's role in the Eastern Ukraine conflict. In the spring of 2017 he managed

to identify a commander responsible for the downing of the MH17 aircraft over Ukraine in 2014. "I do my job," he says. "Maybe in some other media outlet I would feel discomfort covering such issues as the war in Ukraine, the investigation of the downing of MH17, or the presence of Russian special forces in Donbass. But, working at Novaya Gazeta, I don't have any problem with that."

That may be because few people actually read Novaya Gazeta. Kanygin bitterly describes himself and other independent journalists as "pathetic reminders of the free press scabbling around in our small garden," while mainstream opinion in the country is molded by state-controlled propaganda. The limited reach of independent outlets may be the reason Putin allows them to exist at all. "Our authority doesn't want to officially turn into a totalitarian regime," Kanygin says. "That's why it is important for [Putin] to preserve the facade of this allegedly democratic order."

The only remaining large independent media holding company, RosBusinessConsulting (RBC), is experiencing *razgrom* now. The process started in 2014, when RBC published a story revealing that the chairwoman of an obscure high-tech fund called Innopraktika, which handled contracts worth billions of dollars, was actually Putin's daughter. In May of 2016, Elizaveta Osetinskaya, chief editor of the RBC media conglomerate, which includes a TV station, business newspaper, and a widely read political news site, and two of her deputies were forced to resign. In early 2017, RBC was sold to Kremlin loyalist oligarch Grigory Berezkin.

In June, Osetinskaya, who moved to the U.S. and is now with the Investigative Reporting Program at UC Berkeley, launched Kolokol ("The Bell"), a twice-daily email newsletter focused primarily on finance and politics. The newsletter's name is a nod to the muckraking newspaper published first in London, then in Geneva in

"THE BELL" AVOIDS STATE CONTROL BY USING EMAIL AND MESSAGING SERVICES

the mid-19th century, which specialized in publishing leaked documents and counted luminaries such as Ivan Turgenev and Nikolai Nekrasov among its contributors. Officially prohibited in Russia, Kolokol was smuggled into the country by aristocrats and senior officials. It was widely read not only by the intelligentsia, but by Tsar Alexander II himself, who routinely quoted it at state gatherings.

Today's Bell avoids state control through distribution by email and messaging services. The government "doesn't understand that in our time [text messages] and even email can act as media," says Osetinskaya. "It doesn't matter how you spread information. Through Telegram, you can spread a link to a landing page that people will go on sharing."

Independent media like The Bell cater to the Russian intelligentsia, a relatively small section of the population that has historically played an influential role in the country's political and cultural life. "It's their voice," says Osetinskaya. "If the state completely blocks this channel, it will mark a shift to a completely different model of relations with the intelligentsia. It will be a confrontation with the most developed part of society, on which the state is partly based. Our government is not ready to take such a step because it will mean a transition from a conservative society to a real dictatorship."

This might also explain the continued operation of Ekho Moskvy, which openly criticizes the government, despite the fact that Gazprom-Media owns a controlling stake in it. "They have purposefully and deliberately decided to keep it on air in order to know what happens in the country," says Nina Ognianova, coordinator of the Europe and Central Asia Program of the Committee to Protect Journalists. Without it, she adds, the Kremlin would not know what the opposition is thinking.

Among independent outlets, Ekho Moskvy enjoys the most extensive connections to government, providing a bridge between journalists and authorities and often advocating for the profession and its practitioners. It gives voice not only to the opposition, but to government supporters. A popular blogger at Ekho Moskvy's website is Natalya Poklonskaya, an MP and former prosecutor general of annexed Crimea who enthusiastically extols Putin. Chief editor Alexei Venediktov often stands up for freedom of the press. When Chechen authorities threatened Novaya Gazeta over the story about the torture and murder of gay men, he published open letters on Ekho's website denouncing mistreatment of journalists. After the stabbing of Tatyana Felgenhauer—which prompted Novaya Gazeta editor Dmitry Muratov to announce that he plans to arm his staff with guns that fire rubber bullets in order to protect themselves against attacks—Venediktov publicly voiced what many



Protesters at the Russian embassy in Madrid in 2017 oppose anti-gay repression in Chechnya, a campaign uncovered by Novaya Gazeta

ABOVE: VASILY MAXIMOV/AF/GETTY IMAGES
OPPOSITE: MARCOS DEL MAZO/LIGHTROCKET VIA GETTY IMAGES

An Interior Ministry officer enters Moscow-based Ekho Moskvyy after an intruder attacked the radio station's anchor Tatyana Felgenhauer in the fall of 2017



journalists feel motivated the attack: “the atmosphere of hatred, of incitement, of instigation towards journalists.” Two weeks prior to the stabbing, state-controlled channel Russia24 accused Ekho Moskvyy, and specifically Felgenhauer, of being foreign agents acting in the U.S. interest. In late October, Ekho Moskvyy announced that journalist Ksenia Larina is leaving Russia for at least six months out of concern for her safety.

Independent “outlets have to figure out a way to navigate this field where they preserve their independence and ability to critically report while being conscious enough to not anger the establishment to the point where it can apply all of its repressive mechanisms,” says Ognianova.

When privately-owned TV station Dozhd lost its broadcasting access in 2014—for running a poll asking viewers on the 70th anniversary of the lifting of the siege of Leningrad if Russia’s defense of the city, in which upwards of a million civilians died, was worth it—many forecast death for the country’s sole independent TV station. But its founder and owner, Natalya Sindeeva, made a radical shift. Funded by proceeds from the sale of her house, she transitioned the station to an online subscription model. Despite a conspicuous drop in audience, it remains a popular and influential outlet.

IN RUSSIA, THERE IS AN EMERGING DEMAND FOR SERIOUS CONTENT ON YOUTUBE

Dozhd subscribers get access to exclusive stories, such as an examination of how the federal channels make propaganda. In a 10-minute report by Liliya Yapparova published in June, Dmitry Skorobutov, a former editor at the All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company, which owns several state-controlled national TV channels, brandishes his daily list of “topics to be avoided.” Ivan Romanov, a former cameraman for Channel One, describes how his team was forced to falsify coverage of the unrest in the Eastern Ukraine city of Donetsk ahead of the 2014 conflict.

According to Romanov, his team was 60 kilometers away from the city filming coal miners. They were ordered to prepare a video report showing a group of Ukrainian nationalists storming regional administration offices and clashing with pro-Russian protesters. Romanov checked the route of the nationalist demonstration

TATYANA MAKEYEVA/REUTERS

on Google Earth and discovered it was moving away from the regional administration offices. At first, he thought it was a mistake and tried to clarify the situation with his editors. But they insisted on their version. The report was so transparently false, Romanov says, that a fellow correspondent was brought to tears: “It was the only moment when I had to lie, and in that moment I felt how journalism was turning into propaganda.” Romanov now works for a small production company that focuses exclusively on financial coverage.

Some Russian journalists are leaving the country out of concern for their safety, like Milashina, but others are leaving “because of the general atmosphere,” says Human Rights Watch’s Lokshina. “Some are leaving simply because there is nowhere to work. The amount of independent media is so small that there are not enough jobs for all decent journalists.”

Lenta.ru, which once was the biggest independent news portal, was subjected to *razgrom* in 2014, and its chief editor, Galina Timchenko, was removed from her position. Many journalists resigned, following Timchenko to Riga, Latvia, where they launched the online newspaper Meduza, named after the mythological Greek monster that grew multiple heads for each one that was chopped off.

Meduza quickly became one of the leading independent Russian outlets, with a monthly audience exceeding seven million, excluding mobile app users. “If we are fighting for something,” says editor in chief Ivan Kolpakov, “it is only for our right to freely disseminate information and for the right of our readers to receive independent information. We do not consider ourselves an opposition media, just like we do not consider ourselves a pro-government media. We consider ourselves an independent media.”

About 30 percent of the site’s audience is outside the country, mainly in Ukraine, Germany, the U.S., and Great Britain. The English version of Meduza, which features the most important stories in translation, is gaining popularity as an objective firsthand source of information on Russia. In August, Meduza partnered with BuzzFeed to meet the growing demand for information from Russia in the English-speaking world. The sites will carry joint investigations and exchange stories.

Critics accuse Meduza of being out of touch with life inside Russia, yet the site does manage to have an impact. When civil rights activist Ildar Dadin became the first Russian citizen to be convicted under a new criminal code that prohibits street protests, Meduza provided the most extensive coverage of his trial. In December 2015, Dadin was sentenced to three years in prison. The following November, Meduza published a letter Dadin managed to smuggle out of prison. In it, he described the torture, beatings, and threats of rape to which he was subjected. To vet statements made in the letter, Meduza spoke to former prisoners of the same facility who confirmed that torture and mistreatment were routine in that prison. Under pressure from Meduza and other independent media, the Russian Supreme Court cancelled the sentence, and Dadin was released.

Seventy percent of Meduza’s audience is within Russia, as well as nearly all of its advertisers. Yet having headquarters abroad provides the site with a measure of protection. In Latvia, the Russian government cannot apply administrative pressure or send special service or tax police to search the editorial offices.

The role of online platforms in spreading independent reporting came to the fore after a wave of anti-corruption protests in major Russian cities in March 2017. Word of the upcoming protests spread through private chats on WhatsApp and Telegram. Protesters—tens of thousands of people, most of them very young, across some 80 cities—emphasized that they got their news and information from YouTube and social media. The trigger for the marches was a documentary by opposition leader Alexei Navalny, now barred from running for president, on alleged ties between prime minister Dmitry Medvedev and Russian oligarchs. Navalny’s “On vam ne Dimon” (“Don’t Call Him Dimon”)—viewed 25 million times on YouTube—unravels a network of charitable foundations run by Medvedev’s friends that allegedly purchased numerous castles, villas, vineyards, and yachts all over Russia and abroad. Navalny is shunned by state-controlled media.

The protests reoriented journalistic attention to a neglected cohort of the Russian population—young people who don’t watch TV or read newspapers and whose informational and social lives happen on social networking platforms, messaging services, and video blogs. “There grew up a new generation of young people who don’t buy the Kremlin’s propaganda,” says journalist Peter Pomerantsev, who was born in Kiev and is author of “Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible: The Surreal Heart of the New Russia.” “You cannot keep them in fear that, if there is no current order of things, there will be chaos, an idea that works with older generations. They didn’t live through the collapse of the Soviet Union; they don’t remember the lawlessness of the ’90s. There was nothing in their lives that could be used to manipulate them with fear.”

After the March protests, young people recorded videos of their speeches and published them on the same YouTube channels that they normally use to watch their peers commenting on video games. From there, the videos were picked up and circulated by independent media.

YouTube is increasingly substituting for television among Russian millennials. The Google-owned site already has a slightly bigger audience among the urban population of 12- to 44-year-olds (82.7 percent) than First Channel (81.5 percent) who watch the outlets at least once a month, according to international research agency TNS. Alexei Navalny’s YouTube channel alone has over a million followers.

“Until recently, these alternative platforms were a field for very young people, for the teenagers,” says Novaya Gazeta’s Kanygin. “But these people are growing, and together with them we can see an emerging demand for more serious, better quality content. And it attracts to this sphere not only amateurs who can put together funny videos, but journalists and media professionals.” ■



At a time when political and social divisions over race are constantly in the headlines, news outlets are striving to cover the issues with accuracy and sensitivity
BY JAWEED KALEEM

THE RACE BEAT, REVISITED

S

HEREEN MARISOL MERAJI kicked off an episode of “Code Switch,” a podcast taglined “Race and Identity Remixed,” with a confession: “My mom’s Puerto Rican; my dad’s Iranian. And I, too, suffer from racial imposter syndrome.” Meraji went on to dissect a thorny subject at the heart of any discussion of race in the media: Who gets to claim authenticity?

She nodded to the fact that a fast-growing number of minorities in the U.S. are multiracial or children of immigrants. And many, like

Meraji herself, experience guilt about whether they have the “right to claim this part of who I am.” “I actually had an acute flare-up last year” of the syndrome, Meraji said on the show, sharing the example of feeling conflicted over incorporating Persian traditions into her wedding even though she was “much more rooted in my Puerto Rican-ness.” She related that someone once even called her “off-brand” because she didn’t seem to fully fit into either category.

Her “Code Switch” co-host in Washington, D.C., Gene Demby, joined her as the duo spoke to a linguist, a social scientist, and the founder of a cultural festival for multiracial people. They peppered the discussion with clips of readers talking about their own frustration, confusion, and pride over how—and if—to claim racial and ethnic identity. They ended with few answers.

NPR is often mocked as overly formal, but the coverage at “Code Switch” is anything but. A team of reporters around the country devoted to covering race contribute to Meraji and Demby’s podcast, where conclusions are hard to come by—on purpose. Race is messy and complicated, the hosts often say.

NPR and other news outlets are striving to make sense of this messy, complicated issue at a time when political and social divisions over race are once again in the headlines, from the white supremacist march over the summer in Charlottesville, Virginia to activists’ defense of sanctuary cities to campaigns against businesses, like the NAACP-led protest against American Airlines for allegedly routinely discriminating against black passengers.

A 2017 Gallup survey found that 42 percent of Americans worry a “great deal” about race—the highest percentage to say so in 17 years. Criticism has continued to hit newsrooms over their own lack of



ABOVE: Mildred and Richard Loving, above with their children in 1967, the year the Supreme Court struck down bans on interracial marriages

PREVIOUS SPREAD: People gather for a candlelight vigil in Charlottesville, Virginia last August, days after white supremacists marched there and a protester was killed

racial diversity. In March 2017, dozens of Wall Street Journal staffers signed a letter to top management, demanding more gender and racial diversity and pay equity. In April, Fox News employees sued the company, citing “abhorrent, intolerable, unlawful and hostile racial discrimination” from managers. According to the 2017 annual newsroom diversity survey by the American Society of News Editors (ASNE), racial minorities make up just 17 percent of online and print newsroom employees; in the U.S., racial minorities account for 39 percent of the population.

Of course, race has long been a focus of media coverage, but as veteran journalists Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff wrote in “The Race Beat,” the Pulitzer-winning chronicle of journalism during the civil rights era, it was largely white men who reported and edited national coverage of the fight against Jim Crow laws. Oftentimes, local reporting was scant and left to black newspapers.

“Journalists need to invest in and build trust with communities that have been ignored or feel they have been erased,” says Michelle Ferrier, associate professor of journalism at Ohio University whose research focuses on community engagement in media and coverage of underserved communities. “Covering race is one first step at doing that in a world where it’s long been obvious to under-covered communities that they are missing from the media.”

Today, those creating journalism about race are far more likely to look like the people they cover. “Code Switch,” whose team is made up entirely of racial minorities—African-Americans, reporters with Hispanic origins, and an Asian-American—is just one example of how things have changed. “I just knew in my heart of hearts

that discussing race, a subject many people don’t want to get near, wasn’t going to feel satisfying in a four-minute feature on ‘Morning Edition,’” says Meraji, who is based in Los Angeles. “We needed a place to wrestle with ideas and return to them. We needed to be able to tell a story without a pithy kicker at the end.”

Take, for example, the episode on being a racial imposter. The source for the idea was not an editorial brainstorm but an email from a reader, Kristina Ogilvie, who wrote to the show about her experience “living at the intersection of different identities and cultures.” With mixed heritage that includes an Afro-Panamanian father, she likened her racial experience to “stumbling around in a forest in the dark.” Ogilvie asked, “Do you hear from other listeners who feel like fakes? God, I hope the answer is yes.”

Meraji and the “Code Switch” team solicited other stories from their listeners. They quickly received 127 emails, including one from Angie, whose “mother is a Panamanian immigrant and my father is a white guy from Pennsylvania.” She said that made her feel out of place among both Latinas and whites. Another listener named Indigo, whose mother is Jamaican and whose father is African-American, wrote about her experience growing up and discovering how differently people perceived “blackness.”

The episode flipped the traditional script on reporting. It wasn’t journalists who were the experts on what the story should be; it was listeners.

But Meraji, a mixed-race woman, and Demby, an African-American man, weren’t simply conveying the stories of their audience, they interspersed their own experiences into the storytelling.

“IF OUR REALITIES ARE CONSISTENTLY TOLD FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF A WHITE LENS, THEN I DON’T THINK WE’RE DOING THE BEST WE CAN”

**CLARISSA WEI
CHINESE-AMERICAN JOURNALIST**



Sikhs and supporters in Wisconsin mark the anniversary of a shooting rampage by a white supremacist who killed six temple members in 2012. HuffPost’s Asian Voices has featured coverage of anti-Sikh hate crimes

Part of that was the conversational, personal tone of podcasting and radio. But it was also the fruit of at times putting aside traditional journalistic sensibilities of objectivity and the third-person perspective. Meraji says it would be inauthentic not to talk about where she comes from.

“The journalists on the team are all living the [people of color] experience and, to add to that, just like any other beat reporter, we’re developing expertise in the subject area, so we also share our well-informed insights,” she says. “When appropriate, and in the spirit of full transparency, we even add insights from our personal lives.”

One issue Meraji, Demby, and other contributors to “Code Switch” have struggled with is how to appeal to a broad audience while also staying relevant to particular groups of racial minorities. “Our audience is younger and browner than NPR’s, but it still skews white,” says Meraji. “How do we speak directly to an audience of color, who have some common understanding of what it means to live as ‘minorities’ in a majority-white country, and to our white audience, who haven’t lived that experience?”

The answer, she says, is walking the line between explaining too little and explaining too much. In an episode about Puerto Rican identity, Meraji—who often forgoes Anglicized pronunciations—spoke of her love for Puerto Rican pasteles. For the uninitiated, she explained that the traditional foods are “like tamales but way better.” But if the listener had never heard of a tamale—meat, beans, or cheese in masa dough that’s wrapped in a corn husk—they were out of luck.

“Our podcast/blog/broadcast stories are not black-and-white,” Meraji says. “We talk about the Asian and Latino experience, immigrant-of-color issues. We get into multiracial identity and Native American issues, and we’ve realized that the key really is to bring along audience members who aren’t directly a part of the story we’re telling, while giving the group reflected in the story we’re reporting something to chew on, too.”

Jessica Prois, Asian Voices executive editor at HuffPost, shares a similar point of view. The news website, where I worked as the senior religion reporter until early 2016, has always published articles, commentary, and multimedia on race. But as Prois wrote in May to introduce ramped-up coverage, “There

aren't enough Asian-American spaces on the internet." Racism, she says, was at once part of the reason they were missing and a reason they needed to exist.

Asian-American groups have long complained that representations of Asians in the media are lacking but, in recent years, the protests have gained more traction. When the hashtag #OscarsSoWhite arose, the lack of blacks among Oscar nominees was the initial focus before the discussion widened to include media representation of all non-white groups. A spate of films in which white actors play Asian characters has ignited complaints of "whitewashing" in Hollywood. The casting of Scarlett Johansson in "Ghost in the Shell," an adaptation of a Japanese manga, and that of Tilda Swinton as the Ancient One, originally a Tibetan character, in 2016's "Doctor Strange" particularly hit a nerve among critics.

Critics also point out the lack of many prominent Asian-American journalists. Around 85 percent of TV news directors are white, according to a 2016 survey by the Radio Television Digital News Association. Asians make up 2.3 percent of TV news directors, just a slight increase over their percentage a decade ago. In U.S. newsrooms, the latest ASNE survey found that Asians make up 4.3 percent of staffers. NPR statistics show that Asians make up 8.3 percent of its staff. Numbers are harder to come by for websites; BuzzFeed said recently that 12 percent of its U.S. news staff was Asian. According to the U.S. Census, Asians are the fastest-growing demographic and stand at more than 21 million, or nearly 7 percent of the nation's population.

Harder to determine is how frequently—or infrequently—Asians are in the news. The vast number of groups that fall under the term "Asian"—from people with origins in Pakistan to the Philippines—also makes it challenging to measure representation. While dozens of independent journalists and commentators have filled some of the void with podcasts, blogs, and popular social media feeds, mainstream media coverage devoted to Asian-Americans has lagged. Some newspapers based in places with large Asian populations, like the Los Angeles Times, where I cover race and justice, have assigned reporters to cover Asian communities and neighborhoods and maintain bureaus in Asian nations. But that's a rarity. NBC Asian America is another outlet that has focused on Asian-Americans, where the wider NBC network and an array of freelance reporters help extend its coverage and distribution.

The difference at HuffPost, where editors encourage writers to have their own takes on the news, is that the coverage of Asian-Americans often comes with sharp points of view. The site has two staffers—Prois and Asian Voices editor Kimberly Yam—who spend the bulk of their time reporting and editing on Asian-American issues. Since formally launching in spring 2017, Asian Voices has featured coverage of anti-Sikh hate crimes and the fact that elderly Asian-American women have higher rates of suicide than other racial groups. Prois and Yam frequently recruit writers from the newsroom to write about personal experiences, temporarily shift their beat coverage toward Asian issues, or chime in on wider cultural conversations from the lens of being Asian or from a particular ethnic background.

The Atlantic in June published a cover story by Alex Tizon, a former Seattle Times reporter, in which he shared his family's secret of passing down for decades ownership of a Filipina slave. The family brought Lola to the United States where she lived her last years with a \$200 weekly allowance. The viral story drew praise and criticism. Tizon and his family were lambasted for taking decades before offering Lola money and a trip back home. People came out against The Seattle Times, which had written an obituary at Tizon's urging when Lola died years before but failed to find out the key detail about her identity. Others came to the defense of the writer, who had died of cancer before publication, saying critics should try to understand the story in its full cultural and historical context.

As reaction spread online, three Filipina-American HuffPost staffers dissected it via a group chat on Slack. Prois then helped them turn the chat into a piece for the site. "Who gets to tell Filipinos how their stories should be told?" asked the article, which drew upon the views of staffers who had family members who had either worked as servants or hired them in the Philippines or the U.S. "I appreciated that the author was trying to sort out growing up in dual cultures and, eventually, reckoning with his guilt over the normalcy of having a 'slave,'" wrote Carla Herreria, a HuffPost reporter based in Hawaii. "Many Filipinos don't have much, so I wouldn't be surprised if some took people in as help ... feels like a way for them to take care of each other," said Danielle Datu, a HuffPost social media editor. "Many of us (non-Asian, or non-Filipinx, or even non-nationals) don't have answers. And that's okay even if it's also



Lola Pulido, in an undated photo far left and in 2008 with Alex Tizon. "My Family's Slave," Tizon's story about Lola, stirred heated discussion about who gets to tell difficult stories involving history and culture

unsettling," wrote Dzana Ashworth, who at the time was a HuffPost video producer in New York.

The conversation went beyond opinion into global history and economics. Should global human rights standards outweigh cultural traditions particular to Asian nations? In separate articles, HuffPost writers in India and elsewhere weighed in about slavery in South Asia and other Asian nations. There were few conclusions.

Prois, who has Korean heritage, says the idea of Asians writing about Asians is not only about authenticity and accuracy, but about elevating her section's brand. The pieces on HuffPost Asian Voices are frequently written in the first person as reported essays. There's no firm rule about what kinds of stories must be written by Asian writers, Prois says, but certain topics may be perceived better by the audience if they come from an "insider": "The way you build an audience is content that specifically speaks to a specific identity group," she says. "Readers come to you for these types of stories that they can't find anywhere else. And that type of content is typically done by someone from that community. In the case of the Tizon story, discussing ethnic caste systems in article form is probably better left to someone who identifies with that group in some way."

At The New York Times, it's been a time to amp up coverage of race in nontraditional ways, with a substantial number of story ideas and content bubbling up from readers. In 2001, the paper won the Pulitzer Prize in National Reporting for the "How Race is Lived in America" series. But in subsequent years, it has faced criticism over the diversity of its staff and its coverage. At times, readers have said it fell into racial tropes on major stories—like a profile of Michael Brown, who was shot and killed by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, that described him as "no angel." More recently, readers accused the publication of normalizing white supremacy in a controversial viral article on a Nazi sympathizer living in Ohio.

When Dean Baquet became the paper's first African-American executive editor in 2014, journalists inside and outside the Times thought having a non-white editor at the top would translate into improvements on race in the paper's reports. He hit some hurdles early on. In 2015, Baquet faced critics after the paper axed its race and ethnicity beat on the national desk and transferred a reporter covering the topic to the Metro staff to follow Bronx courts.

The following year, then public editor Liz Spayd chastised managers for not substantially increasing the paper's racial diversity.

At the same time, staffers credit Baquet for mandating changes to race coverage that helped break down departmental walls and incorporate new ways of storytelling. In 2016, he encouraged editors to think of ways to "beef up our coverage of race but do it in a way that was not a series," says national editor Marc Lacey. Now, every week, dozens of New York Times editors and reporters join or dial into a meeting at the paper's Manhattan building where an array of section representatives brainstorm stories related to race. The resulting coverage includes a Facebook Live series, where reporters and editors talk via webcam about racial issues in the news, and the Race/Related newsletter, which has gained more than 100,000 subscribers since its launch in April 2016.

"We have a handful of reporters who cover race full time," Lacey says. "But this is really about involving a much larger group across the newsroom. Big news organizations have set themselves up in departments, and those departments have had leaders that operated covering certain areas, but race is not an area that by any means sticks to those boundaries." Race, he says, is "metro, is culture, is national, is sports—it's a part of all of those things."

One live video discussion featured on the NYT Facebook page was between Rachel Swarns and freelancer Clarissa Wei. Swarns' coverage typically focuses on race and history, such as her reports on how the sale of slaves helped finance the construction of Georgetown University. Wei, a Chinese-American freelancer, talked about "The Struggles of Writing About Chinese Food as a Chinese Person," her article for Vice. "Food feels political for us, for many people of color," Swarns, who is black, summarized Wei's arguments, saying in the chat, "When it comes to making money, building a name as a food writer, or building a high-profile successful career, sometimes the people who are doing that and are building careers about, say, Chinese food, aren't actually Chinese-Americans."

Wei cited a recent study, on the blog Intersectional Analyst, which found that of 263 Chinese recipes in the Times's Food section, just 10 percent were written by Chinese authors. "What really bothered me and what struck a chord ... is the lack of representation of Chinese food writers and chefs in the mainstream," Wei said during the conversation. "Storytelling and cooking is a means by

REPORTING RESOURCES FOR COVERING RACE

Reporter's Indigenous Terminology Guide

This guide by the Native American Journalists Association explains how and when to use terms such as Native American and Indigenous, as well as the best way to identify tribal affiliations.

100 Questions and Answers about Arab Americans

Michigan State University professor and former news recruiter Joe Grimm worked with students to produce this guide on race, religion,

and the culture of Arab Americans. The guide is part of a series that also covers Indian Americans, Hispanics and Latinos, Muslim Americans, and East Asian cultures.

Guide to Covering Asian America

This handbook by the Asian American Journalists Association explains how to use dozens of Asian-related terms, from religions and ethnicities to foods and country names.

The Diversity Style Guide

This guide from the Center for

Integration and Improvement of Journalism at San Francisco State University draws from more than a dozen style books on how to cover race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and other topics.

National Association of Black Journalists Style Guide

What's the difference between the NAACP and the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund? The NABJ guide answers questions about African-American

organizations and cultural movements and gives advice on words to avoid.

Race Reporting Guide

The style guide for Colorlines, the nonprofit Race Forward organization's website on race.

The Society of Professional Journalists Toolbox

This "toolbox" offers dozens of vetted bookmarks on covering diversity, religion, and more. —Jaweed Kaleem

COURTESY OF THE TIZON FAMILY

which we form our realities of the world and certain issues. And if our realities are consistently told from the viewpoint of a white lens ... then I don't think we're doing the best that we can."

Reporters and editors, including Lacey, rotate writing the Race/Related newsletter each week, which often includes an original story or presentation in addition to a roundup of links to coverage of race in the Times. In early June, the newsletter led with a report by domestic affairs correspondent Sheryl Gay Stolberg on the 50th anniversary of Loving v. Virginia, the Supreme Court case that struck down laws banning interracial marriages. Stolberg reported the piece from Central Point, Virginia, where Richard Loving and his wife, Mildred, once lived.

But it wasn't a traditional report. The piece clocked in at 557 words—short enough to fit within a few swipes of an iPhone screen. It also included a solicitation with a link: "To explore the effects of Loving vs. Virginia, Race/Related would like to hear from you. Has being in an interracial relationship united or divided your family? Please tell us how, using this form."

A little more than a month later, Stolberg introduced another issue of the newsletter following up on the prompt. It featured profiles and wedding photos of six mixed-race couples who had responded with stories of how they met.

Incorporating reader submissions has been a key part of changes in race coverage at the Times, according to Lacey: "We decided right from the beginning that we would not focus on the print newspaper but on our digital audience. We vowed we would do a lot of callouts. We also decided we'd be less defensive as journalists than we often are when covering contentious, delicate topics like race. We knew if we fessed up right from the beginning that there will be times that you disagree with us, and that we want to hear from you, it would only help."

Sometimes, staffers unwittingly hit upon explosive ideas. In 2016, Lacey noticed his former colleague Michael Luo (now editor of NewYorker.com) venting on social media about a woman who harassed him and his family on a Manhattan street by yelling, "Go back to China!" "I called Mike and said, 'You're clearly really animated about this. Why don't you write something?'" Lacey says. Luo's letter written to the woman went viral and it ran on the front page of the newspaper.

The piece resonated "more than a straight news story because there was something about a New York Times editor who felt the sting of discrimination," he says. It was followed with a video of people sharing stories of discrimination, and it was translated into Chinese for the paper's Chinese-language website.

Like The New York Times, BuzzFeed has also tried to tap into the changing conversation on race. It's done that through aggressive live coverage, such as First Amendment Live, a widely watched Facebook broadcast that often shows civil rights protests and right-wing events across the country. It's also done it through beat assignments, including a reporter in New York who reports on Black Lives Matter and African-American civil rights groups.

But BuzzFeed is also upping its coverage of another slice of race in America: the increasingly vocal white Americans who have showed up at protests and at the polls with claims that their concerns are going unheard. Some identify with so-called "alt-right" and neo-Nazi groups; others include the broad swath of white Americans who helped Trump win the presidency, among whom distrust in the media is at a high. "A lot of publications are trying to grapple with how to cover 'flyover country,' for lack of a better word," says Anne Helen Petersen, a senior culture writer who left New York in 2017 and returned to her native Montana to cover the Mountain West.

Petersen, whose articles range from cultural analyses of celebrities to news and political coverage of Montana, Washington state, and Idaho, is now based in Missoula. The city is a liberal and relatively diverse place in a state that is one of the whitest in the country. "Wackadoodles, Establishment Hacks, and the Big, Ugly, Local Battle for the Heart of the GOP" read the headline on a more than 8,000-word feature Petersen published in October. Ostensibly, it was about a fight for the Republican party in rural North Idaho, where various factions of the GOP were at war in an area where Democrats and liberals barely exist. But its subhead revealed a strong undercurrent to the piece: "The 'whiteopia' of North Idaho has become one of the most desirable places in the West for conservatives to relocate. So why is the local Republican party tearing itself apart—and who's responsible?"

"I think of my beat regionally much more than about race," says Petersen. But the story of the region, she adds, "becomes a story that is often about whiteness."

Petersen, whose reporting on North Idaho politics took her to breakfast and political committee meetings with far-right figures, says her own background frequently gets her access and gives her unique insight. "All reporters try to play up their strengths," says Petersen, who grew up in Idaho and was a Ph.D. student and professor in Texas and Washington state before becoming a reporter. "Sometimes, it means you play up your strengths by talking up people who share characteristics with you. It gives you a lot more credence as someone who understands and can empathize with what it's like to live in a certain place. I'm absolutely aware how my whiteness and the fact that I'm also blonde fits into" gaining interviews and trust when reporting on white conservatives.

It's not only journalists who are becoming aware of how race can tie into access or understanding. A debate erupted on social media after activist Erica Garner died in late December and a family representative tweeted that only black reporters should reach out for interviews. (See Issac Bailey's "We Haven't Fully Grappled with How Much We Unwittingly Judge Journalism Through a White Lens" on page 32.)

In her piece on rural Republican politics, Petersen says she in part focused on how race relations function when there are so few people of other races with whom to relate. One man she interviewed was Jeff Tyler, who moved to North Idaho from California after first visiting in 1994. He said he liked it because it "felt like America in the 1950s."

"Like so many things with reporting, you look for patterns in how people talked about issues, places, and people, and then drew conclusions from there," she says, explaining that she interviewed 25 people in the region and deeply researched local news, including digging up letters to the editors in publications. The conclusion in the article, and in her reporting: the people she interviewed rarely spoke in direct terms about race but frequently were, nonetheless, uncomfortable with the idea of racial diversity in a region that's 98.4 percent white.

"THE WAY YOU BUILD AN AUDIENCE IS CONTENT THAT SPECIFICALLY SPEAKS TO A SPECIFIC IDENTITY GROUP"

JESSICA PROIS
ASIAN VOICES EXECUTIVE EDITOR AT HUFFPO

MARK PETERSON/REDUX



The white supremacists' demonstration and counterprotests in Charlottesville, Virginia last summer highlighted the divisions in the U.S. over race

But while Petersen says she recognized coded language about race—it was clear over the course of interviews that fears of blacks and Latinos ran high in Northern Idaho because they were wrongly tied to crime and violence—Petersen says she didn't bring up any variations of the word "racism" in interviews.

"I'd rather have them elaborate on their ideology and ideas," she says. That way, she keeps her sources and portrays them accurately, while giving readers all the information they need to understand the racial dynamics at play.

"I don't ask questions like, 'Don't you think that's racist?'" Instead, I just ask them to say more," she says. During the reporting of a story in 2017 that touched upon anti-Islam activists in Montana's Flathead County fighting against efforts to resettle refugees in the state, she would frequently hear false information from those she interviewed. "If they claim something that's factually wrong—like the fear over, say, Sharia law spreading into Missoula, or the refugees in Montana, I'll counter with more specifics, like, 'Oh, what do you think about the fact that most of those refugee families were actually Congolese Christians?'" Petersen says.

"I try to connect the dots between the beliefs articulated, which the subjects may not claim to be 'racist,' for example, and how those beliefs enact racist policies," she says.

Keeping the focus local is the core of Unite Rochester, a years-long engagement effort at the Rochester Democrat & Chronicle to tackle lasting racial inequalities in upstate New York. A major component involves getting residents to cross social and economic barriers to get to know each other—and staffers of the newspaper—in person.

Unite Rochester started with a fairly routine news-gathering effort. Five years ago, journalists ran an investigative series on disparities in criminal justice, housing, education, and jobs in Monroe County, a place where the African-American population largely lives in the city of Rochester. They found that Monroe County schools were some of the most segregated in the nation and nearly half of city residents lived in "neighborhoods of extreme poverty." But instead of leaving its reporting results for others to act on, newspaper leaders took it upon themselves to do something.

One of the first steps was an editorial board-led listening tour.

In Monroe County the goal was to hear residents' concerns and offer a space for people to talk to one another. Few people showed up to initial meetings—just eight at the first—but dozens came to later gatherings, including political and civic leaders. Partnerships grew with museums, churches, and civic foundations. The city's power brokers bought in. So did the newsroom, which had institutional backing to pursue coverage of race that went beyond the news.

Those relationships were key in the summer of 2016, when shootings in other states ignited protests across the country over race and policing. Locally, reporters covered the arrest of more than 70 people at a Black Lives Matter protest, a large number for a demonstration in a mid-sized American city. The paper quickly pulled together a forum on the rising racial tensions. Panelists included mediators, the police chief, and pastors.

The paper reported on the event like it would on any other, but it also kept the conversation going. Longer-term efforts included a Community Response Team, made up of more than a dozen leaders from criminal justice, civil rights, religion, and education-related nonprofits. Rochester is now part of the Divided Communities Project at Ohio State University. The study looks at how cities address causes of violence—like racial tensions—before they arise.

The paper has also taken the lead on programs like the Unite Rochester Challenge, which solicited proposals for projects to bridge the racial and socioeconomic gaps in the region. Among 89 entries, the winner was a group called Art Force Five, which used the \$5,000 it received to launch a project to recruit people in the area to create mosaics on themes of violence, education, and incarceration. A staff reporter wrote about the art series for USA Today's "I am an American" project. The community events, from the contest to forums and an outpouring of new op-ed contributors, have given reporters a wide array of new sources and stories to follow as they consider future coverage of race.

For reporters, says Karen Magnuson, Democrat and Chronicle editor and vice president/news who is also co-chair of ASNE's diversity committee, the effort's greatest result is the growth in trust in the paper to write deeply and in a sustained way about race and inequality: "The relationships we've developed increased our credibility with communities of color, and it's helped us improve our coverage of the total community." ■

“WE HAVEN’T FULLY GRAPPLED WITH HOW MUCH WE UNWITTINGLY JUDGE JOURNALISM THROUGH A WHITE LENS”

Newsrooms need to examine biases and decisions about which journalists cover stories about race

BY ISSAC BAILEY

AN ASSOCIATE OF Erica Garner created a firestorm by doing something editors and producers do every day: use race to help decide who gets to tell an important story. It’s just that the Garner request was blunt while race and identity are used in often unacknowledged ways inside newsrooms.

Garner was the 27-year-old daughter of Eric Garner, the man who became well-known for reasons his family wish he hadn’t. He died in 2014 while a New York police officer had him restrained in a chokehold that had been outlawed by the department. Erica Garner became an impassioned advocate for criminal justice reform after her father’s death before succumbing in December to a heart attack some believe was at least partially induced by the enormous amount of stress that came with her advocacy.

An associate of hers requested that only black journalists get in touch about interviews after she died. The request (or demand) sparked howls of reverse racism and snarky jokes on Twitter asking if Asian-Americans or Latinos could be granted half a question.

Had I been an assigning editor, I would have ignored the request. Sources cannot dictate such decisions. But the decisions we make frequently take into account race and identity, even when we pretend they don’t. It’s just that those decisions don’t begin when news breaks. The string running through that long process includes how and who we recruit; who we assign to which beats and why; and which beats are considered prestigious, which are deemed grunt work. Whose voice is most cherished in the newsroom shapes who gets to tell what stories, and which stories float to 1A.

Journalists of color often feel conflicted about race-related stories because of the newsroom environment

they must navigate. Committing to telling such stories—knowing they deserve top-shelf journalistic attention—can make you feel as though you’ve effectively banished yourself to the ghetto of the newsroom because white colleagues believe they are less important than stories about politics or national security. Refusing or shying away from doing them can make you feel complicit in media that frequently distort the image of black families and other groups. Managers in newsrooms may not say “send only black journalists,” but that message gets through anyway when few resources are dedicated to developing such stories and they are treated as extras or evergreens instead of fundamental to daily coverage. That sense is further cemented when the most coveted beats have the least-diverse staff.

And there’s something deeper at work. We haven’t fully grappled with how much we unwittingly judge journalism through a white lens. Most of us likely have an image rattling around our brains about what the “best” journalism looks and feels and sounds like. That image is built upon a traditional view. That traditional view was cultivated by white journalists who determined what was the most professional and appropriate dress, tone, and style for the airwaves, and in print. In the way that the Supreme Court isn’t final because it’s infallible, but infallible because it’s final, the accepted view of what’s great journalism has long been considered final because infallible journalists—industry leaders, often—lack the imagination to consider that there might be a better way, even if it is grating on their ears and offends the sensibilities of the grammarian within.

Many of the conclusions we come to are based on identity, and race is a major pillar of identity in the United States. That’s true even if we don’t factor in racial discrimination. It’s why recent developments in the news industry are

encouraging—and worrying. The push for more diversity is healthy and must continue full speed ahead. It is that important. Representation matters. The ability to tell stories with nuance and from every relevant angle and in an authentic, unapologetic voice matters. People who live the stories have a finer appreciation for them than those who don’t. All of that is true, which is why I’m a big fan of innovations such as NPR’s “Code Switch.”

But that doesn’t mean only journalists of color should tell stories about people of color, particularly stories at the emotional crossroads of race and crime. Dina Temple-Raston of NPR had to dig deep into the horrific killing of James Byrd Jr. in Texas. Jill Leovy’s “Ghettoside” is a must-read. The lesson? Don’t shy away from dealing forthrightly with race—including how the race of the journalist affects the project—and commit to doing great journalism. White journalists should neither be allowed to avoid doing complex race-related stories nor use their lack of direct experience as an excuse for so frequently doing them poorly. They manage to tell compelling stories about men and women suffering from battlefield-induced PTSD without ever having experienced war. There’s no reason they can’t manage to write with empathy about the crack-addicted black single mom the way they have about the opioid-addicted poor white mother.

DON'T SHY AWAY FROM DEALING FORTHRIGHTLY WITH RACE—INCLUDING HOW THE RACE OF THE JOURNALIST AFFECTS A PROJECT—AND COMMIT TO DOING GREAT JOURNALISM

MARY ALTAFER/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Erica Garner addresses the media following the death of her father while in police custody. After she died of a heart attack in December, an associate’s request that only black journalists seek interviews about Erica’s life sparked accusations of reverse racism

The irony is that in the Garner case, a white journalist did just that. Matt Taibbi of Rolling Stone spent years writing and researching “I Can’t Breathe: A Killing on Bay Street.” The book treats Eric Garner in all his complexity and humanity. It doesn’t shy away from the cultural and racial pressures that left Erica without a father. Publicity for the book has been hampered by the resurfacing of some of Taibbi’s long-ago controversial writings. It is clear he has a command of the subject like few others.

He is clear that his race complicated matters.

“I think there are certainly pressures that come with being a white reporter in cases like this,” he says. “The reactions I got ... ranged from anger/outrage over it as an act of cultural appropriation to sarcastic comments about how it took so long for a white reporter to bother spending so much time on the police brutality issue. ... If I’d backed off this story because I was

white, then I’d never have learned so much history about this kind of police violence and bureaucratic prejudice, which is largely a story about white America’s legacy. I think as journalists we should just be interested in a wide range of things. The same issues of access and empathy are going to exist in stories where race is a factor and where it isn’t.”

He also disagrees with the idea that we should start setting rules about what black and white reporters should or should not cover but still wasn’t offended by the Garner request for black journalists.

“People feel the way they feel for reasons and one has to be respectful of those,” he says. “It was and is an emotional time. I had a great relationship with Erica, and she and I became genuine friends over the years. I think she had trust issues with the media generally, especially after the Project Veritas incident.” (Garner made critical comments about the Rev. Al Sharpton during a secretly recorded

conversation with conservative activists.)

One last thing to consider. There may be times when the race of a journalist makes the difference between a great story, and maybe none at all. While journalists of color—including columnists who have essentially embedded with the KKK—have done good work on stories about white supremacists, the well-received Vice documentary about Charlottesville was clearly helped because the reporter was a white, blond woman. That made the alt-right activists she interviewed feel comfortable in ways simply not available to a black male journalist like me.

That’s why, even though I still believe journalists should not have acquiesced to the Garner request, it would be unwise for us not to consider the issue from all angles. That means openly acknowledging and considering race in all its complexity as we make decisions inside newsrooms. Too often, we use race to guide decisions without even thinking it through. ■

TURNING THE FOCUS FROM OPIOID ADDICTION TO TREATMENT AND RECOVERY

**As more people
in recovery share
their stories,
journalists need
to explore the
under-reported
experiences of
people who have
been drug-free
for many years**

BY SUSAN STELLIN



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THESE DAYS, YOU'D be hard-pressed to open a news app, turn on the TV, or check your social media feeds without coming across a story about how the opioid epidemic is affecting families across the United States. From profiles of lives cut short by an overdose to features about the collateral damage inflicted on children to articles presenting grim statistics, there has been no shortage of stories documenting the toll of the epidemic.

It is much tougher to report on how the U.S. should address it. Or more specifically, how to best treat the 21 million Americans who struggle with addiction.

"Coverage of the opioid epidemic on a human level has been pretty good," says Seth Mnookin, an author and director of the Graduate Program in Science Writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "There have been many fewer stories talking about the science behind any aspect of it—the science behind addiction, or the science behind treatment and recovery."

One reason for that coverage imbalance, Mnookin says, is the lack of agreement among scientists, treatment providers, and people in long-term recovery about what approaches work best for different individuals. That can complicate reporters' efforts to evaluate studies and be appropriately skeptical about recovery rates and treatment claims. "Another challenge for journalists," Mnookin says, "has been finding ways to write about recovery and not just have it be anecdotally based."

Mnookin has been open about his own recovery from heroin addiction many years ago, pointing out that there is not a widespread understanding about what constitutes recovery. Most clinicians agree that recovery is a process that typically takes years, not months, and that it isn't just a matter of being drug-free.

But as media outlets shift from covering the problem of addiction to highlighting potential solutions, many reporters are finding that it's easier to focus on what's wrong with our treatment system rather than identifying how it can or should be fixed. There's a lack of good data about basic questions like how recovery rates compare for addictions to different types of drugs, or rigorous evaluations of treatment approaches that take into account the characteristics of different clients—say, an older unemployed man with a decade-long heroin habit vs. a young woman using prescription opioids in college. Sources with impressive academic titles often disagree about what qualifies as "evidence-based



ABOVE: Jerald Brooks, left, is a participant in Seattle's Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, a program for drug offenders profiled in the documentary "Chasing Heroin"

PREVIOUS SPREAD: Oxycodone is commonly prescribed for patients with chronic pain. People who get addicted to it often move on to heroin, which is cheaper

treatment," and even argue about whether addiction should be considered a disease. Since addiction has mostly been treated outside the healthcare system, sometimes by unregulated for-profit providers, journalists must navigate the financial motives that can influence interviews with "experts," as well as research funded by companies with a stake in the results. And as more people in recovery decide to share their stories, bucking the stigma that has long kept addiction in the shadows, media outlets must be careful about how these examples are framed. Just as there is more than one way to lose weight—and no easy fix for our obesity epidemic—there are many pathways to overcoming addiction. Yet one reason it's important to cover these success stories is to balance the narrative of despair with a dose of hope.

William White, emeritus senior research consultant at the nonprofit Chestnut Health Systems who has worked in the addictions field for nearly 50 years as a clinician, educator, and research scientist, has written about the media's disproportionate focus on the mayhem of addiction, urging a more balanced approach. In an essay titled, "Waiting for Breaking Good: The Media and Addiction Recovery," White notes that coverage of recovery is "rare and tangential," contributing to a popular perception that overcoming addiction is the exception rather than the norm. In fact, according to his analysis of 415 studies of recovery outcomes, about half of those individuals who once met diagnostic criteria for a substance use disorder did achieve remission—which some studies defined as abstinence and others as reducing use to non-problematic levels.

PREVIOUS SPREAD: JOHN MOORE/GETTY IMAGES
ABOVE: TED S. WARREN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Yet just under half of them consider themselves to be "in recovery," illustrating another challenge reporters writing about this topic face. Although there is a growing shift toward viewing addiction as a public health issue rather than a criminal one—including in a 2016 Surgeon General's Report, "Facing Addiction in America"—the fact that many of the drugs being used are illegal can make some people wary of speaking publicly about a past problem.

Journalists have highlighted a range of efforts to help people recover from addiction, such as a prison rehabilitation program in New Hampshire, a community-based approach in Ann Arbor, medication-assisted treatment in Kentucky, and an alternative to incarceration in Seattle. But what's also needed is a longer view examining the success rates of various programs down the road. White is critical of the media's tendency to profile people in early recovery, which he likens to "interviewing an infant about the meaning of life." White says what is still missing from most media coverage is the perspective of people who have been drug-free for many years: "I don't see any leading or local journalists telling the story of

Addiction expert William White says reporting on people in early recovery is like "interviewing an infant about the meaning of life"

long-term (emphasis on long-term) recovery from opioid addiction and drawing lessons from the collective experience of these individuals and families."

I have firsthand experience with many of the points White raises. After writing a joint memoir, "Chancers: Addiction, Prison, Recovery, Love," with my husband, Graham MacIndoe, about how he became addicted to heroin and finally managed to quit in 2010, I was surprised by the media's focus on the lurid details of his years of addiction rather than the prison rehabilitation program and other support that ultimately helped him succeed. Even more unsettling was the pessimism about Graham's chances of remaining drug-free.

One person who interviewed us in 2016 commented, "I recently saw a documentary about dealing with drug addiction in Seattle," presumably referring to the Frontline documentary, "Chasing Heroin," which had aired earlier that year. "Most of the addicts said that it's almost impossible to stay off forever."

My husband challenged that assumption, pointing out that he knows a lot of people who have quit heroin and remained drug-free for many years. Yet the interviewer returned to that topic later, asking: "So you don't fear relapsing? Is it something you have to be constantly vigilant about?"

It's a common question—one we both get asked often—but if you think about someone whose cancer is in remission, I suspect most people wouldn't pose a similar question in the context of inevitability or fear. That's the issue my husband addressed when he replied: "To be honest with you ... I try not to live with that fear or that past hanging over me. I enjoy every day."

"Chasing Heroin" is about Seattle's Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program, which allows police officers to redirect people stopped for low-level drug crimes to community-based services instead of jail. Marcela Gaviria, who wrote, produced, and directed the documentary, says she was interested in exploring how communities were responding to the opioid epidemic, focusing on LEAD as an alternative to the drug war she has covered for many years. One of her goals was "to try to help people by asking the tough questions about why they're not getting better treatment." What "Chasing Heroin" illustrates best is that it's not enough to stop arresting people for drug crimes—there have to be quality programs to treat them and services that continue after they've been discharged from residential care.

"This is the thing about treatment: it's not a magic bullet," says one mother Gaviria filmed, who spent \$40,000 to send her teenage daughter to rehab for 90 days. After getting into heroin, the teen went into a 30-day detox center. After doing well for a year and a half and graduating from high school, her daughter relapsed and died of a heroin overdose, demonstrating "how hard it is to crawl out of this," Gaviria says.

She and her team interviewed an impressive group of people tackling this topic from many angles: researchers and academics, public policy makers, doctors, law enforcement officials, a judge, counselors, and social workers, ultimately focusing on two individuals going through the LEAD program, two who weren't

in the program, and a father desperate for advice on how to help his daughter. Their relationship is one of the most poignant aspects of the film, particularly the father's conflict over what he could or should do for a 20-year-old shown shooting up on the streets.

It also highlights why reporting on treatment for addiction is so challenging. "There's no Consumer Reports for where to send your child," Gaviria says. "Nobody knows what works, what doesn't, or where to go."

The fact that the people she filmed were part of the LEAD program made it easier to decide to show them actively using drugs. "It would've been very difficult to film people breaking the law if they weren't part of a program that didn't criminalize them," Gaviria says.

By choosing individuals caught up in the criminal justice system—often those with more severe addictions, less support, and more unstable lives—"Chasing Heroin" focuses on a population that has proven hardest to treat. But as Gaviria points out, the complex reasons why people aren't getting good treatment is a story the press should be investigating more, especially

The Palm Beach Post has been at the forefront of exposing patient brokering and insurance fraud in the addiction treatment industry

since there are so many conflicting opinions about what actually works. "As journalists that's what we do—identify problems—and one of the problems is that complete confusion," she says. "But I think we've failed as journalists as well. A lot of the coverage is very 'Look, how shocking—this is happening everywhere,' but not really asking tougher questions."

One of the tough questions for Gaviria is the economic model of the for-profit addiction treatment industry, which exists mostly outside the health care system with little oversight and plenty of opportunity for abuse. That is an issue reporters have been investigating more

aggressively in Florida, which has become a top location for treatment centers and sober homes—but also a magnet for fraud and abuse. Local journalists have been at the forefront of exposing the dark side of the treatment business, a story national outlets have later followed.

For instance, The Palm Beach Post's series, "Addiction Treatment: Inside the Gold Rush," has been investigating corruption, patient brokering, and insurance fraud in the sober home industry since 2015. Also known as halfway houses, sober homes offer transitional housing for people who have completed in-patient rehabilitation, typically requiring drug testing and imposing other rules.

However, the Post has published articles about sober home residents openly using drugs, allegations that one owner was using clients as part of a prostitution business, and reports that some owners are cashing in on the chance to bill insurance companies for urine samples collected from residents for drug testing—earning \$150 for each sample collected as many as five times per week.

Holly Baltz, senior editor of investigations for The Palm Beach Post, says about eight reporters and two editors have worked on the series—including Christine Stapleton, an investigative reporter at the Post and a recovered alcoholic who has been sober for almost 20 years. "Christine was a big driver in writing about this," Baltz says. "She and other reporters in the recovery community spearheaded the project because they'd been hearing about patient brokering and other kinds of corruption in the industry."

An unanticipated source of the "gold rush" in the treatment industry is money made available by the Affordable Care Act and the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, which expanded insurance coverage for addiction treatment. But as The Palm Beach Post, The New York Times, and STAT and its partner The Boston Globe have reported, some of the fraud that characterized Florida's pill mills shifted to the practice of patient brokering, whereby middlemen collect fees to refer out-of-state clients to rehab centers in places like Florida. "It's an inherently local problem that's going

"AS A RECOVERING ADDICT, I KNOW THOSE PICTURES LIVE FOREVER"

A photographer who once was addicted to heroin on how to fairly and ethically depict addiction



Photographer Graham MacIndoe left his native Scotland in 1992 to make it in New York. He worked for outlets such as The New York Times Magazine and The Guardian, taking

pictures of Quentin Crisp, Michael Jackson, and other artists, musicians, and writers. He dabbled in drugs, then got addicted to crack cocaine and heroin. He documented his descent into addiction through a series of self-portraits. Arrested for drug possession in 2010, he landed in Rikers Island jail. He enrolled in a drug rehab program while he was being held in an immigration detention center. Today he's working again as a freelance photographer and teaching photography in New York. He returned to Scotland for a visit in 2017 as the National Portrait Gallery opened "Graham MacIndoe: Coming Clean," an exhibit of the photographs taken during his addiction. What follows are excerpts from a conversation with him about images of addiction and recovery:

IMAGES ARE FOREVER From my personal experience, I think that addicts will agree to a lot of things when they're high that they might not agree to when they're clean and sober. It's a difficult thing for somebody in active addiction to give informed consent, not knowing where those pictures are going, especially nowadays. Back in the '80s, you knew it was going to be a specific newspaper, magazine, or a book, and that was it. Now, because there's the Internet, multiple platforms, and digital media, everybody can see everything. As a recovering addict, I know that those pictures live forever. When you go for a job, people Google you. If what pops up is a picture of you taking drugs and your name is attached to it, people make instantaneous assumptions about your life and who you are. A common assumption is that addicts don't recover. I get that all the time.

THE FUNCTIONING ADDICT There are a lot of functioning addicts. That's why when Philip Seymour Hoffman died, you're just like, "Oh, my God." You hear about it all the time. Not just famous people, but other people. Addiction's about hiding. When you're at it, you're always hiding it. That's why you don't see images in that gray area of the functioning addict, as they go toward being the very dysfunctional addict. People don't want to talk about it because they don't want people to know, and also because it's illegal.

CONTEXT MATTERS Depending on how a picture is used and what the context is, it could say a very, very different thing. The very same picture can be used in a gratuitous, voyeuristic sort of way, within a blog, with no context. Or you can put it in the context of this is how a person was, this is the route, and this is where they are now. They found recovery. They can look back at this and say, "Wow." Pictures of addiction on their own can be misconstrued and misread. Publishing them along with text, interviews, quotes, and data is the most powerful way to talk about addiction and recovery.

EXPLOITING ADDICTION Journalists are held to a standard of ethics. Then you've got videos on social media, like Instagram, Snapchat, Tumblr, and Facebook. It's the viral videos that become the bigger thing within the world of media. There's not a huge amount of people that read The New York Times, compared to those that go on Facebook.

There are people who trawl around neighborhoods and photograph prostitutes or addicts and offer them drugs. Those people are not held to any standard. It can be problematic that the world of media has changed so much over the last 15 years in terms of people being able to take videos on phones and post them instantaneously. As opposed to someone who goes and researches something,



Photographer Graham MacIndoe, left and above, chronicled his descent into heroin addiction through a series of self-portraits he titled "Coming Clean"

spends time, edits it, gets it perfect, and puts it in a magazine or online.

When photographers photograph addicts doing illegal activities, buying drugs, trading drugs, or in buildings where drug deals are going down, they're putting that addict on the radar of the police. The police are getting clever

about how they track these sorts of things. They find out where, and they sometimes raid those houses.

TAKING TIME There was a couple in Memphis who were both over 50. In the fall of 2016, they had done heroin in a store, walked out on the street, and the

heroin was so powerful that they started falling over. People were videotaping them. It went viral. About a year later, Time magazine, in a collaboration with Mic, followed up on the couple, sending a photographer and writer to spend time with them. The people who were in the video are now clean. A short time clean. The article was about how they found recovery. There's a lot of shaming in images of addiction, but the video that went viral was powerful enough that the couple looked at their lives and said, "Wow. I don't want to be that person anymore." That was the impetus for them to go to rehab, get help, and get clean. Even though they were reasonably new in recovery, the pictures and the interviews were compelling and interesting, in the way that they talked about their previous life and what recovery had given to them.

PICTURING RECOVERY Photographs of addiction tend to be about the external, the user, and the environment. It's the people around you, the darkness, the grimness. Whereas recovery imagery is much more about what you feel inside and what you feel toward the world, those around you, your gratefulness for being in recovery. It's just like everything else. You've got ups and downs, happy times and not happy times. Again, it's context. How do you say something about recovery that's real, but also compelling? ■

LEFT AND OPPOSITE: GRAHAM MACINDOE

national,” says Baltz, adding that she expects more scrutiny of the addiction treatment business as national media outlets shift their focus from the problem of the opioid epidemic to potential solutions. “Sadly, the great number of people who are dying is starting to rev up the issue.”

For The Palm Beach Post, taking on a topic that is a big business locally presents challenges the national outlets don’t necessarily face. Asked if the paper has had any pushback from local treatment providers objecting to the largely negative tone of the articles in the series, Baltz says, “Yes, we have.” Her team has tried to find positive news to highlight, such as articles about Palm Beach County’s Sober Homes Task Force and its efforts to tackle some of the problems in the industry, which has resulted in dozens of arrests—some prompted by the Post’s reporting.

The paper also ran an op-ed by a task force member, who pointed out the challenge of reining in patient brokering in an era when deep-pocketed and sometimes unethical treatment providers can manipulate Google’s advertising program to attract clients. For instance, an online search for a rehab center could lead to a site with a toll-free phone number for a business selling patient referrals to the highest bidder. That is an issue The Verge covered extensively in September, revealing some of the deceptive practices used to lure desperate individuals to rehabs that often don’t deliver the services promised. Shortly afterward, Google announced a crackdown on rehab ads, a business

Bloomberg reported may have added up to \$1 billion a year in revenue for Google, which charged \$100 or more in fees for clicks on ads linked to searches like “heroin rehab near me.”

Baltz says these problems in the largely unregulated treatment industry make it difficult to find inspiring stories to share. “We want to write about people doing it well,” she says. “But it feels like just about every time we start looking into people, we hear about something negative—from tapping our sources or court records. It’s been a little bit difficult to find the good guys.”

Difficult, but not impossible, and reporters are discovering examples of treatment approaches that seem promising, even if it can be tough to assess their long-term results.

For instance, the Vice News documentary “Cold Turkey: New Hampshire’s Prison Detox” filmed inmates participating in a rehabilitation program offered at the state prison in Berlin. Nilo Tabrizy, who produced the documentary, says she was interested in exploring access to treatment after working on a documentary about the overdose reversal drug naloxone: “I was drawn to New Hampshire because it was among the top five states in terms of fatal overdoses, but it ranked second to last in terms of access to treatment.” After calling different treatment providers in New Hampshire, she decided to focus on the program at the prison because “it seemed like it was doing something more than the baseline cold turkey approach.”

USING LANGUAGE AROUND ADDICTION THAT DOESN'T SHAME OR STIGMATIZE

BY SUSAN STELLIN

YOU DON'T HAVE to go too far back in time to find the word “junkie” used to refer to someone who injects heroin, even by outlets that steer clear of that word in some contexts now. And in a profession full of self-described “news junkies,” the j-word has become a stand-in for people with all sorts of obsessive habits.

But a more vocal movement by people in recovery has started to spark some changes on the language front. Last May, the Associated Press released its 2017 Stylebook with updated entries on drugs and addiction and a new entry on opiates and opioids, recommending alternatives to some stigmatizing terms.

The guidelines suggest avoiding words like “alcoholic,” “addict,” “user” and “abuser,” unless they appear in quotes or the names of journals or organizations—like the National Institute on Drug Abuse. So instead of “heroin addicts,” the AP recommends “people with heroin addiction,” or “heavy drug use” rather than “drug problem.”

Felice Freyer, a health care reporter for The Boston Globe, says she was prompted to write about this issue in 2016 because of notes she was getting from readers saying terms like “substance abuse” and “addict” contributed to the shame and stigma surrounding addiction. That feedback, along with input from Michael Botticelli, former director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, who issued a memo to federal agencies before he left office in 2017 titled “Changing the Language of Addiction,” persuaded her to reconsider the terms she uses in her articles—though so far, The Boston Globe hasn’t updated its policy.

“First of all, there was disagreement even among the experts I spoke to over

which words were anathema and which were OK,” Freyer says. “And then there’s the practical matter of headline writing and writing sentences that are clear and have meaning for the public.” For instance, “substance use disorder” is grounded in the language of a medical diagnosis, but it’s not widely used by those outside the treatment field. And many people who attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings still use the terms “addict” and “alcoholic” themselves. “To this day, when I use the phrase ‘substance use disorder,’ an editor will often change it to ‘substance abuse’ because people don’t know what that is,” Freyer explains. “For us as journalists, we have to serve our readers first and we can’t use terms that don’t have meaning for them or aren’t clear.”

Even so, she says the AP Stylebook changes motivated her to pay more attention to word choice when writing about addiction: “It sort of emboldened me to work better terminology into my stories. If there’s a way I can write a meaningful and not awkward sentence without using the word ‘addict,’ I will.” ■



Choosing to focus on rehabilitation in a prison setting can be controversial—courting criticism from those who think the government shouldn’t be spending money “treating criminals,” as well as those who believe that it perpetuates the criminalization of addiction. An op-ed by Sam Quinones in The New York Times, “Addicts Need Help. Jails Could Have the Answer,” about a similar program at a jail in Kentucky, sparked negative comments from both sets of critics, and letters arguing that “Jail Isn’t the Place to Treat Drug Addiction.”

But highlighting these programs reflects the reality that someone struggling with addiction is more likely to get treatment after getting caught up in the criminal justice system, either through a referral from drug court to a community facility or sometimes programs offered by prisons or jails. “For many people, the way they were able to get treatment was by going to prison,” Tabrizy says. “Most of the people who ended up in that wing were there because of a crime associated with their addiction.”

Before the shoot, Tabrizy had several conversations with the prison’s mental health administrator, who helped navigate which inmates were willing to be filmed—about half of the program’s participants. “I only wanted to talk to inmates who were comfortable speaking to me, and I wanted to make sure I wasn’t getting in the way of their treatment,” Tabrizy says.

Jimmy, addicted to heroin, washes in an open fire hydrant in Philadelphia, where more than 900 people died in 2016 of opioid overdoses

She also had anyone who appeared on camera sign a release, which outlined how the footage would be used. Since the program participants had been off drugs for months, Tabrizy didn’t have to navigate the ethical issue that comes up when interviewing people who are still using: whether they have the cognitive capacity to consent to being interviewed, photographed, or filmed.

What is striking about the documentary is how open and articulate a few of the inmates are about how they became addicted to drugs and ended up in prison, knowing they’d be identified by their full names.

In addition to individual interviews with some of the program participants, Tabrizy filmed one of the group therapy sessions, capturing a candid discussion about relapse risks and how to manage them outside of prison—given that many people would be sent to halfway houses offering minimal support. “My goal has always been to represent people in addiction and people in recovery with humanity,” Tabrizy says. For instance, asked about how it feels to be off drugs, one young man admits, “I hate it but I love it”—explaining that he’s glad he can feel and express his emotions again, but that also means dealing with a lot of pain and regret.

Tabrizy says she kept in touch for a while with a couple of the people she filmed: one person was arrested for drug possession after getting released from prison and one seemed to be doing well the last time she heard any news. That mixed success rate illustrates why it’s tough for reporters to highlight examples of treatment programs that seem promising. There are a lot of factors that impact recovery, and even for researchers, it is not easy to gauge if a treatment program wasn’t effective—or if it couldn’t address all the factors someone in recovery may have to overcome, like finding a job or a place to live despite a criminal record.

Laura Ungar’s reporting on Suboxone, touted as a top treatment for opioid addiction, uncovered misuse of the drug

SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES

Derek Wolfe, a recent graduate of the University of Michigan, wrote about how one community is trying to address those broader challenges in an eight-part series on Medium in 2016. “The Healing Forest Project” explores how Ann Arbor, Michigan has taken a community-based approach to recovery, the idea being to create a “healing forest” locally rather than sending people for treatment in another state.

The series presents a thorough overview of the factors necessary to create a community supportive of recovery, including access to treatment, affordable housing for people transitioning out of residential care, employers willing to hire staff members in recovery, educational programs that offer an alternative to campus drinking culture and support groups that provide a sober social network, and role models who are in recovery themselves.

Wolfe’s take is influenced by knowing people in recovery and understanding what it takes to rebuild a life wrecked by addiction. He notes that when the media do address recovery, the stories sometimes suggest there’s a quick fix. For instance, articles that describe a celebrity who “completed” treatment after spending a few months in rehab can set an expectation that 90 days may be all it takes to get well. However, the lengthy timeline for recovery isn’t one that fits our news cycle, when reporters rarely get to follow a story for months, let alone years. “We’re talking about a disease that doesn’t operate on that cycle so it doesn’t make it easy to report and be patient,” Wolfe says. “But that’s what treating addiction is—it’s about being patient with people.”

Our cultural quick-fix mentality can sometimes infuse reports about new medications to treat opioid addiction, which often don’t delve into all the things a pill or a shot can’t address—like estranged children or a

A prayer group from the Covenant United Methodist Church in Middlesboro, Kentucky focuses on a message of recovery

spouse who won’t give you another chance. “The thing that bothers me most about addiction coverage is that I don’t think it’s really honest about what happens to people when they’re addicted to drugs,” Wolfe says. “That’s not being covered enough—how much addiction ravages people’s lives in every way.”

For that reason, he emphasizes how important it is for reporters to spend time with people who have gone through the treatment process they’re writing about, to really understand all of the hurdles they face. “Once you realize how much work these people are putting into getting healthy again,” he says, “you might have a new appreciation for what it takes.” For Laura Ungar, an investigative reporter for the Courier Journal in Louisville, Kentucky and a member of USA Today’s investigative team, cultivating sources with that type of personal experience has been key to writing about addiction, which she started covering in depth in 2010. “Prescription for Tragedy,” a three-part series she worked on with Emily Hagedorn was published in January 2011—chronicling the toll of prescription drug abuse in Kentucky. Since then, she has written about the surge in heroin use as Kentucky cracked down on pain pills, the epidemic’s devastating effect on children, and the plight of babies born dependent on drugs, a project supported by a fellowship from the Center for Health Journalism at the University of Southern California.

As her focus shifted to treatment and she started reporting on medications like buprenorphine, which when combined with naloxone is sold under the brand name Suboxone and often touted as a leading treatment for opioid addiction, her sources tipped her off about some of the drug’s downsides that weren’t getting as much attention. “That’s how I started hearing, ‘You should

look into buprenorphine. It can be misused, diverted, and sold on the street’—by talking to people who had that intimate knowledge,” Ungar says.

The headline of her June 2017 article, “Rogue Doctors Exploit Loopholes to Let a Powerful Drug ‘Devastate a Community,’” could just as easily sit atop one of her 2011 articles about painkillers. Instead, it describes how a medication intended to curb opioid cravings and ease withdrawal was being prescribed by doctors with disciplinary records, fueling misuse and the rise of rogue clinics that Kentucky’s attorney general called “the second coming of our pill mills.”

The Courier Journal published the full complaint records against 27 physicians, who were subject to disciplinary action by the state medical board for breaches, such as allowing a receptionist and maintenance man to see patients and call in prescriptions for Suboxone, writing prescriptions for themselves or family members, and conspiring to distribute controlled substances.

Ungar interviewed patients who had both positive and negative experiences with Suboxone, a researcher at the University of Kentucky who in a study of nearly 1,000 people who had taken the medication found that abuse and diversion were common, and doctors who followed responsible prescribing practices as well as doctors who were subject to disciplinary action. “I did get some backlash from people asking, ‘Why are you writing negatively about medication-assisted treatment when it’s the only way we can treat this epidemic?’” Ungar says. “But I think we have to put that skeptical eye toward everything, even when the medical community is saying medication-assisted treatment plus therapy is the best approach. That doesn’t mean we don’t look at all the different sides of things and investigate what could go wrong.”

Patrick Graney, son of Maureen and Jack Graney, above, died after being sent to a rehab facility in Florida. The Boston Globe and STAT wrote about Patrick in a story on patient brokering

Because addiction is such a big issue in the community, Ungar’s articles often generate a lot of emails and calls—some from people who want to share their story as well. “The reason they usually give is, ‘Maybe my story can help others,’” Ungar says. “They view it as something good that can come out of a terrible time in their lives.”

Even so, she cautions her sources about the potential repercussions of talking openly about a drug problem: “You have to really explain to your sources that they’re going to be in the paper and what they say could endanger their job.”

The Courier Journal includes a list of resources with many of these articles, offering advice on where readers can get help. The paper also hosted a speakers’ panel about the opioid epidemic in 2016, eliciting so many questions from audience members that the paper ran follow-up Q&As answering questions that required more research—like how many beds were available in local treatment centers.

Right now, one of her projects is editing a series of stories about recovery, looking at different ways people in the community have worked to break free of addiction. So far, the profiles range from a woman who had been off drugs for 87 days to a man in recovery for more than six years. One of the goals is to show multiple pathways out of addiction, resisting the urge to present one treatment or therapy as better than another.

That is perhaps the most important advice Ungar has for anyone newer to the beat: “Whenever anyone says, ‘This way is the best way,’ I’m skeptical of that. Having spent years covering addiction, I’ve seen people on all sides of the issue, so when I encounter someone who’s an evangelist for one type of treatment over another, I think as a reporter you have to step back and say, ‘This is not black and white.’ It’s a complicated issue with a lot of factors at play.” ■



LEFT: THE COURIER JOURNAL, JANUARY 31 © 2011 GANNETT-COMMUNITY PUBLISHING
OPPOSITE: KEITH BEDFORD/THE BOSTON GLOBE VIA GETTY IMAGES

“Almost Everyone, On Every Beat, Becomes
Covering immigration requires a multidisciplinary approach to

an Immigration Reporter at Some Point”
reporting, from economics to politics to education BY GLENN JEFFERS



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OBERT SNELL, AN investigative reporter for The Detroit News, was in a Detroit federal courthouse reviewing court records for another story when he came across an unsealed affidavit.

It was for a search warrant, which seemed simple enough, but as Snell read on, a few things jumped out at him. First, the affidavit requested the use of a cell-site simulator, a device that tricks phones into providing location data by masquerading as a nearby cell tower. The device was originally designed for counterterrorism use overseas, though Snell had seen it used domestically, typically in drug cases.

But that was the other thing he found odd. The affidavit wasn't for a drug case. It was for an immigration case.

According to the affidavit, a team of FBI and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents would use the device to track down and arrest Rudy Carcamo-Carranza, a 23-year-old restaurant worker from El Salvador. An undocumented immigrant, Carcamo-Carranza had entered the United States illegally on multiple occasions dating back to 2005. Twice, authorities captured and deported Carcamo-Carranza, but he returned a third time and was later involved in a hit-and-run car accident in Shelby Township, about 30 miles north of Detroit.

While no one was hurt in the collision, deportation agents started looking for Carcamo-Carranza. A year later, they applied for a search warrant to find his phone using the simulator. A judge signed off on the warrant.

Federal authorities were not required to file search warrants to use cell-site simulators until September 2015, when the Justice Department enacted new regulations requiring a judge's approval. Still, Snell contacted several privacy and civil liberty experts to see if they had heard of an immigration case where a simulator was used like this. "Based on my reporting, it's unprecedented, at least since 2015, where they're disclosing that they've used this tool in an immigration investigation," says Snell.

Snell's story on the device and Carcamo-Carranza's arrest ran in May 2017, making it the first time federal officials publicly acknowledged using cell-site simulators in immigration operations. While discovering

the affidavit was unexpected, Snell didn't find the tactics surprising. As he notes in the story, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, under which ICE falls, had purchased more than 120 cell-site simulators. If Homeland Security and ICE have these tools, it stands to reason they would use them in an immigration case, Snell says.

And if the story's online comments section was any indication, many did not mind its use. One commenter wrote, "All illegals are criminals so get 'em all! ...That's one of the things we elected President Trump to do."

With hardliners now in policy-making positions, immigration is increasingly a flashpoint in national politics, saturating the news cycle daily with stories of ICE crackdowns, policy changes (including the administration's termination of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program), and families fearful of arrest and deportation. It routinely seeps into breaking news and other beats. During Hurricane Harvey's assault on the Houston area, the state of Texas announced that it would not check the legal status of people arriving at emergency shelters.

It's an issue that has added to American divisiveness across politics. According to data from the Pew Research Center, 67 percent of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents say construction of a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border is an important goal for immigration policy, a position shared by only 16 percent of Democrats and Democratic leaners.

Covering immigration these days means understanding a large group—more than 43 million people, or 13.4 percent of the U.S. population—and an issue that affects every facet of life, from economics to politics to education. Yes, it includes issues of illegality, bans, and border crossings, but it also affects communities in other ways—such as bolstering the federal budget by contributing to the tax base.

And it requires a multidisciplinary approach to reporting to provide the necessary nuance and depth. "Almost everyone, on every beat, becomes an immigration reporter at some point," says Cindy Carcamo, an immigration reporter for the Los Angeles Times. "Immigration has impacted many

things: health care, education, the economy. Immigration law is just as complicated as tax law. It's interwoven into the fabric of American life."

So how are newsrooms, especially those in sanctuary cities with large immigrant populations, responding to this increasing focus? Some are using social media to reach out and enhance their interactions with these growing communities. Others are revamping and expanding their teams to better cover immigration. Many are building out new platforms to specifically capture these voices, a necessary move as immigration trends change, such as Asians outpacing Latinx immigration into the United States.

"This issue goes beyond the Mexican

PREVIOUS SPREAD: GIULIO PALETTA/LUZ/REDUX
ABOVE: DAVID MCNEW/GETTY IMAGES

"A growing number of undocumented are Asian immigrants, but we don't really talk about them" Jose Antonio Vargas, founder of Define American

border," says Jose Antonio Vargas, founder of Define American, a nonprofit media and culture organization focusing on immigration issues, and writer/director of the 2013 documentary "Documented." "A growing number of undocumented are Asian immigrants, but we don't really talk about them, or undocumented black immigrants, or undocumented white immigrants. They're not at all a part of the narrative."

Slate senior editor Dahlia Lithwick's beat got very busy when Trump signed the first travel ban a week after taking office. Implemented on a Friday, the initial ban prohibited all refugees from entering the country for 120 days and banned entry from Iraq and six other countries—Libya, Syria, Sudan,

Somalia, Yemen, and Iran—for 90 days. The chaos began almost immediately when federal customs agents, unsure of what to do with incoming flights, began detaining foreign-born passengers flying into the United States.

Over the weekend, anger over the ban and detainments sparked protests at airports nationwide. Several Slate reporters joined in to help cover the demonstrations. Meanwhile, Lithwick pored over the order, trying to grasp the ban's legality. "I literally did not understand the first travel ban. Then you realize, 'Oh, John Kelly [then at the Department of Homeland Security] doesn't know either,'" says Lithwick, who has a law degree from Stanford.

Then came the motions, followed swiftly

by federal judges issuing temporary stays on the order. Lithwick went through every legal document filed. "It was sort of the diligent work of reading what they were saying and trying to parse," she says.

In between reading the motions, dissecting the order and interviewing several experts in immigration law, Lithwick coordinated with reporters in the field as they interviewed volunteer lawyers, many of whom had rushed to nearby airports to provide legal services though they were not knowledgeable about immigration law, and suddenly found themselves with detainee clients. The story thrust Lithwick's work into an accelerated pace she hadn't encountered before: Reporting a legal story, with all its intricacies



LEFT: A protester in Los Angeles passes a homeless encampment during a protest of President Trump's order to end DACA, a program that protects young undocumented immigrants from deportation

PREVIOUS SPREAD: On Sundays, Mexicans who have been deported from the U.S. are allowed to visit for four hours with relatives who are on the American side of the border. They are not allowed to touch each other



Baraa, a refugee from Syria, holds an American flag as she walks out of Chicago O'Hare International Airport on a night in early 2017 that federal judges reviewed a travel ban



In an installation by the French artist JR, a photo of a toddler from Tecate, Mexico is visible on the American side of the U.S.-Mexico border

and litigious ambiguity, alongside the frenzy of a breaking news story.

Lithwick penned and co-wrote five stories that weekend, all covering multiple angles of the ban including the volunteer lawyers, the stranded foreign-born travelers, and the immediate injunctions from federal judges. A commentary, co-written with Daria Roithmayr, focused on how Congress should respond. Her final story, co-written with Leon Neyfakh and Mark Joseph Stern, posited an unsettling hypothetical and its legal consequences: What would happen if the administration refused to follow a federal judge's injunction?

"Covering [the ban] as though it was like the Super Bowl is not what most legal reporters are trained to do," says Lithwick. "But there was this sentiment that the lawyers and the judges were going to push back hard and that somebody needed to read all those pleadings and motions and filings, and try to understand and interpret. That's not a position many of us are used to on the legal beat."

The ban triggered a torrent of lawsuits and litigation that is continuing. The fallout presented Lithwick with another challenge. She had to stress the importance of these cases at a time when both the public and the journalists were fatigued. "The challenge was that the courts were struggling to find their lane, and it all seemed unprecedented," she says. "The administration kept tweaking and changing things, so we never knew if the rules had shifted. Also, the public was becoming weary and finding it hard to follow, so we sensed that we could never break through."

But with "SCOTUS Splits the Travel Ban Baby," Lithwick and Stern demystified the Supreme Court's June 26 decision. While both partisan factions declared victory, Lithwick reminded readers that the high court merely decided to hear the case in October and narrowed the injunction's scope, allowing the revised ban to take effect. The high court later dismissed the appeal against the revised ban.

Still, it's this kind of "boring dedication

to words" that Lithwick says is critical to understanding the legal issues at the center of the immigration issue. That kind of reporting means reading statutes and calling academic academics in order to provide comprehensive analysis. "The law is glacial, and legal journalism needs to go slow," she says.

Lithwick adds: "I feel like my job, more than ever, is to explain. If I haven't taken something that seems technical and jargon-laden and made it explicable to a smart high schooler, then I'm not doing anything. And, yes, I do it more in the Trump era because there's more legal stuff to unpack, but there is a heightened responsibility for legal journalists to take all the screaming headlines and say, 'What can I explain about what just happened, whether it's the scope, or why it happened or why it matters, or what it's going to mean going forward.' I think the work right now is to do that translating."

As thousands headed to the airports to protest that weekend, millions more turned to their computers and phones to voice their opinions online. Hashtags like #travelban started trending, and that gave Hannah Wise an idea.

Wise, the engagement editor for The Dallas Morning News, emailed her editors that Saturday and asked if she could put together a Google Form, a quick and free online survey, asking immigrant readers to share their stories with the paper. She had used Google Forms before to solicit readers, but for smaller stories, like one on college debt.

The form was simple. It requested the user's name and contact information (phone number and email), then asked if they were an immigrant. If they were, the form asked them to share their stories. Wise embedded the form onto a page on DallasNews.com and waited. Within a day, she had more than 50 responses from immigrants spanning 30-plus countries. That the form generated so many responses in such a short time demonstrated how engagement can help develop story ideas and leads, Wise says.

"As newsrooms get smaller and smaller, we have even more of a limited scope of experience and knowledge within the building," she says. "We cover a metropolitan area that's nine counties. Millions of people live here, and we cannot have a one-to-one understanding of every single person's experience on any given day. If I can ask them to share with us, [those responses] can inform our reporting and what questions we're asking on their behalf."

Crowdsourcing also connects reporters to a larger audience rather than depending on nonprofits and activist groups that share the same stories to multiple outlets or promote their own agendas. "This is a good way for us to find stories that might go untold," says Wise.

One response caught Wise's attention. It was from a 25-year-old man named Ibrahim Yousif, a former U.S. Army translator during the Iraq war who had since immigrated to Plano, a suburb north of Dallas. His brother, a Minnesota-based lawyer, and his family were visiting relatives in Iraq when the travel ban went into effect, stranding them overseas.

The next day, Wise passed Yousif's information to Brendan Meyer, a general assignment writer for the Morning News's How We Live section, which builds feature stories off the news cycle. Meyer reached out to Yousif, who was eager to talk. "He wasn't surprised when we called," says Meyer. "He filled out the form for a reason."

Within hours, Meyer was inside Yousif's home, interviewing him about his family's dilemma. As a translator, Yousif worked with U.S. armed forces during Operation Iraqi Freedom before moving stateside in 2012. He later became a permanent resident and received green cards for his brother, his brother's wife, and their children.

With the initial ban in place, Yousif feared for the safety of his brother and other family members still in Iraq, which included his parents and fiancée, due to his involvement with the U.S. military. That fear prompted Yousif

to find a way to publicize his story and garner attention, and help secure an attorney if necessary. When he found Wise's callout for immigrant stories related to the ban, he quickly filled out the form. "I wanted to speak out for the unspoken," Yousif says. "I decided to make sure that readers understand that not just refugees are affected, but also a lot of people who actually wore the uniform."

Using the Google Form spreadsheet was a first for Meyer. In the past, he relied on leaving contact information at the end of his stories, hoping that "people would write in with story ideas or pitches," he says. Instead, the form provided a list of responses, complete with names, contact information, and summaries of their stories. Now, thanks to some embedded lines of code on a webpage, he had a breaking-news feature story within 24 hours. "I loved it," Meyer says. "If we could somehow condition our readers to look for these callouts for whatever topic and write a short blurb with their contact information, that would be incredible."

Wise and others at the Morning News are looking at ways to capitalize on this kind of engagement. "Anecdotally, community members tweeted or emailed saying that they were happy to see us reaching out in that way," Wise says. "That goodwill in the community is the most valuable part of this strategy."

As for Yousif, he's happy he could get his story out. He's also grateful that his brother, wife and family could return to the United States shortly after a federal court granted an injunction against the initial ban. However, he's still waiting to hear back from the State Department on whether the rest of his family can receive green cards and come to America. And he worries about his plans to travel to Iraq to visit his family. Despite his status as a legalized citizen, he fears he

won't be allowed back into the country.

That Wise's form generated responses from immigrants of various nationalities illustrates a challenge in immigration coverage: How do journalists move beyond well-established narratives within the Latinx and Middle Eastern communities?

Since 2010, Asian immigration to the United States has outpaced Latinx immigration, according to the Pew Research Center, with Asians projected to surpass Hispanics by 2055 to become the country's largest immigrant group. So why aren't these other groups part of the conversation? "People aren't sure how to talk about it in the context of the immediate news," says Traci G. Lee, digital editorial manager for NBC Asian America, a multimedia site launched in 2014 that focuses on news, features, and video documentaries that elevate Asian-American and Pacific Islander voices.

When it comes to immigration, Lee says, the news cycle is often inundated with more familiar narratives of Latinx communities or refugees from countries such as Syria. Yet, many forget that the largest U.S. refugee resettlement effort came when more than 1 million refugees from Vietnam, Laos, Malaysia, and Cambodia immigrated to the States between 1975 and 1992. "There are so many of those threads that, if it's not immediately in the news cycle, they're not going to get talked about," Lee says. "That's the issue with the deportation of Cambodian refugees. If I wasn't focusing on a site about Asian-American news, I might not even be talking about it today."

The subject of Cambodian refugees came up back in summer 2016, when Lee and documentary filmmaker Sahra V. Nguyen brainstormed ideas for a docu-series. Lee wanted something for video-sharing platforms like

YouTube and Vimeo—short and sharable, yet in-depth and visual—an objective of hers since joining NBC Asian America in 2016. "We still do that news-of-the-day stuff; we also wanted this element of content creation," says Lee, whose background includes work as a digital producer for MSNBC. "I'm somebody who grew up on the internet. I read the news online before I see it on TV most days. I consume YouTube videos and social media all the time. I saw that we needed a place like that for NBC Asian America."

Nguyen pitched Lee on the removal and deportation of more than 600 refugees back to Cambodia since 2002, a subject that's interested her going back to her high school and college days—"I was really involved in community organizing," she says—and given the political climate, revisiting the subject seemed timely. "Deportation, under the larger umbrella of immigration, was something all the presidential candidates were talking about," says the Brooklyn-based Nguyen, whose parents are among the refugees that immigrated following the Vietnam War.

Coupling that family connection with a desire not to exploit the relatives of those deported by capturing their pain on film, Nguyen opted to focus more on the organizers and activists. "I really had to try to find a balance between getting a well-rounded story, but also not asking them to revisit anything too traumatic," she says. "I wanted to raise awareness of the issue, but I also wanted to shine a spotlight on a lot of the modern civil-rights leaders. We don't really talk about folks in these positions until years after their time."

Together, they produced "Deported," a five-part video series that ran in March 2017. In the series, Nguyen focused on the 1Love Movement, a Philadelphia-based

"[Posting a survey online] is a good way for us to find stories that might go untold" Hannah Wise, Dallas Morning News

ABOVE: ALYSSA SCHUKAR/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX OPPOSITE: JR/REDUX



Activists demonstrate outside a federal courthouse in New York where a judge issued an emergency order in January 2017



Veronica Coban, with her son, told a reporter for the LA Times that she's been afraid to leave her home because of the crackdown on immigrants

group that worked on behalf of the families of Cambodian deportees with the goal of bringing them back to the United States.

Their removal stems from the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, a 1996 bill that not only expanded the types of crimes that could lead to deportation, but allowed for that broader classification to be applied retroactively. This resulted in more than 15,000 Southeast Asian Americans receiving orders of removal—78 percent of which were based on old criminal convictions. A subsequent repatriation treaty signed in 2002 allowed Cambodian refugees who had not filed for citizenship to be deported, forcibly if necessary, for misdemeanor crimes.

Conducting interviews and taping their activities over a four-month span, Nguyen highlighted 1Love's work with the Cambodian community, which ranged from helping family members prepare to speak before governmental officials to organizing rallies, marches, and other events.

In the third episode of the series, 1Love co-directors Mia-lia Boua Kiernan and Naroen Chhin worked with the U.S. Human Rights Network to bring special rapporteurs from the United Nations Human Rights Council to one of the network's regional meetings. Kiernan and Chhin made their case against Cambodian deportation to the rapporteurs, from the unfairness of penalizing ex-offenders who have served their time to the United States secretly negotiating a repatriation agreement without notifying those it would affect. "People have these broad strokes about what social change or activism looks like, but to see the inner workings of an activist's brain ... it's incredible to witness," Nguyen says. "There's so much work, so much brainpower and critical thinking. You

can't just jump into it. It takes real training and development."

With her familial connections and past advocacy of the subject in mind, Nguyen reached out to and interviewed representatives from ICE and the United Nations. "When I was working on the project, I approached it with an open mind," she says, "being very clear and intentional that I needed to separate my personal opinions from the pursuit of journalism. It's possible to have a perspective on an issue and pursue fair reporting. As humans, all journalists have a perspective inherent to their own experiences when pursuing a topic. The fairness comes in how we navigate the conversation and the process—by not pursuing a perspective, but rather, asking open-ended questions, never leading, and allowing the subjects to express themselves however they want."

Nguyen flew to Cambodia, traveling with Kiernan, Chhin, and the rest of 1Love to meet with their counterparts in Phnom Penh, deportees who have struggled to adjust to life in a country whose language and culture seem foreign, despite their heritage. "When my cousin brought me to where I was going to be living, it was just like me entering prison for the first time," says Chally Dang, a 1Love Cambodia organizer, in the series. Dang was deported in 2011 following a 1999 conviction for aggravated assault; he was paroled in 2003. "I feel like I'm being detained all over again because I'm just forced into a little box, placed in a country [that] I know nothing of."

The group's objectives in Cambodia were two-fold. First, they helped the deportees in Cambodia organize, holding workshops on communicating with government officials, reaching out to non-government groups, and strategizing with lawyers. Later, organizers met with government officials and

learned that the Ministry of Interior already had reached out to the U.S. Embassy and requested that the United States suspend all deportations to the country until the repatriation agreement could be revisited. While U.S. officials rejected the request but agreed to a discussion, the Cambodian government had taken it a step further, no longer issuing travel documents to Cambodian-born U.S. residents who face deportation due to felony convictions, effectively halting the repatriation program.

These steps could lead to deportees like Dang returning to the United States someday. And the deportees' hope to see their families again is palpable in the series' fifth and final episode. There, Nguyen records a long take of the deportees and organizers leaving the meeting, at first stunned as they process the news, then jubilant to the point of tears. "Regardless of history or shared experiences, journalists should always navigate the process with the code of ethics in mind. The goal is to connect and communicate a truth between subject and audience, so that the audience can form the best possible understanding," Nguyen says. "That being said, in addition to the code of ethics, one can facilitate the process of exploring the subject matter with compassion, kindness, and empathy."

Empathy is key to telling immigration stories. "Families here who contribute to the economy, who have strong ties and are part of the community are made to feel that, at any moment, their lives could be in danger," says Sabrineh Ardalan, assistant director at the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program and an assistant professor at Harvard Law School. "That missing [personal] piece is important in terms of helping the public understand what these policies mean."

That's not always easy to do, says Judy

London, a lecturer at the UCLA School of Law and directing attorney for the Immigrants' Rights Project at Public Counsel, a pro bono law firm. The administration's emboldening of ICE agents and constant rhetoric against undocumented immigrants have caused many to shy away from sharing their stories, even those with legal status protections. They fear that ICE will retaliate either against them or their family members. "People like me in the past would want to share these stories with journalists, but our obligation is to protect our clients," London says. "Any story that could possibly lead to a client being identified, we can't go forward with. That's a chilling effect across the board. The stories need to be told, but it's much more difficult to tell them."

Despite that trepidation, many immigrants went on the record when they spoke with Carcamo, the L.A. Times reporter, for a story in 2017 on how people living in the U.S. illegally were dealing with the added scrutiny due to the president's executive orders. It's a standard that Carcamo strives for with her sources, knowing full well that exposure could possibly lead to deportation.

Carcamo has a lot of experience working with the immigrant community. A native of Los Angeles, she has spent the last eight years covering immigration, first as a reporter with The Orange County Register and later with the Times as a national correspondent covering the Southwest.

In the past, immigrants were more willing to speak freely, Carcamo admits. And while walking the streets of Santa Ana in Orange County to report the story, she found that many, legal or not, were leery about talking on the record. But she remained steadfast on transparency. Yes, the story would run both in print and online, and everyone would be able to read it, including immigration officials. Ultimately, she found undocumented immigrants willing to talk. "I want them to be aware before they make a final decision," says Carcamo. "Some were totally fine with going on the

record with their full names. You eventually find people, but it takes a lot more work."

Her sources included a 33-year-old wife and mother, a 62-year-old man with no criminal history, a 57-year-old street peddler, and a grandmother raising her deceased daughter's child. All undocumented, they spoke about their fears of being arrested, detained, and deported. They were concerned about leaving their children with family members. They wondered aloud why they couldn't live the American dream along with everyone else, just because they didn't have proper documentation of their legal status. But they all spoke on the record.

Carcamo, however, did honor their requests not to be photographed, or she had them photographed in a way that obscured their faces. And recently, she's begun to accommodate sources who are living in the U.S. illegally and want their last names withheld. She states in the story that the person was fearful of being targeted.

Times reporters Andrea Castillo, Ruben Vives, and Corina Knoll co-reported and wrote the story with Carcamo, turning the daily story around in a few hours. That extra support is indicative of a new, larger, more informal team tasked with handling daily immigration reporting. The added help allows Carcamo to continue covering immigration, but also focus more on enterprise stories.

A recent enterprise piece by Carcamo highlighted an issue that's been largely ignored outside the immigration community: Businesses that hire undocumented immigrants as cheap, profitable labor despite having federal mandates to check their status through a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services database called E-Verify. A few states, including Texas, Arizona, South Carolina, and Alabama, require businesses to use E-Verify to screen out undocumented workers, but they lack the infrastructure to supervise the screenings. Punitive damages are either miniscule or nonexistent. The result is a system that "crack[s] down on people in the country

illegally while largely giving a pass to those who illegally hire them," Carcamo wrote.

"The story is really not so much about E-Verify," she says. "It's about the great hypocrisy in the immigration debate."

Carcamo spent weeks reaching out to think tanks, nongovernment organizations, and legislators from several states to pull together the story. She also gathered data from groups like the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, and the Pew Research Center, while reaching out to right- and left-leaning nonprofits. She interviewed former ICE officials, business association presidents, and legislators from both sides of the aisle.

It's important, Carcamo says, to look past the rhetoric for credible information from all sides, especially now as many evaluate the cost and benefits of immigration programs like DACA. Following the Trump administration's announcement in September to phase out the program over the next six months, think tanks varied on the potential economic fallout. While the Cato Institute estimated the U.S. economy could shrink by about \$280 billion over the next decade, the left-leaning Center for American Progress pegged the shrinkage over that period at \$430 billion. Carcamo mentioned nonpartisan groups like the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, a research center at Syracuse University, and the Migration Policy Institute, a think tank based in Washington, D.C., as go-to sources. "They're not activists, they're researchers," she says.

Reaching this level of detail is crucial to covering immigration in sufficient depth. "If you define 'American' as a set of values—as a belief in working hard for a better life for you and your family, a belief in religious freedom and contributing to your communities—then absolutely undocumented immigrants embody what it means to be American," Vargas says. "Now more than ever we need to continue to use, create, and curate content that will help people see that undocumented immigrants are your neighbors." ■

"Any story that could possibly lead to a client being identified, we can't go forward with. That's a chilling effect across the board" Judy London, immigration attorney

ABOVE: RASHID UMAR ABBAS/REUTERS OPPOSITE: MARCUS YAM / LOS ANGELES TIMES

1949

Lawrence G. Weiss, formerly an editorial writer for The Denver Post, died in Boulder, Colorado on January 10. He was 97.

Weiss was an editorial writer for The Denver Post from 1958 until 1975, when he became a special assistant to the Governor of Colorado. He later served as the director of public affairs for the Colorado and Denver Bar associations, retiring in 1985.

Weiss graduated from Harvard College magna cum laude in 1942 and began his

journalism career at The Boston Herald. He also worked as a writer at The New York Times and a special assistant to the Secretary of Labor in Washington, D.C. before moving to Boulder in 1954. He taught journalism at the University of Colorado.

1993

Rick Bragg is the author of “The Best Cook in the World: Tales from My Momma’s Table,” to be published by Knopf in April. The book is part cookbook and part food memoir.

1995

Marilyn Geewax is teaching at the University of Georgia

as an Industry Fellow with the school’s James M. Cox Jr. Institute for Journalism Innovation, Management and Leadership. She continues to work for NPR as a senior business editor.

2002

Giannina Segnini has been named the Columbia Journalism School’s first Knight Chair in Data Journalism. Segnini, a longtime investigative journalist, is also the director of the school’s M.S. in data journalism program.

2003

Kevin Cullen was honored with the David Nyhan Prize for Political Journalism, presented

annually by the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Policy at Harvard Kennedy School to a journalist who challenges the powerful and acts as a voice for those who are seldom heard. Cullen is a longtime reporter and columnist for The Boston Globe.

2009

Alfredo Corchado is the author of “Homelands: Four Friends, Two Countries, and the Fate of the Great Mexican-American Migration,” to be published by Bloomsbury in June. The book tells a story of Mexican immigration to the U.S. over the past three decades.

“A Gentle Giant”

Peggy Simpson, NF ’79, reflects on the pioneering journalist Simeon Booker, NF ’51

Simeon Booker, NF ’51, whose coverage of segregation and racism woke up the nation, died December 10 in Solomons, Maryland at the age of 99. The first African-American reporter at The Washington Post, he wrote for Jet and Ebony, working for the magazines’ parent company, Johnson Publishing Company, from 1954 to 2007. In 1955, his reporting about the murder of Emmett Till in Mississippi made international news. Simeon and a photographer were with Till’s mother when she received the mutilated body of her son. She insisted on an open casket. The shocking photos and Simeon’s stories helped galvanize people beyond the South “from indifference to outrage,” as Washington Post columnist Eugene Robinson, NF ’88, put it. Peggy Simpson, NF ’79, met Booker when they both worked in D.C.:

Simeon was a gentle giant among journalists covering the seismic racial, economic, and social changes of the past seven decades.

I got to know him through the Washington Press Club (WPC) in the late 1960s and 1970s. After the Women’s National Press Club changed its name and opened its ranks to men, Simeon was one of the first to join.

I recruited his Jet colleague Fannie Granton to be secretary of the WPC board when I was president in 1975-76.

Simeon was the second African American member of the National Press Club (NPC) and was active on its committees. He recruited the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. for a first appearance before the national press corps as speaker for a prestigious NPC luncheon. (The head of the speakers committee resigned in protest.)

Simeon didn’t boast about his accomplishments. But he never stopped educating people about the stories that were his passion.

Raised in the North, he first encountered Southern segregationist

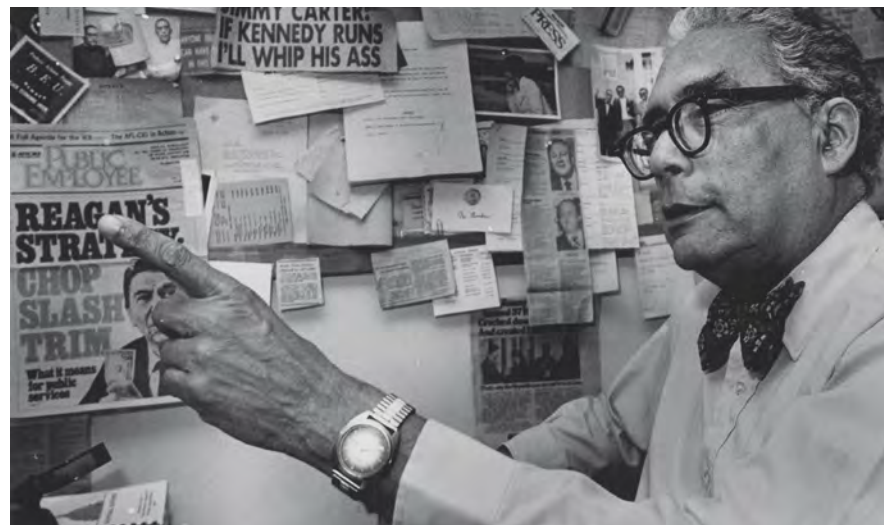
mobs as a reporter. He developed survival skills to protect himself.

He told the National Press Club, in accepting its Fourth Estate Award several decades ago, that he “wanted to fight segregation on the front lines. ... Segregation was beating down my people. I volunteered for every assignment and suggested more. I stayed on the road, covering civil rights day and night.”

Several weeks before he died, he gave a book talk at a church in rural Maryland.

A woman brought up the life-threatening racial violence and asked: “What kept you going back?”

Without missing a beat, Booker said, “It was my job.”



Simeon Booker, here in 1982, “wanted to fight segregation on the front lines”

LEFT: FRED SWEETS/THE WASHINGTON POST VIA GETTY IMAGES
OPPOSITE: GEORGE TAMES/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX

Tommy Tomlinson is the host of “SouthBound,” a new podcast series from WFAE in Charlotte, North Carolina. Tomlinson, who spent more than two decades as a reporter and columnist at The Charlotte Observer, talks with notable Southerners from various fields and walks of life.

2010

Alissa Quart has been named a winner of Columbia Journalism School’s 2018 Alumni Award. Quart, who graduated from the school in 1997, is currently the executive editor of the nonprofit Economic Hardship Reporting Project.

2011

Deb Price has joined Caixin Global in Beijing as executive editor, overseeing the Chinese independent financial news publication’s North American operations. Previously, she was Caixin’s managing editor.

2013

Chong-ae Lee has been promoted to editor of Seoul Broadcasting System’s Future Korea Report team.

Soud Mekhennet’s 2017 memoir “I Was Told to Come Alone: My Journey Behind the Lines of Jihad” is being developed for television by The Cantillon Company and Brillstein Entertainment Partners. “I Was Told To Come Alone” will be an hour-long drama series that follows Mekhennet, a German-born Muslim journalist, as she investigates Islamic extremism around the globe.

Laura Wides-Muñoz is the author of “The Making of a Dream: How a Group of Undocumented Immigrants Helped Change What It Means to Be American,” published in January by Harper. In it, she chronicles the lives of

five young undocumented activists, whose stories intersect with the landmark political and economic events of the past two decades.

2015

Jason Grotto has joined ProPublica Illinois as a reporter, specializing in quantitative analysis to investigate corruption, negligence, and poor public policy. Most recently, Grotto worked as an investigative reporter for the Chicago Tribune.

2016

Debra Adams Simmons has joined National Geographic as an executive editor for culture. Formerly, Adams Simmons was vice president of news development for Advance Local.

Wendi C. Thomas’s MLK50: Justice Through Journalism, a nonprofit reporting project based in Memphis, has received a \$100,000 grant from the Surdna Foundation, which seeks to foster sustainable communities in the U.S. guided by principles of social justice. The grant will help support MLK50’s yearlong reporting efforts on economic justice.

Wonbo Woo is an executive producer for Wired’s video team, based in New York. Previously, Woo was a producer for NBC’s Nightly News.

2017

Jason Rezaian has joined the team at WorldViews, The Washington Post’s foreign news blog, as a staff writer. Rezaian served as the Post’s Tehran bureau chief until he was unjustly imprisoned in 2014 by the Iranian government for 18 months.

Reporting on Bloody Sunday

The late Roy Reed, NF ’64, on the unmatched brutality of a seminal moment in the civil rights movement



Roy Reed, in the D.C. bureau of The New York Times in 1968

Roy Reed, NF ’64, who covered the civil rights movement for The New York Times, died December 10 in Fayetteville, Arkansas, after suffering a stroke. He was 87. Hired by the Times shortly after his Nieman year, he worked for the paper in Atlanta, New Orleans, Washington, D.C., and London. In his 2012 memoir “Beware of Limbo Dancers: A Correspondent’s Adventures with The New York Times,” he writes, “I saw many outrages covering the civil rights story, but for sheer brutality I never saw anything to match the scene” on Bloody Sunday, March 7, 1965 in Selma, Alabama. “I hope never again to see such hatred in the eyes of men, women, and yes, children.” In this edited excerpt, he sets the scene:

A few hundred marchers, mostly black, had crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge on the Alabama River to begin what had been billed, a little tentatively, as a march to the state capital, Montgomery, some 54 miles east. Their repeated attempts to register to vote had been rebuffed—firmly, you might say—so they wanted to press their case with Governor George C. Wallace in person. He sent his personal emissary, Colonel Al Lingo, head of the state police, and several dozen armed troopers.

Colonel Lingo got out a bullhorn and ordered the marchers to halt. They went a few steps farther. They stopped, hesitated, then knelt to pray in the grassy median that divided the four-lane highway.

Quite suddenly, Colonel Lingo ordered the troopers to advance. They rushed forward in a flying wedge. I described what happened next in my story for the Times:

The wedge moved with such force that it seemed almost to pass over the waiting column instead of through it.

The first 10 or 20 Negroes were swept to the ground screaming, arms and legs flying, and packs and bags went skittering across the grassy divider strip and on the pavement on both sides. Those still on their feet retreated. A cheer went up from the white spectators lining the south side of the highway.

Then came the pop of a tear-gas canister, and a venomous cloud covered the highway. Through the mist I heard coughing, the sound of clubs on flesh and bone, and cries of pain. The men on horses sped through the fleeing marchers wielding whips on faces, backs, and legs. The spectators whooped and cheered.



The Science of Journalism

Like scientists, reporters make connections, synthesize facts, and provide original insight

BY CHRISTINE MUNGAI

I CAME INTO journalism in a roundabout way. I was a voracious reader as a child, growing up in middle-class Nairobi, partly as a retreat from a difficult home situation as my parents' marriage broke down. I spent hours poring over world maps, absorbing obscure facts from encyclopedias, and reading all manner of novels from Dickens classics to Sweet Valley High.

Like many high-performing students of my generation, I was steered into a career in the sciences for its perceived job security and prestige. In my undergraduate years, I studied biomedical science and technology, which I enjoyed reasonably well enough but soon began to feel dissatisfied about. I felt as though a life in scientific research was not making the right demands of me—being a scientist would mean narrowing my focus, in that I would know more and more about less and less. Yet I had grown up with an intellectual appetite to know all sorts of things. I wanted to go broad, not go deep. This orientation was vindicated in my third year of university when I was part of the winning team on a popular televised general knowledge game show, featuring 16 student teams drawn from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, and Zambia.

I graduated with my degree in biomedical science, but soon after was introduced to the managing editor of East Africa's leading weekly newspaper. It quickly became apparent that both my intellectual curiosity and scientific training gave me an advantage in the newsroom—I could make connections between random facts in a way that gave fresh insight to a story. My background in the lab also meant that I wasn't afraid to hypothesize about the nature of the world, propose theories about why a certain event was happening, and possibly what was likely to happen next. In many newsroom contexts, this kind of writing would be corralled to the op-ed pages, but my editors at The East African published it as analysis—their only criteria was that it had to be well-researched, supported by data, logically sound, and internally consistent.

I call it “speculative nonfiction,” and it is the kind of writing I most enjoy doing. It is not strictly committed to methodological purity, and the trends uncovered may not even pass the test of statistical significance (That is the work of researchers!). Instead, speculative nonfiction discerns clues, faint signals, and stories that are hidden in the plain sight of data.

During my years at The East African, the story I am proudest of was a three-part series I wrote in 2013, in collaboration with my editor Charles Onyango-Obbo, a 1992 Nieman Fellow, that speculated on where the future “center of gravity” of East Africa's political and economic power would lie. Would the driving engine be westward, where the fabulous riches of the Democratic Republic of Congo remain largely untapped (the country's mineral wealth is estimated at \$24 trillion, more than the GDP of Europe and the U.S. combined)? Would it be northward, toward a roaring Ethiopian economy, or eastward, over the ocean, where a rising India and China are looking to use the East African coast as a beachhead on the continent?

Our verdict was on an eastward pull—today, China is building its first overseas

“**The kind of writing I most enjoy doing is what I call ‘speculative nonfiction.’ These are stories hidden in the plain sight of data**”

military base at Obock in Djibouti. Meanwhile, Ethiopia is slowing down, while the Democratic Republic of Congo is embroiled in a protracted political crisis.

Later, while I was at Mail & Guardian Africa, I traveled to Abuja, the capital of Nigeria, where I was struck by the number of abandoned buildings lining the city's huge highways. At first glance you might think that dilapidation is a sign of urban decay and economic decline. But there might be an alternative theory. At the time, Nigeria had implemented stricter controls on the cross-border movement of cash. We proposed that abandoned buildings may be a sign of an economy flush with illicit cash—people are unable to stash stolen money in banks because of money laundering regulations, so they buy land and buildings to “park” their money in, and use the property as collateral to borrow even more money from banks, without a care for default. We called it the Abandoned Buildings Index, which we proposed could be used as an alternative “street” measure of economic performance, because official economic figures often do not reflect sentiments on the ground.

More recently, at Africapedia, a startup data and trends web publication where I am editor, I hypothesized on why some communities in East Africa have such “bad” cooking. My community is notorious for a disorderly, one-pot combination-style cooking that many other Kenyans find unacceptable—indeed, bordering on sacrilege.

I wanted to take the jokes, memes, and stereotypes seriously and try to understand where bad cooking comes from. My theory is that societies with pronounced class divisions and social inequalities have an incentive to prepare “good food”—food is one of the ways to ingratiate yourself with the king, the court, or the sultan. “Bad food” is, therefore, in my view, an unlikely marker of a relatively egalitarian society.

I believe that this is ultimately what journalism should seek to do—make connections, synthesize facts, and provide original insight, not merely record events as they happen, or present quotes from opposing camps in a debate and leave it at that. Today's society is drowning in information; never has there been so much available to read, watch, and listen, at the click of a button. But most of us are starved for insight and meaning. The news media has a responsibility to transcend feeding the beast, and instead help us make sense of it all. ■

Christine Mungai, a 2018 Nieman Fellow, is the Nairobi-based editor of Africapedia

OPPOSITE: LISA ABITBOL

Nieman Online



Lynsey Addario, a photojournalist who has covered conflicts in many countries around the world, delivered the 2018 Joe Alex Morris Memorial Lecture at the Nieman Foundation in January. Watch the video at nieman.harvard.edu

“There’s no protection anymore that comes with being a journalist”

Lynsey Addario
Photojournalist

NiemanReports

Five Tools to Rebuild Trust in Media

The low levels of trust in the media in the U.S. and abroad can be attributed, at least in part, to the deterioration of public discourse. María Ramírez, a 2018 Nieman Fellow and cofounder of Politibot, highlights five digital tools that can help readers slow down, ask questions, and find reasoned opposing views.

Bringing Ethical Clarity to Native Advertising

Jake Batsell, an associate journalism professor at Southern Methodist University and author of “Engaged Journalism: Connecting with Digitally Empowered News Audiences,” recommends four steps to establish ethical standards for sponsored content.

NiemanLab

Predictions for Journalism 2018

For each new year, Nieman Lab asks some of the smartest people in journalism and digital media what they think is coming in the next 12 months. For 2018, they gathered over 150 predictions covering topics such as mobile video, news games, alt-weeklies, and collaboration.

The Year in Digital and Social Media Research

Denise-Marie Ordway, managing editor of Journalist's Resource, a project of Harvard Kennedy School, shares 10 of the most important pieces of research on digital media published in 2017.

NiemanStoryboard

The Stories We Need Next

Susan Orlean, Pamela Colloff, and other legends of longform narrative writing talk about what inspires them to work when they feel demoralized and what stories they'd like to see in the coming year.

Looking Ahead: Literary Journalism Conferences and Workshops

Looking to hone your narrative skills in 2018 and take a trip while you're at it? Check out Nieman Storyboard's list of upcoming literary journalism conferences and workshops, including the Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Conference at the University of North Texas in July.

NiemanReports

The Nieman Foundation for Journalism
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WINTER 2018

VOL. 72 NO. 1

TO PROMOTE AND
ELEVATE THE STANDARDS
OF JOURNALISM

