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Marc Lacey What color is your reader? Doug Mitchell Make your own pipeline Ron Nixon Diversify investigative teams

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Periodicals postage paid at
Boston, Massachusetts and additional
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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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Protesters gather in Brooklyn following the death of George Floyd

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“Beyond the Noise” Provides Africa News by and for Africans

Hannane Ferdjani, NF ’20, launched her program to report on the pandemic

Providing better narratives about Africa — it’s been my journalism quest since I first stumbled my way into the field almost a decade ago. But as I moved from print to television, from national to international newsrooms, and finally made it back on the continent as a news anchor on a pan-African news channel, that pursuit became increasingly crucial, albeit difficult to attain.

How to achieve reporting that speaks truth to power and unveils injustices that vulnerable Africans are suffering from without perpetuating longstanding stereotypes that mainstream media had always fed me about Africa?

My application for the Nieman fellowship reeked of that dilemma. Or challenge, if you choose a glass-half-full approach. And as I audited my way into classes rethinking paradigms about development, governance, and socioeconomic ecosystems in Africa, the direction I needed to take remained blurry.

That is until the pandemic happened. I had pondered starting my own web-based journalism project for a couple of years, but when the world came to a halt and everything we thought we knew about the future crumbled, there just seemed like there was no more time to think.

If I’m honest, my weekly online program which initially covered the impact of Covid-19 on the African continent — “Beyond the Noise” — was born from a need to regain control of a moment of absolute uncertainty.

Sure, I could have surveyed online trends and trajectories, fixed up a dedicated YouTube channel, written up a business plan, or sought funding before publishing episode 1.

Had I taken those planning steps before



Hannane Ferdjani at work on “Beyond the Noise,” a weekly program covering Africa

clicking “post” that first time in March, I probably would have avoided some rookie mistakes or simply better grasped the forever evolving intricacies of online video creation. I would have prepared myself for a multilayered battle for views, likes, and shares, or what the savvy refer to as “engagement.”

But as confusing, demanding, and time-consuming as these past few months have been, I have never felt more engaged in my quest to become a better storyteller for Africa.

None of the roles I was given in the past allowed me to explore such a wide-

ranging spectrum of stories in depth and to give African voices the ability to share their firsthand insights, experiences, and knowledge with an African audience.

From investigating African educational systems to shedding light on innovative projects brought forth by Africans in response to the sanitary crisis to exploring the Black Lives Matter movement’s ramifications on the continent, “Beyond the Noise” has grown and improved and become a trusted source of reporting for a niche audience interested in underreported stories, fact-based information, and innovative content. ■

OPPOSITE: CHINATOPIX VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

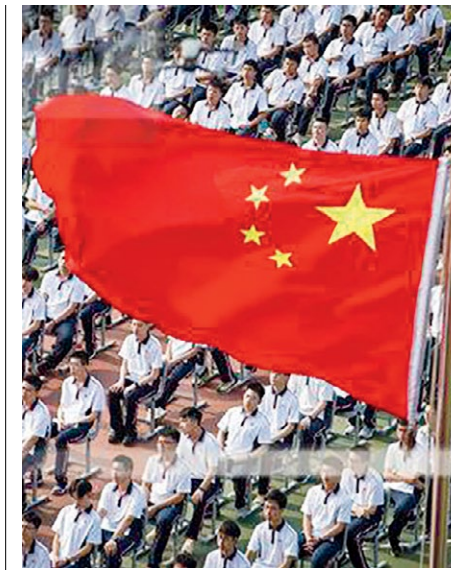
A Startup Focuses on Making a Business out of Reporting on China

David Barboza, NF ’16, is turning information gathered by his journalists into a database for companies

During much of my time working as a journalist at The New York Times, I kept asking myself the same question: what do I do with all the notes and documents I’ve collected during the course of my reporting? And, despite the concerns of our legal counsel, the answer was easy for a student of history: save them and some day build an archive that can help historians and provide the raw material for today’s investigative reporters.

And now, in an unexpected way, I find myself working in Boston, building a small newsroom focused around data, notes, and archives — a business project that might not just help produce deeper news stories but also, eventually, finance them. It’s a company we are tentatively calling The Wire.

The Times encouraged me to explore this idea as a Knight Visiting Nieman Fellow in the summer of 2016. Three years later, I left the Times after a group of angel investors backed my idea of building a news publication and database focused initially



Students attend a ceremony to begin the new semester at a school in Wuhan, China

on China — a country that I had covered for 14 years, much of that time as the Times’s Shanghai bureau chief. (I contributed a large chunk of my own savings.)

Now, just over a year and a half into this venture, I’m managing a weekly digital magazine focused on China’s rise as a global and economic power. Within the newsroom (which is now virtual, because of Covid-19) we also have an archive and a database that can be used by our own journalists, but soon, also by researchers, scholars, and businesses that are eager to understand China and its companies and entrepreneurs.

We’re a bit like Bloomberg — which has news and data — but also a bit like a university library, think tank, or independent research firm. The goal is to produce great, independent journalism of the highest standards and integrity, and at the same time, a data platform for businesses and others eager to learn about China and retrieve information, uncolored by our journalism or opinions.

I realize this is going to be a challenge. But that’s part of the reason why I find it so exciting.

Building this startup is allowing me to think deeply about the question I began with: if data is so valuable, and journalists are out collecting it every day, organizing it, and analyzing it, why do so many journalists throw the raw material of their stories away — the notes, audiotapes, source documents, etc.? Why doesn’t The New York Times or The Washington Post value their reporters’ notebooks? Does the value of those digital and paper documents really go to zero once I publish (meaning we should just throw them out), or is there valuable material there — the contacts, documents, interview notes that can inform and deepen future stories, and perhaps even seed a future investigation?

The answer, I believe, is yes.

Robert Caro, one of my heroes for his dogged determination, went from a newsroom to the archives. I’d like to bring the archives back into the newsroom, and beyond. ■

A Journalist Brings Her Reporting Acumen to American History

Paul Solman, NF ’77, on fellow Fellow Cassandra Tate’s tale of the West

Nieman curator Howard Simons used to tease our class of ’77 about the number of members who abandoned journalism. Mel Goo became a lawyer; Dolly Katz, an epidemiologist. Al Larkin stayed at The Boston Globe, but switched to the business side. And then there was Cassandra Tate. She got a Ph.D. and became, god help us, a historian.

Now battling cancer, Cassandra published her first book, “Cigarette Wars,” in 1999 with Oxford University Press. Written in

the elegant, colloquial style and with the reportorial precision that won her a Nieman from a tiny newspaper in Idaho, the book was a slim masterpiece which the ultimate arbiter of such efforts, The American Historical Review, called “[A] compelling work of cultural history. Better than any other scholar to date, [Tate] highlights the frenzied attempts by various reformers to rid society” of cigarettes through various efforts before and after World War I.

The reporter-turned-scholar, a devout Pacific Northwesterner, long worked for the Seattle online site HistoryLink.org, contributing occasionally to Columbia Journalism Review and other national magazines. Her second book, “Unsettled Ground: The Whitman Massacre and Its Shifting Legacy in the American West,” will be published November 17 by Sasquatch Books.

“Cigarette Wars” was a revelation. Readers learned that The New York

Times condemned nicotine’s “disastrous effects” — in 1879! Cigarettes were thought perilous because, among other noxious side effects, of their link to sex. And yet America’s love affair with consumerism — coupled with tobacco’s addictiveness — delivered the “coffin nails” from evil.

“Unsettled Ground” is even more unsettling: the story of Second-Great-Awakening missionaries who went West as young men (and women) to save the “savages” but mainly brought misery via the measles and more and more settlers, culminating in a 1847 massacre that made the mission’s leader, Marcus Whitman, a martyr for more than a century, his name given to both Whitman County and Whitman College in Washington state, his statue chosen to represent the state in Washington, D.C.’s halls of Congress.

It turns out Tate did not abandon journalism. She has enlarged it. Howard Simons would be proud. ■

HOW TO HANDLE HACKS & LEAKS

Journalists need to figure out how to responsibly report on hack-and-leak operations like those that marred the 2016 ballot

BY CHRISTA CASE BRYANT

WHEN A TWITTER user named @Guccifer_2 direct messaged reporter Sheera Frenkel in June 2016, offering hacked emails from the Democratic National Committee, she demonstrated an instinct that will be crucial for journalists covering the election this fall.

“Can you explain where these emails came from?” she recalls asking over and over. “I want to understand how you got them.”

Frenkel, a relatively new cybersecurity reporter for BuzzFeed who has since joined The New York Times, never received a satisfactory response. So she spent the next five months digging for answers. On October 15, amid a flurry of coverage detailing salacious details of internal Democratic emails, she published a blockbuster piece looking at the larger context — which turned out to be a crucial issue for America’s election security.

Russian President Vladimir Putin enters the Grand Kremlin Palace in Moscow to take the oath during his inauguration ceremony after his reelection in 2018

“Meet Fancy Bear, The Russian Group Hacking The U.S. Election,” the headline trumpeted. Guccifer 2.0, it turned out, was a fake persona created by a Russian military intelligence agency to disseminate hacked emails and shape the narratives around the election.

Even as media organizations have gradually gotten more up to speed on how to watch out for trolls and debunk misinformation, there’s an unresolved dilemma: how to responsibly handle hack-and-leak operations like the one Frenkel uncovered, which involve authentic, newsworthy documents but which are put forward at a time and in a manner that serves the agenda of bad actors. Finding the right balance between covering the context as well as the contents of the documents can be tricky. With no major operation targeting U.S. politics since 2016, it’s unclear how well American journalists would handle such a dump this time around.

“Now there’s much more focus on developing those resources for training journalists to understand the role they play in state operations,” says Renée DiResta, research manager at the Stanford Internet Observatory and co-author of “Potemkin Pages & Personas,” its 2019 report analyzing Russia’s manipulation of U.S. media. “At the same time though, we’re all waiting to see what happens when the next big trove of hacked docs comes out.”

Amid a pandemic, the Black Lives Matter protests, America’s greatest social upheaval since 1968, and the threat of interference in a high-stakes election this fall, the atmosphere is particularly ripe for exploitation. Fear, anger, and intensifying partisan divisions, especially on issues like race and election security, make people more susceptible to believing misleading information — and amplifying it or even acting on it.

Meanwhile, the media industry, already grappling with declining public trust, aggressive attacks on its integrity, and systemic financial woes that have shuttered

or strained many local news outlets, is now confronting an additional vulnerability: the proliferation of disinformation that targets journalists in a bid to weaponize their megaphones or drown them out, undermining the credibility and clout of the free press.

As experts and lawmakers have unraveled the web of deception Moscow spun around the 2016 election and continues to spin around this year’s vote, they have revealed a wide range of techniques Russia and others have used to exploit the credibility of journalists in the U.S. and other democracies. These included creating trolls, whose social media posts were quoted in dozens of news outlets and erroneously held up as authentic American voices; fabricating freelance “journalists” who seeded Russian narratives into a variety of publications worldwide in a bid to launder those narratives and give them greater credibility; offering journalists hacked emails from the World Anti-Doping Agency in a bid to frame what the hackers called “Anglo-Saxon nations” as power-hungry competitors using clean sport as a pretext for banning Russia from the 2018 Olympic Games; and leaking documents on everything from U.S. politics to secret U.K.-U.S. trade talks, resulting in a flurry of coverage about Russia’s chosen topics on the eve of its adversaries’ national elections.

The documents from the U.K.-U.S. trade talks, which surfaced in the run-up to Britain’s December 2019 election, were leaked by a long-running Russian information campaign called Secondary Infektion — a reference to a Cold War disinformation campaign run by the KGB that aimed to spread the belief that the U.S. government had purposely created HIV/AIDS — whose reach was little understood until very recently. In a June report, top social media analysis firm Graphika revealed for the first time the extent of the operation, which published more than 2,500 pieces of content across 300 platforms from 2014 to 2020, much of it designed to exacerbate tensions between the U.S. and its allies. The operation relied heavily on forged documents, impersonating everyone from prominent U.S. senators to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

To be sure, the CIA has meddled in many countries’ domestic politics, from orchestrating the 1953 coup

PREVIOUS SPREAD: JOSE A. BERNAT BAGETE/GETTY IMAGES
OPPOSITE: ALEXANDER ZEMLIANICHENKO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



d'état that ousted Iran’s democratically elected prime minister to planting stories in the Nicaraguan press that undermined the Sandinista government leading up to the 1990 election, paving the way for the opposition’s victory. Scholars and former agents argue, however, that interventions designed to support democratic opposition groups in their fight against authoritarianism are not morally equivalent to the foreign meddling of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has sought to boost Russia’s power by undermining his opponents at home and abroad — and just secured the public’s support to stay in office until 2036.

Some have criticized journalists for being too quick to suspect a Russian boogeyman is lurking behind every tweet, thereby exaggerating the influence of foreign disinformation campaigns and absolving elected officials, journalists, and voters of responsibility for the course of American politics. But the point is not that Russia has swept in and begun playing Americans like so many marionettes against their better judgment. Rather, their meddling has cast a fog over American politics and raised doubts about whether the democratic system can be trusted to work properly. Seen in this light, journalists’ suspicions are proof of the efficacy of Russia’s strategy, which is now yielding dividends far beyond the initial investment.

Russia is by no means the sole perpetrator of dis-

SHOULD JOURNALISTS COVER NEWSWORTHY LEAKS

DIFFERENTLY — OR AT ALL — IF THE DOCUMENTS WERE

BROUGHT TO LIGHT BY AN INFORMATION OPERATION?

information campaigns against Western democracies, however; China and Iran are also high-profile purveyors of disinformation targeting U.S. politics, and domestic actors and scammers can play a role as well.

In 2017, for example, white supremacists and others impersonating Antifa on social media sought to discredit the far-left organization and bait journalists into thinking the accounts were authentic, an effort highlighted in a September 2019 Data & Society report co-authored by Joan Donovan of Harvard. The following year, anonymous social media users seeded the viral anti-immigrant slogan “Jobs Not Mobs” into mainstream U.S. media and the political rhetoric ahead of the midterm elections.

The largest Black Lives Matter page on Facebook, with fundraisers, merchandise for sale, and some 700,000 followers, turned out to be run by a white man from Australia — a case study highlighted by

the European Journalism Centre's new Verification Handbook, which provides specific guidance on dealing with disinformation and media manipulation.

And this spring, both Covid-19 and the death of George Floyd while pinned under the knee of a white police officer have sparked a fury of misinformation and disinformation over everything from how the pandemic started to who's behind the looting that accompanied some nationwide protests over racial injustice.

On June 11, Twitter took down 23,750 accounts involved in a Chinese disinformation campaign, which, among other things, promoted Beijing's response to the pandemic. It also took down an additional 150,000 "amplifier" accounts that had been used to spread the campaign's reach by liking and retweeting content. While such efforts do not necessarily target journalists directly, they cloud the media environment and can create powerful countercurrents to fact-based reporting.

"I increasingly feel that for journalists, the Internet is a hostile environment," says Claire Wardle, co-founder and director of First Draft, who likens the nonprofit's workshops on countering misinformation and disinformation to a new kind of hostile environment training for navigating the perils of this new digital landscape. "Journalists don't understand that they are being deliberately manipulated."

That said, Wardle sees a growing awareness of the threat over the past two years. Frenkel echoes that point: "I think journalists are so much more aware of the role we play in amplifying disinformation." Also, social media platforms' increasing transparency in sharing data on manipulation campaigns has helped tremendously, she adds. "It's night and day, the amount of information we're able to get from Facebook" compared to 2016, says Frenkel.

In addition, new or newly expanded initiatives have sprung up to help journalists deal with disinformation. The Stanford Internet Observatory and First Draft launched attribution.news, an online resource that includes case studies and best practices for journalists covering cyber incidents and disinformation. It includes tips such as specifying the confidence level of government agencies, experts, and cybersecurity firms in attributing an attack or influence operation, and asking others to challenge one's research and conclusions in order to discover gaps or biases.

Boston-based cybersecurity firm Cybereason has run seven simulations of Election Day mayhem designed to stress-test the preparedness level of various actors, including journalists. Participants have had to contend with hacked municipal social media accounts, deep fake videos of public officials "saying" things they never said, and disinformation designed to suppress the vote, such as fake reports of ICE agents targeting undocumented residents or police frisking Black men on their way to vote.

Israel Barak, Cybereason's chief information security officer and an expert in cyber warfare, says two key lessons for journalists are establishing validated channels for corroborating information rather than relying on social media, even official accounts, and also guarding against a failure of imagination. "You need to educate

yourself through a simulation or other means in the art of the possible," he says. "Not only what happened in the past, but what is possible."

First Draft, which has a wealth of information and video seminars on its own website, has organized 15 live simulations across the U.S. that have given hundreds of journalists hands-on experience with disinformation campaigns, followed by master classes on how to respond.

Just weeks before Britain's election last December, which would determine whether Prime Minister Boris Johnson could follow through with his Brexit plan the following month, the Labour opposition called a press conference to present 451 pages of unredacted documents detailing U.K.-U.S. trade talks, which they said revealed that Johnson's Tory government had discussed selling the state-run National Health Service. Given that the trade talks were one of the biggest issues in the upcoming election, the documents — which appeared to be real — had genuine news value. But the Labour Party wouldn't identify the source that had provided the documents to them.

So Jack Stubbs, Reuters' European cybersecurity correspondent, teamed up with Ben Nimmo, director of investigations for Graphika, to figure out the source of the leak. Neither of them slept much for a week, mapping out how the documents had originally been disseminated online. They knew that the documents had first been posted to Reddit by a user named Gregoriator, who had also tweeted the Reddit post directly to journalists and U.K. politicians. Stubbs and Nimmo concluded that the operation mirrored tactics and techniques previously used by Secondary Infektion. Stubbs revealed their findings in a December 2 article, citing support from Nimmo as well as researchers at the Atlantic Council, Oxford, and Cardiff University.

Within the week, Reddit said it had banned 61 accounts, including Gregoriator, and confirmed that the U.K.-U.S. trade leaks were tied to Secondary Infektion.

People on Twitter argued that it didn't matter where the documents came from if they were real. But Stubbs disagreed. "Two things can be true — that the documents are genuine and have news value, and that the way that they were first distributed online implies that an outside actor was acting in bad faith," he says. "Both are newsworthy."

This raises a crucial question: Should journalists cover newsworthy leaks differently — or even at all — if the documents were brought to light by an information operation?

"In the 21st century, we at all times need to be prepared for information warfare," says Jack Shafer, a media and politics columnist for Politico. "We can do one of two things — we can confront it head on or we can attempt to ignore it. I submit that ignoring information, even state-sponsored misinformation, is a dereliction of journalistic duty."

While the agenda of the leaker matters, he says, it should also be weighed against the news value of the leak. "When the information is demonstrably true — a genuine document — then the motive of the leaker may



not be the paramount story," argues Shafer.

After all, even if the intent was malign, governments have historically revealed true information about adversaries. Heidi Tworek, an expert on the international history of communications technology at the University of British Columbia, offers a classic example from the Cold War when East Germany compiled and released the names of ex-Nazis working for the West German government. Although the intent was to undermine West Germany, and the West German government condemned these lists as Communist propaganda, historical investigation revealed that the lists were largely correct.

So should journalists of that day not published the lists, or focused more on why East Germany was releasing the lists than who was on them?

"The example shows that journalists have had to wrestle with such questions for a long time," says Tworek.

Tworek argues that it's important for journalists to recognize the motive for putting out such documents in the first place, or else they could end up "unintentionally doing the bidding of somebody else for geopolitical purposes."

To some degree, every leaker has an agenda, acknowledges Bret Schafer, media and digital disinformation fellow at the German Marshall Fund's Alliance for Securing Democracy in Washington, D.C., which Tworek is also affiliated with. But when the agenda is to inflict damage on a country or on a political candidate for the benefit of a foreign adversary, he adds, the focus should be less on the juicy details buried in the leak and more on questions like: Why do we have it? Why do we have it now? Who could have gotten this and who could have orchestrated the type of leak that happened?

JOURNALISTS' SUSPICIONS ARE PROOF OF THE EFFICACY

OF RUSSIA'S STRATEGY, WHICH IS NOW YIELDING

DIVIDENDS FAR BEYOND THE INITIAL INVESTMENT

Most of the 2016 coverage of the hacks of the DNC and Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta did the reverse, focusing disproportionately on the contents of stolen emails, rather than digging into who would have had the ability and motivation to pull off the operation — and whose interests it would serve to have those issues covered in the American media.

"There were mainstream front-page articles about the Podesta leaks throughout the last month before the election ... That was nearly the entire journalistic community taking the bait," says Nimmo, a pioneer of investigations into online disinformation campaigns who previously worked as a reporter for Deutsche Presse-Agentur and covered Russian-stoked unrest in Estonia in 2007. "I think they were completely played."

Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election concluded that it was done with the express purpose of sowing discord and dissension among the American people, and weakening their faith in their democratic institutions.

To that end, Moscow exploited one of the institutions most vital to democracy: a free press.

Its approach included two main prongs: creating fake personas to deepen divisions via social media, and hacking sensitive information and then leaking it

Leaked documents revealed British Prime Minister Boris Johnson had discussed selling the U.K.'s National Health Service (NHS) in trade talks with the U.S.

PETER SUMMERS VIA PA IMAGES/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Experts worry the U.S. will see an uptick in misinformation around the issue of mail-in ballots as the election approaches

to the press.

The Internet Research Agency (IRA), a Kremlin-linked outfit in St. Petersburg, reached 126 million people through 470 Facebook accounts and 1.4 million through 3,814 Twitter accounts, according to representatives of the U.S.-based social media companies. A significant number of those tweets tagged journalists. And it worked.

One Russian troll who claimed to be an African-American political science major in New York, @wokeluisa (Luisa Haynes), garnered more than 50,000 followers and was featured in more than two dozen news stories, including in the BBC, Time, and Wired.

And a University of Wisconsin-Madison study of 33 outlets from Fox News to The Washington Post found that all but one of them quoted accounts now known to be Russian trolls.

The other prong of Russia's strategy — hacking sensitive information and leaking it via personas like @Guccifer_2 and DC Leaks — was orchestrated by the Russian military intelligence agency known as the GRU and had little success on social media, according to the 2019 report "Potemkin Pages & Personas." The GRU's most popular account got only 47.9 likes on average, and garnered less than 7,500 engagements. Yet the report concludes that of all the ways Russia interfered in the 2016 election, the hack-and-leak operation targeting the DNC "arguably had the most impact."

Why? Because the media picked up that material and amplified it.

Shafer of Politico argues, however, that that was totally justified because there was "politically actionable news" in those leaks, including how the Democratic Party was sabotaging Bernie Sanders, Chelsea Clinton's feuding with Doug Band (Clinton called out Band, a longtime Clinton advisor, for his conflicts of interests involving the Clinton Foundation and his private consulting firm), and Donna Brazile's leaking of CNN town hall questions to Hillary Clinton.

"It's demonstrably true that there is fascinating news about how the political process works contained in those emails and the fact that the Russians may have been behind it does not make that news off-limits," says Shafer. "Just because the story might make the Kremlin smile does not mean that journalists should suppress it."

Some argue that the release of the hacked documents, while newsworthy, appeared designed to distract voters' attention from important campaign issues or unfavorable press coverage. For example, why did WikiLeaks release the first trove of Podesta emails hacked by the Russians within an hour of The Washington Post's publishing of the "Access Hollywood" recording that revealed Trump's lewd talk about forcing himself on women?

Podesta and others in the Clinton camp argued that context mattered more than the emails.

Even Nimmo acknowledges it would be unrealistic to expect journalists not to cover newsworthy leaks just because they were brought to light through an information operation. But as a general principle, he says, the context is equally as crucial. "Once the leak is out there,

the first questions are whether it's genuine, and whether the content is actually newsworthy. If the answer is 'Yes' to both, you're caught between the content and the context," says Nimmo. "The only thing you can fairly do as a journalist is give equal weight to both."

It's a dilemma American journalists may increasingly face heading into the November election. With social media platforms cracking down on networks of fake accounts like the ones Russia's IRA used in 2016, Nimmo and other disinformation experts say it's likely that information operations will shift their efforts more toward direct outreach to journalists. Are newsrooms ready for the next iteration of Guccifer?

"If a Guccifer 3.0 pops up, Facebook and Twitter are going to go after it hard," says Schafer of the Alliance for Securing Democracy. But, he adds, "I don't think we're collectively in a much better place in 2020 than we were in 2015-16 with the hack-and-leak problem."

He points to media reports that Russia's GRU had hacked into Burisma, the Ukrainian energy company that figured prominently in President Trump's impeachment trial. The hacks began in early November 2019, when Joe Biden was facing scrutiny from the Trump administration and others for his son's position on the company's board from 2014-19. While no leaks have materialized so far, hackers stole email credentials through a phishing campaign, which media reports speculated could have given the hackers access to information about the Bidens.

Attribution.news, the joint project of the Stanford Internet Observatory and First Draft, critiques coverage of the Burisma hack in one of its case studies, pointing out that the media relied on a thinly-sourced attribution report from an anti-phishing security company to assert Russian involvement, and warns that without proper vetting journalists can become "accomplices of disinformation."

Attribution.news recommends that in such cases journalists should specify the confidence level of those claiming to have found a hacking operation; not rely on circumstantial evidence, such as politically significant timing, as proof of attribution; ask an expert in technical digital forensics to read the report detailing such a hack and assess the credibility of the entity that produced it; and consider whether coverage of the alleged hack would benefit the perpetrator.

"Media face a huge challenge; they are a target, because people rely on them to make sense of these situations," DiResta explains. "Less scrupulous, hyper-partisan publications will rush out stories based on the leaked docs without fully vetting them or discussing their origin, which means the public will have a particular perception before the time-consuming work to contextualize what's real and what actually happened is done."

In some ways, Covid-19 has offered an opportunity for journalists to test their new skills in uncovering and reporting on disinformation — a dress rehearsal of sorts for November. But many cash-strapped newsrooms haven't been able to invest in such efforts — and even for those who have, new curve balls could come as the election draws near.

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"For the news organizations that haven't really been able to afford to follow this over the past few years, it is going to be like sprinting uphill to get a handle on election disinformation during the moment where everyone's focused on Covid-19," says Joan Donovan, co-author of the 2019 Data & Society report and research director of the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard Kennedy School.

She foresees significant disinformation around the issue of mail-in ballots, which will be more difficult to cover because of social distancing requirements. And even if the election goes smoothly without any such interference, there's still a strong potential for undermining the election's integrity through online channels.

"You won't actually need evidence of mail-in voter fraud to make the claim appear as true if you can get enough networks of social media to believe it," says Donovan, citing President Trump's false claims that Michigan was "illegally" mailing ballots to 7.7 million residents, opening the way for widespread voter fraud. (In fact, Michigan mailed its 7.7 million registered voters paperwork to apply for absentee ballots.)

A key defensive measure, she says, is proactive communication from both journalists and public officials to educate voters about revised voting protocols and estab-

COVID-19 HAS OFFERED AN OPPORTUNITY FOR

JOURNALISTS TO TEST THEIR NEW SKILLS IN

UNCOVERING AND REPORTING ON DISINFORMATION

lish trust in those authoritative channels — inoculating voters before they're exposed to swirling rumors or an 11th-hour disinformation campaign.

As for vetting leaker offering potentially hacked documents, journalists should begin with some key questions, Stubbs says: Who are you? What is your agenda? How can I trust this information?

If you can't answer those questions, that should give you pause, says Stubbs, who responded to an interview request for this article by asking for confirmation of the writer's identity, and a DM from her verified Twitter account.

But, he adds, "If you go through the due diligence of trying to answer those questions, you may end up with a bigger story."

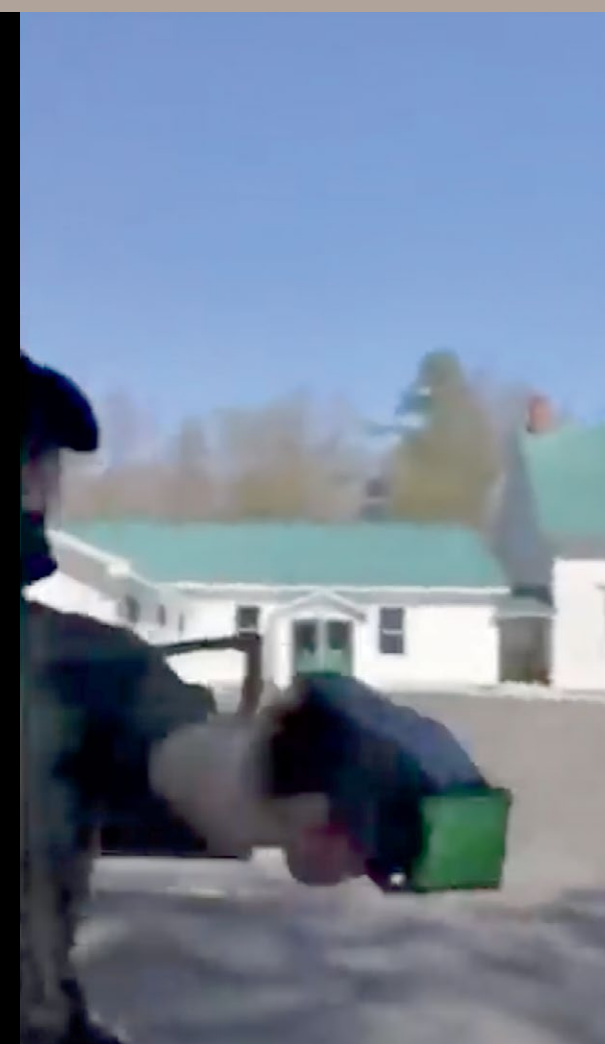
Just ask Frenkel. ■

COLLABORATION

**IS
THE
FUTURE
OF
JOURNALISM**

To meet the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic and the racial justice movement, the historically competitive media culture is becoming more collaborative

BY CASEY QUACKENBUSH



W

HEN JEAN RONALD Saint Preux started live-streaming on Facebook, the police had already smashed his driver seat window.

On a clear day, May 20th, in the parking lot of the town hall of Albany, a 700-person town in New Hampshire, two state troopers pulled over Saint Preux, a 34-year-old Black man, for an alleged motor vehicle inspection sticker violation. Allegedly without asking for his license or registration — the police claim otherwise — they demanded he get out of the car. When he refused for several minutes, the police said he was under arrest and broke in.

One officer wedged her baton into a corner of the car's cracked window, while the other pounded the glass with a baton until it cracked into a giant spider web. The second officer peeled back the pane with a crunch. The car door opened. They grabbed Saint Preux by head, hair, and ears, dragged him out of the car, and tased him.

The video went viral, drawing over 300,000 views when local newspaper The Conway Daily Sun picked up the story on May 28. "I just felt like I was going to be another statistic," Saint Preux said in an interview with Freedom Media Canada, an independent media organization that focuses on police accountability. "One of them people that gets killed for no reason." Saint Preux was charged with assault on a police officer, resisting arrest, disobeying a police officer, and a motor vehicle inspection sticker violation.

At the time, the Granite State News Collaborative (GSNC), a collective of 17 newsrooms across New Hampshire, of which the Sun is a member, was only sharing Covid-19 stories. But as the Black Lives Matter movement began to convulse the country following George Floyd's killing on May 25, just five days after Saint Preux's incident, expanding the collaborative to

encompass the next crisis was a given, says Melanie Plenda, the director of the GSNC. Plenda alerted the partners to Saint Preux's story. On May 29th, New Hampshire Public Radio picked it up, with a reporter directly asking the governor about the incident at a Covid-19 press conference.

"It was a story that probably would've lived and died in a small town," says Plenda. "But within a day, because we all worked together and furthered the reporting, at the least the governor went on record for saying he'd look into it."

As the world swings from one crisis to the next, such is the indispensable nature of collaboration at this moment for journalism. Just as the coronavirus pandemic and the Black Lives Matter protests have laid bare America's devastating social vulnerabilities and inequities, so too has it highlighted the media's own weak-

nesses — scarcity of resources, inability to do in-person reporting, shrinking budgets — especially for local media. While this is still a time of a high-stakes competition among news outlets, it's also a time of high-reward collaboration. To meet the mounting challenges from mounting crises a historically competitive media culture is giving way to an accelerating trend of collaboration.

Collaboration "is a necessity," says Plenda. "News outlets really feel compelled to get this information out to their communities. That was the most important thing [for GSNC]."

To be sure, collaboration is not a new phenomenon in journalism. By 1846, the invention of the telegraph had so dramatically upended the media that five New York papers banded together to create the Associated Press to reduce the costs and competition of covering the Mexican-American War. Starting in the 2000s, collaborations gathered momentum, with money pouring into initiatives from the Knight Foundation, the Democracy Fund, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. In 2016, ProPublica partnered with a coalition of organizations, including the USA Today News Network, to launch Electionland, an initiative covering voting issues. The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists' analysis of the leaked Panama Papers — an effort of over 100 news outlets in 25 languages — that same year was a watershed moment.

But in just the last few years, the number and diversity of collaborations has exploded. According to the Center for Cooperative Media at Montclair State University, which houses a database of collaborative journalism projects, U.S. collaborations have grown from 44 in 2017 to over 300 today.

It's not just the act of collaboration that's growing, but the tools and resources created to facilitate it, too. Resolve Philly, which has launched several newsroom initiatives over the years covering different areas in Philadelphia, recently won a \$1 million grant to launch a new one called Equally Informed, a public service campaign to ensure Philadelphians have access to Covid-19-related info in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Vietnamese, and French. Oklahoma Watch, a collaboration for investigative journalism in the state, launched the Coronavirus Storytelling Project to help displaced or furloughed journalists or newsrooms struggling through the pandemic. Loved and Lost is a New Jersey-statewide collaboration aiming to write obituaries — or, as the project calls them, celebrations — for the lives of the over 15,000 residents lost to Covid-19. The list goes on.

"For the survival of journalism, we have to find new ways to collaborate," says Kat Stafford, a reporter with the Associated Press covering race and ethnicity. "We are trying to serve the reader, the communities ... it's so vital to make sure that local journalists are able to provide a level of nuance for their readers. [Collaboration] is the future of journalism."

When the pandemic hit, Stafford knew immediately one community that needed to be served: African-Americans. From the Great Depression to Hurricane Katrina, African-Americans disproportionately suffer during major disasters. The pandemic would be no differ-

ent. Stafford could already see it happening in her hometown of Detroit. Entire generations of families, gone; denied hospital visits, some died at home. "The magnitude of the deaths has been unreal," says Stafford. "I knew that this was something we needed to look at right away."

So Stafford and a team of eight reporters across the country started to dig. They called every state for a breakdown of Covid-19 deaths by race. With so many hands in a single project and different streams of data, reporting such a sweeping and technical story can be tricky. To keep everything in check, they used AP's DataKit, an open-source interface tool designed to provide structure to vast newsroom collaborations.

Since its public launch in September 2019, DataKit has served as the backbone for every data analysis reporting project at the AP. With collaborations, reporters often come with different ways of working and data coming in from many places — FOIA requests, emails, spreadsheets, RSS scrapers. With DataKit, everything is consolidated into one place. It allows data to sync, reporters to work on the same project simultaneously, dialogue between teams, and opportunities to build out stories from data. "On any given project ... it takes something that could take an hour, and shaves it down into seconds, literally," says Troy Thibodeaux, data journalism team editor at the Associated Press.

What emerged was a dire portrait, and one of the first nationwide looks at Covid-19's disproportionate impact on African-Americans. While African-Americans represent 14% of the population in analyzed areas, they represent nearly a third of known Covid-19 deaths. Obtaining the data was not easy. Some states were not releasing the data, claiming to either be too overwhelmed or not having it at all. Overlooking demographics like that, "frankly," says Stafford, "was part of the story."

Ultimately, the AP data got local leaders and politicians talking about systemic racism and structural inequality, all the way up to Joe Biden, the former vice president and Democratic presidential nominee, who cited AP's data in a tweet, calling the health inequities "unconscionable." As a cascade of similar reports followed, along with many lawmakers joining the chorus to release demographic data, the CDC finally released its first breakdown of Covid-19 case data by race. While federal data was missing racial information for 75% of all cases, the known data showed that 30% of patients whose race was known were Black.

"Our ability to do one of the first comprehensive looks at the racial toll really set the tone in the conversation for how Americans should be viewing this pandemic," says Stafford.

The use of DataKit is not just limited to AP. DataKit "is a living project, open source, and free. I would really love to see if other newsrooms ... make it their own," says Thibodeaux.

DataKit is just one of many tools AP has designed. There's also the "Chronomancer," a data-pulling tool that predates Covid-19 but has since been informally called the "Coronamancer." The tool pulls data from Johns Hopkins every hour, adds a few more layers of information like population counts and 7-day rolling averages, and then

PREVIOUS SPREAD: Jean Ronald Saint Preux's livestream of police breaking into his car was seen around New Hampshire after being shared by partners of the Granite State News Collaborative

RIGHT: People wait for distribution of masks and food in Harlem, New York in April 2020. Using the open-source DataKit, the AP was among the first news outlets to reveal the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on African-Americans



PREVIOUS SPREAD: JEAN RONALD SAINT PREUX/FACEBOOK
REBETO MATTHEWS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

While this is still a time of a high-stakes competition among news outlets, it's also a time of high-reward collaboration





RESOURCES FOR COLLABORATIVE JOURNALISM

Center for Cooperative Media
A Montclair State University initiative that aims to strengthen and grow local journalism through partnerships, training, product development, and more.

Covid-19 Collaboration Wire
Hostwriter's match-maker tool that connects editors and journalists around the world.

DataKit
An open-source interface tool designed by the Associated Press to provide structure to vast newsroom collaborations.

Collaborate
ProPublica's open-source tool that helps reporters tackle large data sets together.

Klaxon
A free and open-source tool built by The Marshall Project that scrapes web pages for updates on data.

publishes it live, one of more than a dozen Covid-19 datasets that local reporters can use in their reporting.

AP also generates graphs for weekly news like unemployment claim filings. Within AP, there's COVID Hub, a standalone internal website that provides AP reporters regularly updated dashboards on national and state-level figures on a number of metrics, from testing rates to 14-day case trends. "Everything we do is collaboration," says Meghan Hoyer, the lead data editor on the racial toll story. At a time when data is so scattered and changing all of the time, these tools mean they can answer the basic questions a lot faster.

One of those public data sets is published alongside The Marshall Project, a nonprofit investigative newsroom dedicated to the U.S. criminal justice system. Starting in mid-March, The Marshall Project began tracking the outbreak of Covid-19 in prisons, dividing up the country among its 15 reporters who requested this data every week, primarily calling and emailing the state and federal prison agencies. The data is then broken down into weekly charts on a public dashboard, which shows coronavirus cases and deaths among inmates and staff by state.

After publishing its second round of data, the Project partnered with the AP, which was also interested in tracking the data and added six reporters to the effort — an arduous data collection process that involves battling with reluctant state officials for several days at a time. The Marshall Project team had been working hard, so the additional resources added a "boost of energy," says Tom Meagher, The Marshall Project's managing editor for data and digital. Generally, AP contributes the numbers, and the Project crunches them.

To keep up with the rising number of Covid-19 cases inside correctional facilities, The Marshall Project also uses Klaxon, a free and open source tool it build that scrapes web pages for updates on data, which has doubled the outlet's ability to monitor changes since the pandemic. All of that data is then uploaded to data.world, the world's largest collaborative data community, which is free and open to the public, and especially useful for other newsrooms. "Our whole publishing platform is based on collaboration," says Meagher, noting that The Marshall Project has co-published stories with some 150 newsrooms. But since the pandemic, many more publications have come to them asking to collaborate.

At the height of the pandemic in April, Adriana Gallardo did not know what she was going to do with her class. Gallardo, an engagement reporter with ProPublica, also teaches advanced reporting as a bilingual adjunct professor at CUNY's Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism. Normally throughout the semester, the class produces reporting centered on the Latino community throughout the five boroughs of New York. But when the pandemic forced all of her students to return home, Gallardo was at a complete loss.

Then it dawned on her: Broaden the scope.

Like Stafford at AP, Gallardo knew disasters disproportionately impact Latino communities, especially those who are undocumented. So Gallardo transformed the course's original project from a local to a nationwide look at Latino communities affected by the pandemic.

She teamed up with ProPublica and Univision to execute it. The former had the tools, the latter had the Latino reach, and the class had the labor. Inti Pacheco, a Wall Street Journal data reporter (unaffiliated with the project), served as the co-instructor and co-editor, and Tamoia Calzadilla, a senior investigative journalist at Univision, acted as editor on behalf of her newsroom.

The team used ProPublica's Collaborate, a new open-source tool that helps reporters tackle large data sets together. Datasets are often bottomless troves of information and story ideas, too large for any single reporter to meaningfully tackle alone. Collaborate allows for all of that data to be uploaded to a single place — from Google Sheets, Screendoor, Google Forms — where a whole team of reporters can sort, verify, claim, and report on the data. With code found on GitHub, newsrooms can adapt and customize Collaborate to their needs.

For Gallardo's class, the team used spreadsheet software called Screendoor to create a secure callout form asking Latinos about the impact of Covid-19 on their lives. The responses collected in Collaborate, where all publications who embed the form can access the thousands of responses, take notes, track progress, and redact sensitive information. The students were taught how to organize, label, and filter through responses, and how to identify actionable stories. To maximize the reach of the form, the class painstakingly pasted the link into various Latino Facebook groups.

"It doubled the ability of journalism," says Gallardo. "By putting 10 of my students to work with two newsrooms, we could move faster" and were more organized.

The responses poured in. Some sought help. Many wanted to share their stories, expressing fear about complete loss of income. Once the stories started running on Univision — the U.S.'s largest provider of Spanish-language content — and readers began to see themselves in the reporting, even more tips came. "The more people saw themselves, the more people contributed," says Gallardo.

What emerged was a series of 13 stories about the struggles of Latinos grappling with the pandemic nationwide: immigrants awaiting lung transplants; how mothers were adapting to teaching at home, whether in their non-native language or with children with special needs; how four Hispanic transgender women were battling the challenges of Covid-19 and discrimination.

One story was an especially difficult one for Gallardo to report: "Los New Yorkers," co-reported with one of her students, Ariel Goodman, about low-wage essential workers, who, as decade-long residents, by any normal metric would be considered New Yorkers. But because they're undocumented, they do not have access to critical aid and protection during the pandemic.

Gallardo lives in Brooklyn, just 20 minutes away from undocumented New Yorkers she needed to interview in Queens, but couldn't meet them because of the coronavirus. These folks were suffering. They didn't qualify for funds to bury their loved ones lost to Covid; they were too afraid to seek medical help for fear of immigration authorities. Instead, her interviewees would have to relay these traumatic details to her over the phone. They

did not want to be forgotten the same way they felt they were with 9/11. For Gallardo, a Mexican immigrant herself, this hit close to home.

Having contributors voluntarily offer up their stories changed the dynamic of the interviews, too. By filling out the form, contributors "in some way have raised their hand," says Gallardo. "That's a really different way to enter those conversations."

When it comes to accessing overlooked communities, collaborations are key, says Gallardo. "All of my work in the classroom and at ProPublica is collaborative," says Gallardo. "If my students' goals are to reach communities often ignored by newsrooms and/or to build ambitious deep-dives, I can't imagine teaching them any other way to get the work done."

The pandemic has dramatically constricted reporting options. Now, with such strict travel and quarantine restrictions, unless newsrooms already have correspondents in place, parachute journalism is not an option. But for Natalie Nougayrède, just because travel has halted doesn't mean exchange should.

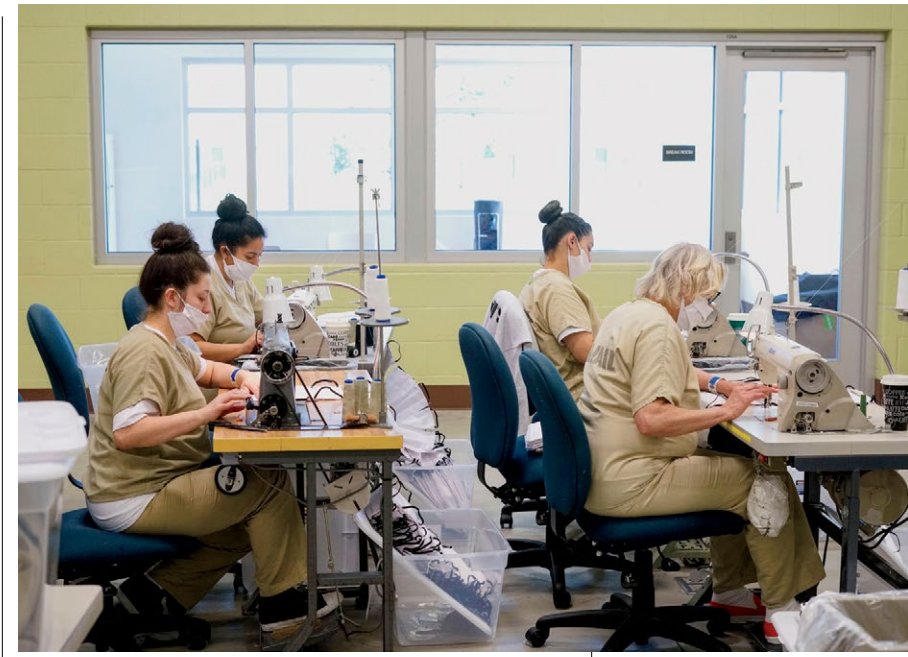
Such was the inspiration for "Summer of Solidarity," a pop-up European newsroom collaboration launched in June of citizens, journalists, media start-ups, civil society organizations, and cultural groups from across the continent. Summer of Solidarity aims to document the profound changes Europeans are undergoing this summer through stories of culture and transformation, with an emphasis on youth.

Aside from a few smaller start-ups, the European media landscape is dominated by nationally-rooted organizations. While Le Monde and Germany's public broadcasting system, for example, do pursue stories throughout Europe, pan-European approaches to the news usually find little traction. "What does not exist is an obvious platform with reach that serves all Europeans without taking a lens that is defined nationally," says Nougayrède, Summer of Solidarity's co-founder and editor who's on leave from The Guardian UK, researching the need for a new pan-European media initiative during a year-long fellowship with Berlin's Robert Bosch Academy.

To achieve that pan-European outlook, Nougayrède says, the project commissions content from journalists across the continent. In one of its first commissions, Summer of Solidarity ran a story about how Covid-19 is pushing Italian youths to the mountains. Most recently, a journalist explored how German activists were fighting the pandemic's childcare crisis, and a Polish man describes how he rediscovered his family history in Krakow's lockdown. The platform will also curate a wide range of content from smaller outlets.

As a journalist who moved to the U.K. a few years before Brexit and then watched populism grow elsewhere, Nougayrède recognizes how crucial it is to keep journalists local and tapped into nascent societal changes. "If we journalists don't deploy ourselves in more collaborative ways, we may end up missing the deeper undercurrents in our societies," she says. "We're keen to look at people whose voices may only be heard when they protest. We want to spend time with them before they protest."

Essential to achieving this goal is Hostwriter, a Berlin-



based international network launched in May 2014 that enables cross-border collaborations among members, totaling 5,300-plus media professionals, mostly freelance journalists and editors, in 154 countries. With journalists unable to travel for stories, co-founder Tabea Grzeszyk launched Hostwriter's Covid-19 Collaboration Wire, a match-maker tool that connects editors and journalists who are not members to commission stories. In partnership with the European Journalism Centre, Hostwriter granted Summer of Solidarity access to a network of 3,000 journalists and editors across Europe.

With Hostwriter, Grzeszyk hopes that journalism will diversify, forcing editors to look at more local talent pools instead of resorting to parachute journalism. "A problem with journalism in general [is that] it can be a closed box," says Grzeszyk. "People commission who they know and trust." To break through that trust barrier, Grzeszyk has been a mediator for Summer of Solidarity, helping editors vet and select writers.

Hostwriter's Covid Collaboration Wire feature is still in its early stages, but it's already seeing traction, with Europeans seeking journalists in Mumbai or Abuja, and Armenian journalists seeking people on the ground in Berlin. Polish media outlet Outriders used the wire to find a journalist in Brazil to collaborate with for their new Covid solutions project Radar, and the digital magazine of a German foundation, Stiftung Mercator, has commissioned several stories through it as well. Hostwriter also has a popular "Find a Co-author" channel, where freelancers seek other journalists to work with. Through the channel, a team was recently assembled for a project to study institutional racism in Europe, supported by a grant from Stars4Media.

The pandemic "is accelerating something that was on the way anyway," says Grzeszyk. "This journalism paradigm of, 'We all hate each other, We all want to be the first,' this is an old paradigm. I wonder in 10 years from the pandemic maybe we will look back on this something like a Panama Papers moment for journalism." ■

Inmates sew protective masks at the Las Colinas Women's Detention Facility in Santee, California. The Marshall Project partnered with the Associated Press to track coronavirus cases in prisons

SANDY HUFFAKER/APP VIA GETTY IMAGES

**THE
NEWSROOMS
WE**

NEEDED

NOW

**WHAT JOURNALISTS CAN DO
TO MEET THE CALL FOR DIVERSITY,
EQUITY, AND INCLUSION**

DEAR JOURNALISM: DO BETTER

Journalists offer their prescriptions for what the news industry needs to do to meet the challenges of this moment **BY ANN MARIE LIPINSKI**

Dear Journalism.

Those two words formed the silent call I heard throughout the summer as anguish over George Floyd's killing and an amplified Black Lives Matter movement forced a news industry reckoning. Yes, there was deep pain and disillusionment in many of the nation's newsrooms, powerfully expressed by Philadelphia Inquirer journalists who protested the paper's egregious "Buildings matter, too" headline by organizing a "sick and tired" day.

But these weren't journalists turning their backs on the profession. These were journalists whose demands expressed a longing. Dear Journalism: Do better.

"I spent some of the happiest and most productive years of my life working for The New York Times," tweeted Lydia Polgreen about a Times op-ed calling for the use of federal troops against protesters. "So it is with love and sadness that I say: running this puts Black @nytimes staff—and many, many others—in danger."

The essays collected here reflect both that devotion and disappointment and demand to be read by us all. Nieman Reports asked each of these contributors what the industry needs to do to meet the challenges of this moment; to accelerate the advancement of journalists of color; to create equitable newsrooms; to improve coverage of racism. Individually, they offer hard-earned insight into structural problems plaguing newsrooms that undermine our news gathering and success. Collectively, they represent decades of bearing witness to inequality and thinking about what would make us stronger. What these journalists prescribe is not simple, but all of it is achievable.

"If you are looking at this reckoning on race and trying to change your newsroom, I'm going to ask you to do something harder: Take a critical look at your own life," writes S. Mitra Kalita of CNN. "There are no easy answers to solve for diversity, equity and inclusion. There

is only the work."

In her piece, Futuro Media's Erika Dilday points to historic moorings that have shadowed journalism, of professional norms authored by groups that "were overwhelmingly, and at times exclusively, white, privileged, and male." The conventions that spring from those roots can be as basic as how you picture and speak to your audience. Quick: what is the race of your reader?

Times national editor Marc Lacey asks and answers the question. "For too long, readers in the mainstream media have been presumed to be white," he writes. "White is the norm. And the writer helpfully lets us know when someone or something strays from that norm. The writer points out that the mayor is Black. But the city councilman's race is left unstated two paragraphs later. A neighborhood is described as predominantly Hispanic but another area has no racial identifier at all. Someone is described as being classically beautiful or having all-American looks. Hmm."

Kalita, Dilday, Lacey, and others are generous, offering a resistant industry a path forward. Implores ESPN's Rob King: "Let's please get to work." ■

Ann Marie Lipinski is curator of the Nieman Foundation

JESSICA KOURKOUNIS/GETTY IMAGES



Days after the killing of George Floyd, Lauren Coursey protests outside City Hall in Philadelphia

LET “OTHERS” TELL THE STORY

“The only way we can report the ‘truth’ is by allowing people to share their stories” BY ERIKA DILDAY

American journalists are chronicling a nation in turmoil. The strife centers around inequality and is fueled by our inability to understand each other. We are a country of factions that has not figured out how to work together for an equitable society.

At the root of this problem is race.

We stand at another pivotal moment of our national identity. Once again, people of color, particularly Black people, have been driven to act by the constant assault of systemic, brutal, confrontational racism that threatens our present, our future, and our very survival. The Black Lives Matter action may be new, but the frustration, call to action, and anger that action represents are not. Throughout our turbulent history, these issues have been consistently covered by journalists, but we must recognize that journalism, as it is currently practiced, contributes to the problem.

Without an approach to reporting that is observational instead of narrational, and that recognizes each journalist’s part in and relationship to the story, we do a disservice, particularly to those whom we don’t immediately understand and can’t accurately represent. For the most part, this disservice has been done to communities of color, immigrants, and those of lower socioeconomic status.

Journalists have created and enabled a system of news and media that deems terms like “ethics,” “journalism,” and “truth” unassailable, depending on the speaker or forum. The codes of ethics and standards of practice we put forth in the West often differ greatly from those adopted by journalists in other parts of the world. But we tend to think that they should learn from

us and not that we should learn from them. This means our norms are codified by a small, homogeneous group that informal but firm consensus has decided are the gatekeepers of the fourth estate. This has led to huge blind spots in how and what we cover.

What needs to change is the journalist’s role within a story. I believe our role is facilitator instead of interpreter, catalyst instead of judge. The narrative that we see immediately may not be the real one. We always have to ask ourselves, Who am I to tell this story? We have to accept that by telling it, we take a role. We inject bias and subjectivity, and we must recognize that at all times. Our belief in our ability to be objective is our own hubris.

Our goal must be to present the entire picture, to see

JOSH GALEMORE/ARIZONA DAILY STAR



people — no matter their circumstances — from many angles. If we don’t, we isolate our audiences from our subjects instead of bringing them closer.

The only way we can report the “truth” is by allowing people to share their stories, by asking our audiences to meet people where they are, and to absorb information, ideas, and voices that take them out of their comfort zones. We must also ensure that we have the right people in the room to help make decisions about how those stories are shared, or we run the risk of perpetuating the same problems we are trying to solve.

When we are not careful about not just who but how others are represented, the effect can be damaging. In 2016, The New York Times attempted to give its readers insight into the lives of Black Americans by sharing different stories written by African Americans about their reality. These first-person narratives were exactly what should be shared. But the article missed the mark. Why? Because the subhead of the article was, “What do people fail to understand about the lives of black Americans?”

The armchair white reader probably wouldn’t notice the problem, and this is what makes bias and hubris so dangerous. For some reason, the idea of “people” in this subhead excludes Black Americans. There is no qualifier. It doesn’t say, “What do WHITE people fail to understand...” or “What do NON-BLACK people fail to understand...” We are the other, and the Times reinforced that idea.

A more recent example comes from a column about Andrew Yang and the “Yang Gang” that also appeared in The New York Times. The columnist represented the Yang Gang as follows: “That night, the Yang Gang, as the candidate’s fans proudly call themselves, was a happy crowd of gamers, Asians, former goth girls, Burning Man enthusiasts, sci-fi geeks, students, coders and stoners.” At some point, the embarrassing use of “Asians” as separate from all the others was silently removed from the column, but this was after publication.

Though these examples are from the Times, many major outlets experience this type of blindness, a blindness called out by the Kerner Commission Report back in 1968.

In 1967 America was in the middle of a civil war for civil rights. Frightened and frustrated, the U.S. government formed the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, led by Governor Otto Kerner Jr. of Illinois. In February of 1968, weeks before Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination, it issued the Kerner Commission Report, which recognized the issues that were brewing: “What white Americans have never fully understood — but what the Negro can never forget — is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it.”

The language may be anachronistic, but the intent is clear. People of color — or more expansively, the

Protesters face a line of Tucson, Arizona police officers during a May protest following the killing of George Floyd

“other” — must be front and center in the coverage of people of color and a part of any societal conversation. The report advocated changes in the news media around three major ideas: recruit and advance qualified people of color into journalism and journalism management; create opportunities to train and educate journalists in the coverage of the “other”; and create media vehicles that recognize these groups exist and are active, important members of the American community.

After Kerner, very little was done by those in power to take action on any of the report’s conclusions. One notable and unique case was when the FCC was ordered in 1969 to revoke the operating license of a television station in Mississippi. WLBT-TV in Jackson had its license rescinded for failing to serve the public interest; this failure basically amounted to overtly racist practices, including blocking speeches by liberal politicians and focusing on the faces of protesters, which made them potential targets of law enforcement. In response, WLBT was forced to transfer ownership to a Black group, and that group hired the nation’s first Black general manager of a television station in the United States in 1972.

That general manager was my father.

I grew up in Mississippi, transplanted there from Boston, when my father, William H. Dilday Jr., a personnel manager, took the leap and moved his entire family to Jackson to start work at WLBT-TV. My father and

What the ride taught me was that journalism was an extremely powerful tool and that without varied points of view and the ability of diverse voices to help shape the narrative, we are in danger of not just missing the story but doing harm.

I grew up at the station, pretending to broadcast from the news desk, selling Girl Scout cookies, and absorbing that some people thought my father was a hero and others saw him as a troublemaker and villain. One of the most memorable events of my youth was when, in 1980, my father refused to air the miniseries “Beulah Land,” which depicted life on a plantation, on WLBT. The series was shot in Mississippi, and many local people were featured as extras in the production. However, it was overwhelmingly panned and also boycotted by the NAACP for “what they say is an effort to make Americans believe blacks enjoyed life on the plantation,” according to a UPI review at the time. The only other NBC station in the country that didn’t carry it was WBAL-TV in Baltimore.

I remember the anger that was directed toward my father. The Mississippi Film Commission released a statement against WLBT, and even Black actors threatened to boycott the station. I also remember my father never wavering, even though racial tensions were already high in the city and both the NAACP and the Ku Klux Klan held demonstrations that weekend over this and other incidents.

As a Black station manager, he knew the importance of the narrative. This narrative was false and, even worse, damaging. The Washington Post summed it up: “‘Beulah Land’ is not suitable for human habitation. The first two chapters of this six-hour NBC mini-series about a Southern plantation are so clatteringly, clumsily awful they’re pretty funny, but in the third chapter it turns ugly and hateful and leaves one feeling nauseated.”

Over the course of his time at WLBT, my father continued to make decisions that changed the face of the station. He hired Black people and women for both on-air and behind-the-scenes positions at a level never before seen in Mississippi, and he still brought the station from loss to profitability.

The norms my father helped break were set by small, elite groups that wrote journalistic codes at several key points in the nation’s history. These groups were overwhelmingly, and at times exclusively, white, privileged, and male.

These norms led us to believe that in order to speak authoritatively, speakers must sound like a white man from the mid-Atlantic, even when the speaker is anything but. People from other countries couldn’t speak with strong accents — unless they were British aristocrats. Black women had to have their hair styled in a manner that did not look too “ethnic.” And words from another language could never pop into the conversation — unless, of course, they were French.

Journalists can’t pretend to know the other or how to represent the other. So, the new norm has to be: “Others” must tell their own stories.

In Sarah Burns and David McMahon’s “East Lake Meadows: A Public Housing Story” documentary (PBS,

2020), there are experts and pundits who speak about the history of the housing development and its demise. But the story is overwhelmingly told by the residents who lived there. They directly share opinions, experiences, and viewpoints that allow the audience to understand firsthand what they experienced. McMahon and Burns, both white, knew that the story was theirs to guide but not to tell. The result is beautiful, authentic, and real.

Journalism needs to let people own their own narratives.

Too often, particularly in marginalized communities, journalists create POCporn, people of color porn. Like poverty porn and other types of superficial coverage, POCporn focuses on the shock value of situations and the “otherness” of marginalized communities, allowing armchair middle-class audiences to reinforce the stereotypes they already have of “those people” and “those places.” These stories may engender sympathy, but they don’t foster understanding.

A Netflix documentary, “Immigration Nation,” and a piece produced and reported by people of color, from Latino USA, offer a case in point.

The Netflix series starts with ICE executing a warrant, knocking on a door, politely forcing their way into a home and detaining a despondent man. We don’t know who he is; the only name we have is “Anna,” the woman who opens the door. There is mention of a baby, but the fact that this is a family is barely distinguishable. Later in the documentary, there are also the requisite “good” immigrants, who can prove their value to this country and therefore deserve not to be deported.

Latino USA’s story focuses on the Mississippi ICE raids in 2019 and is told by people of color. The story starts with a woman and her daughter and identifies their native tongue as the Mayan language Mam. As the report begins, we are introduced to the little girl, who speaks Mam, Spanish, and English and, at 12, is prepared to stay in this country if her mother, who wears an ankle bracelet, is deported. The basics of their story are translated, but throughout you hear the mother and daughter speaking in their own voices.

So, how do we know when we are hitting our blind spots? How do we practice journalism with humility and responsibly?

The simple answer to all of these questions is, by helping people tell their own stories.

We must incorporate, in our newsrooms and in our management structures, people who are the “other” and allow them to speak up when they see that we are on the wrong path. I have a colleague who is also a Black woman who has been in journalism for more than 30 years. Her method of dealing with majority blind spots in news coverage is to decide, “Is this the battle I will pick this week? Because I won’t be listened to twice.”

We need to listen more than twice. We need people of color to feel that they can speak to these issues and educate their peers without feeling that it will be a “battle.”

As a journalist and supervisor of journalism, my trajectory has been shaped by experience, frustration,

and ultimately a deep sense of responsibility to help get things right. I’ve learned from mentors, POC and white, how to be a better journalist.

Change will involve a level of humility from majority journalists and tolerance on the part of people of color. Yes, we are angry, but we need to use our anger to form coalitions and create large-scale change. We need not to spend our time telling people in power what they have done wrong; we need to tell them what they need to do to make things right.

Too often, we spout a list of grievances instead of actionable solutions. The National Association of Black Journalists focuses on solutions by not only calling out racism in journalism, but also producing an online style guide that sets standards on how to talk about communities of color.

As a profession, we need to refocus what we call “ethics.” Our current codes of ethics focus on objectivity and honesty, but don’t recognize that journalists are people with experiences, ideas, and points of view. A good start is to look at the codes of ethics for other countries.

The code of ethics for Namibian media includes the sentence: “While a journalist is entitled to have his own political and other opinions, the newspaper or broadcaster must recognize and give due consideration to the opinions of others in the community.” And the Press Council of India includes the following in its code: “The media shall make every possible effort to build bridges of co-operation, friendly relations and better understanding between India and foreign States.”

While these principles may not fit specifically within our ideas of what journalism should be, the position of the journalist in society can and should be examined through different lenses.

At the very least, we have to get our audiences out of their comfort zones and let them hear accents and different modes of speech and even a few words in another language.

Stop the production of POCporn by making sure that editors and reporters who understand the particular landscape are contributing to the shaping of stories. Veteran journalists have to learn to understand where and how their limitations will hurt a story. Let people of color take the lead when appropriate. Having one or two people on staff isn’t enough to address systemic problems.

Actively engage people of color on all levels and use community advocates and other people who work daily with marginalized groups to shape how things are covered and to identify what is missing. Don’t assume that one person of color has the answer. We are different people with different ideas and different opinions on what is needed. Listen, learn, and assume that the answers have the same complexity as the problem.

Most importantly, remember that journalists need to talk less, listen more, and realize that reporting does not mean digesting for your audience. Give audiences a chance to do it themselves. Our future depends on it. ■

Erika Dilday is chief executive officer and executive director at The Futuro Media Group



A protester holds up his hands during a demonstration outside the Third Police Precinct on May 27 in Minneapolis over the killing of George Floyd

mother both came from large close-knit Boston families, which like many Black Bostonians were sprinkled throughout the southern part of the city in neighborhoods including the South End, Jamaica Plain, Roxbury, and Dorchester. When we moved to Mississippi, we knew no one and had never been south of Washington, D.C. Many of our family and friends thought the reverse migration was dangerous and crazy. For my father, the move was his opportunity to make a difference, and he did not back down from a challenge. The rest of us were just along for the ride.

KEREM YUCELI/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

“STOP THINKING ABOUT A FINISH LINE”

Progress on racial equity starts with a steadfast commitment to constant newsroom evolution **BY ROB KING**

During a recent conversation on the ongoing pursuit of racial equity in our workplaces, a colleague asked a question we all should ask ourselves: “How did we get here?”

The answer, of course, is that while many of us heard the terms *diversity* and *inclusion* and *unconscious bias* and *microaggressions*, while many sat for training about these concepts, while many discussed the words and stipulated to their virtues, only some of us *felt* these terms. Only some of us thought about these ideas when we left the office and went home, when we went to bed and awoke, while driving or shopping or watching our children at play.

For some of us, fostering racial equity in our newsrooms is our second full-time job. Ironically, we can drop the other gig — the paid gig — on nights, weekends, and holidays. The unpaid gig? We can never clock out.

I learned this lesson before I ever set foot in my first major newsroom job. In 1987, I’d secured a chance to do the only thing I’d dreamt of doing for a living: drawing editorial cartoons. Yeah, the small print on the job assignment also called for me to do graphic design and general assignment reporting, but the cartooning carried the biggest headline (in my head, anyway).

Before making my way to the Midwest metropolis known as Danville, Illinois, I stopped by Gannett headquarters in Arlington, Virginia to visit with family friend and mentor Alice Bonner. She took in my enthusiasm over my cartooning job with a patient smile, and then offered, “That’s nice, Rob. But you realize that there are too few Black people in newsrooms for you to just sit in your office, do your little cartoon, and go home. You’re going to have to be present in that room, and you’re going to have to be there for others.”

I only *thought* I understood what she meant.

On my first day in Danville — at the age of 24 — I met my best friend.

Alvin A. Reid was two years my senior and one of a handful of African American journalists working at the tiny Commercial-News. Already married and established as a multi-talented reporter, Alvin had a handle on all of the workings of the paper and immediately volun-

teered to help with my orientation.

That process began with a trip down a flight of stairs to meet the newspaper’s receptionist, who was *not* a person of color. Near her desk stood a decades-old, wood-paneled check-in system. In a tone that suggested my IQ sat at the range of a 7-year-old, she methodically explained that when I was in the office, I needed to slide a button over beneath the column marked “In,” and when I was out of the office, I needed to slide that button beneath the column marked “Out.”

I couldn’t resist.

“Let me get this straight,” I said. “When I’m in, I should slide this button to the side that says ‘In?’”

“That’s right,” she said.

“And when I’m out, I slide it to the other side?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“Okay, I think I’ve got it,” I said, sliding the button toward “In.”

On the way upstairs, Alvin said something to the effect of, “Okay, I think I’m in love.”

Without Alvin and his wife Carmen, I wouldn’t have made it through the year, two weeks, and three days I spent in Danville. They dragged me out on weekends and remembered my birthday and listened to my complaints about a dearth of a dating life.

VICTOR J. BLUE/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX



More important, Alvin showed me the way to pay this kindness forward. As young and relatively inexperienced as we were, he and I became the mentors for our Black colleagues, some of whom were even younger and greener and further at sea.

As reporters, Alvin and I wrote quickly and cleanly, which gave us both time to read over the work of our colleagues before sending their pieces to our small, sometimes overburdened copy desk. We spent a lot of time teaching, asking questions, challenging our Black colleagues to abandon the notion that work stopped after hitting “Send.”

We also checked in on them outside of the office. I even let one new hire, a young sportswriter who had to spend his moving allowance on the car he’d need to do his job, stay in my meager apartment for two weeks. When my Dad found out I was feeding him on my \$225-per-week salary, he blew a gasket.

I kept thinking about Alice Bonner though, and moved ahead.

As I write this now, her words ring in my head like a form of tinnitus. I think of so many people of color and members of the LGBTQ community who rise to this challenge every day. Some are more senior in their organizations, and many are far more junior and early in their careers.

Despite the ceaseless white noise of dread and disappointment manufactured with nearly every news alert

or social post, we, the ones who *feel it*, clock in day and night, reaching out to one another, working to foster a sense of connection and community essential to withstanding the weight of the paid gig.

I believe we have reason to hope, as this present reckoning has seen flashpoints of progress and greater urgency to listen, to understand, to act. My greatest hope, however, is that we all remain resolute. In general, leaders have a bias toward certainty and measurable results — neither of which come easily in the realm of diversity, inclusion, and fostering a sense of true belonging across the entire workforce.

Progress — true progress — starts with processes that demand humility, admission of frailty, and a steadfast commitment to constant evolution. We have to create work environments that allow people the space to dare to be dumb and acknowledge our gaps in knowledge, awareness, empathy.

And while goals for better representation and responsibility matter greatly, we have to stop thinking about a finish line. There’ll never be a moment when we can all high-five each other and say, “There, that’s done.”

What we can do — all of us — is embrace creating that sense of belonging as a full-time job.

Let’s please get to work. ■

Rob King is senior vice president and editor-at-large of ESPN Content

One protester wipes away the tears of another as they demonstrate against police brutality in Minneapolis

WHAT COLOR IS YOUR READER?

“I look forward to the day when the subtle hints fade that a particular piece is meant for white readers” BY MARC LACEY

Every journalist needs to imagine a reader, someone to tell the story to. Of course, we all want many, many readers but keeping at least one person in mind during the writing process can help keep engaging prose from veering toward boilerplate.

If you work for a local newspaper, your reader is probably from the city where your publication circulates. If your newspaper is national in scope, your reader could be living in New York or Los Angeles or anywhere in between. Your reader — or listener or viewer — may be professional or working class, worldly or parochial, retired or hipster. As you mull whom you write for, it is worth considering this question:

What is the race of your reader?

For too long, readers in the mainstream media have been presumed to be white. I notice it regularly as I survey the news. White is the norm. And the writer helpfully lets us know when someone or something strays from that norm. The writer points out that the mayor is Black. But the city councilman’s race is left unstated two paragraphs later. A neighborhood is described as predominantly Hispanic but another area has no racial identifier at all. Someone is described as being classically beautiful or having all-American looks. Hmm.

With all the attention being paid to structural racism and anti-racism these days, let me say that what I’m describing I don’t consider to be racism at all. Rather, it’s a blind spot that lingers from the days when newsrooms were all white and readerships were presumed to be the same. As newsrooms become more multicultural, I look forward to the day when the subtle hints fade that a particular piece is meant for white readers, caught by the writer, excised by the editor.

As I read an article in *The New York Times* the other day about the many potential candidates that Governor Gavin Newsom might choose to replace Kamala Harris as a senator in California should she become vice president, I knew race was legitimately

going to be a factor and I braced for something to strike me as off. But I couldn’t find anything. One reason was because Mr. Newsom’s race was acknowledged as a factor: “In fact, political strategists say, the choice will be tricky for Mr. Newsom, a white man who would be replacing a female senator who is Black and of Indian and Jamaican descent in a heavily Democratic state with no ethnic majority and innumerable factions.” Often, it is appropriate to acknowledge that whiteness is a factor, however uncomfortable it can make us.

One of my former colleagues used to encourage *Times* correspondents to write their articles in the same voice they would use at a dinner party full of intellectually curious guests. He meant that we should be engaging and concise in our writing and that we should use language that is both conversational and highbrow. I found that advice useful but I’m going to add an addendum: imagine that your dinner party guests are a diverse lot — which ought to be far more common than it is in America — and that your goal is not to have any of them flinch during the main course as you hold court. ■

Marc Lacey, a former national and foreign correspondent at *The New York Times*, is now the paper’s national editor

ROBERT F. BUKATY/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



BEFORE YOU CAN FIX YOUR NEWSROOM, YOU NEED TO FIX YOUR LIFE

“Those bookshelves in your Zoom backdrop should overflow with literature that challenges your world view”

BY S. MITRA KALITA

If you are looking at this reckoning on race and trying to change your newsroom, I’m going to ask you to do something harder: Take a critical look at your own life.

There are no easy answers to solve for diversity, equity, and inclusion. There is only the work. Some actions you might consider:

READ. Maybe you’ve read “White Fragility” but what about books that center Black voices and experiences? I am grateful I grew up in a home with something by James Baldwin in every room. Some other transformative works: “The Autobiography of Malcolm X.” “Native Son.” “Beloved.” “Song of Solomon.” “Their Eyes Were Watching God.” “Americanah.” “The Water Dancer.” “The Beautiful Struggle.” Go global, too: “Things Fall Apart.” “An Obedient Father.” “Dreaming in Cuban.” “One Hundred Years of Solitude.” “Purple Hibiscus.” “Brick Lane.” Those bookshelves in your Zoom backdrop should overflow with literature that expands and challenges your world view.

At a June 3 rally in Portland, Maine, demonstrators gathered to demand an end to institutional racism and police brutality

BUY BLACK DOLLS. I realized as I went around my house the other day that my kids have a lot of Black dolls. Many are gifts from friends and me; others are their own requests, applied to the world they create, the world they want, when they play house, school, doctor, princess, office. Weave Black toys, books, and dolls into your children's lives or as gifts for others. Force an appreciation and accommodation of new perspectives at a young age.

CURATE YOUR FEEDS. Join groups or follow people who represent diversity (across the political spectrum, across geography and languages and race and class lines.). Do NOT label and box us off into some "diversity" list because we can see that on Twitter and it's annoying.

SWITCH UP YOUR VACATIONS. Learn history: All journalists should have visited the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture, the Equal Justice Initiative's Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, Martin Luther King's boyhood home in Atlanta, and Ebenezer Baptist Church. Ellis Island, Angel Island, the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. Olvera Street. So many Chinatowns.

ASSESS YOUR FRIENDSHIPS. Was your wedding invite list all White? Your dinner parties and other social gatherings? Do you know the names and life stories of the people around you, grocers to mail carriers? Do you help their kids land internships like you do your college buddy's? If you do not operate in diverse circles, it will be very difficult to diversify your newsroom. If you have gone this long without legitimate relationships with people of color, know that it might be hard and the burden of building is on you. Join one of the affinity groups for journalists of color (or all of them). Attend networking events (not just the annual convention). If you want diversity to infuse your predominantly white institutions, think about meeting us halfway.

ENGAGE. Did you choose to live in a town or neighborhood that is not diverse? Consider what you mean when you say things like "safe" or "quaint" or "good schools." Call out racist comments when you hear them or even after the fact. Know that the price you pay for your relative comfort is to be uncomfortable. Work to level the playing field.

LOVE. Look for the good in people who are different from you. See your children, mothers, friends in us. Think twice before speaking negatively about people of color. It is held against us in a way that is different from White colleagues, who get to have career trajectories based on the potential they represent versus the path of being twice as good. Shift how you see diverse talent so if you see Black and Latino names, you reach out and want to offer a leg up.

DIVERSIFY YOUR NETWORKS. When you contract a lawyer or an accountant, hire a real estate agent or a financial planner, find a doctor or a therapist, see this as an opportunity to diversify the business of your life. Beware of referrals from friends saying "I know a guy..." when the guy always looks the same. Be intentional about shaking up your networks.

REALIZE IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU. You must center Black voices even at your own expense. I advise my fellow Asians to advocate for those not at the table. Do not ask "what about us" and be so rooted in our own identity that you cannot recognize our relative privilege. This is only heightened for White colleagues. Some lines to avoid in memos and communication: "There's a pipeline issue." Or "We hired for diversity and thus had some performance issues" or "The best person should get the job" or "White guys have no chance right now."

BE NONTRANSACTIONAL. Consider holding at least three calls a week with random journalistic talent, mostly women or people of color. DO NOT interview them for jobs but simply try to soak up how they consume media, what they're reading/thinking, what challenges they face, what brings them joy, etc. This action forces us to get away from the transactional nature our industry usually has with diverse talent — "I have a job. We don't want a White guy. Please apply!" — and take a step back to forge more human, meaningful connections.

THE RULE OF THREE. You know that old rule of journalism that says if three things are true, it's a trend? Break that trend if it refers to three white people. Job candidates. Teams. Committees. Direct reports. People in the meeting. The bylines on the stories praised or mentioned. The folks assigned to the shiny new thing. Break the trend. Say and praise the names of non-White talent publicly. Check the room. Change the room. Who's at the table? Add more voices of the missing perspectives.

HIRE MORE BLACK PEOPLE. Do not say "people of color" or "minorities" or BIPOC when you mean Black. Say Black. Black editors. Black reporters. Black teachers. Black doctors. Black presidents. Asians like me might cloud the lack of Black staffers when we report diversity numbers. Let's get honest and more exacting on this.

ADD YOUR OWN ACTION. Don't just ask people of color for their thoughts on diversity. I've given you a dozen of my ideas based on decades of doing the work. This is not a checklist or a bunch of merit badges you earn, rather a path to baseline competence. Good luck. ■

S. Mitra Kalita is the senior vice president of national news, opinion, and programming at CNN Digital

DAVID 'DEE' DELGADO

RESPECT MEANS "LOOKING AGAIN"

"The story can't always be told in the heat of the moment" BY MELISSA BUNNI ELIAN



In July 19, Black Lives Matter Toronto activists held a press conference about the release of three demonstrators from police custody in connection with pink paint that had been thrown on three statues — including one of Ryerson University's namesake, Egerton Ryerson, a 19th-century Methodist minister and education advocate — for their associations with racism, colonialism, and violence (the other statues were of King Edward VII and Prime Minister John A. Macdonald). In a viral three-minute video clip, Rayvn Wngz, a Black trans woman, rified on the media.

"We have tried many different ways to get the attention and the conversation of those in leadership roles and positions. It took us having to [vandalize a statue] to get y'all to show up," she said, speaking directly to the press in attendance. "It's really ridiculous to me that we're still talking about monuments."

It's been some months since the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, and protests are still going strong around the country, though many don't catch the attention of national news outlets unless there is conflict, property destruction, or civil disobedience. This is exemplified in Portland, where protests never ended, but interest has only been renewed as federal troops have been sent to control the growing crowds.

Beyond the direct moments of confrontation, which are only a fraction of what's happening on the ground, there's so much more going on that tells a more complete story of the uprising.

When the board of the Authority Collective, an affinity group of gender-expanding individuals and women of color who work in lens-based professions, released our Do No Harm statement, we asked image makers to



consider Black protesters as a vulnerable group worthy of the protective precautions journalists often employ when reporting on at-risk groups. We also provided suggestions of different moments to focus on in addition to moments of conflict at protests. We saw how the focus on vandalism, destruction, and police confrontations dominated the first few weeks of the Black Lives Matter uprising. We said, "By only emphasizing conflict over collaboration and community, you fail in your duty as a witness, a truthful storyteller, and a concerned citizen."

A distraught person is comforted by fellow protesters on June 2 in New York City, the sixth day of civil unrest following the killing of George Floyd

As news photojournalists, we do our best to avoid illusion and misrepresentation. We understand the limits of our frame so, for context, we aim for photo essays. We also know that capturing an iconic moment can catapult one's career, which can inform many of our instincts about who, what and how to photograph. There are some photographers who go into these moments for the action shot — for the prize — which results in overlooking the meaning of the in-between, the interstitial muscle that keeps everything in motion.

So, when photographers and photo editors choose to lead the story with destruction and conflict, they leave behind countless other images that signify what this moment is about for the people who live with oppression every day, which should be the actual focus if that oppression is to be eradicated.

When David “Dee” Delgado, a Bronx-based Afro-Latino photojournalist, set out to cover the George Floyd protests in New York City, he expected more of the peaceful protests that he's been covering since the beginning of the Black Lives Matter movement. But once he saw the protesters directly challenging the police, disobeying orders and defiantly walking up to them, he knew this time would be different. The anger was palpable.

On the second night of curfew, as the eight o'clock deadline approached, Delgado and a few other photographers he often works alongside were following a group of protestors planning to defy the police's citywide curfew order. That's when a white photographer made a remark Delgado says was “burned into my memory.”

Delgado recognized that the protestors “didn't want to start trouble” but that one man was seeking revenge. “He was like, ‘There goes Trump Tower. Let's set it off on these m*****ers.’” That's when a white photographer remarked, “‘There goes an instigator,’” Delgado says. Delgado saw the man was visibly intoxicated and holding a liquor bottle. He saw something more and captured a different rendering of the pre-curfew moment.

“The white photographer is looking at him like an instigator, a troublemaker, and I'm not looking at him that way,” Delgado says. “I'm looking at him as, This is a guy that's hurt, and he has no other way to vocalize that hurt but with rage. [The white photojournalists] started photographing him angry and trying to antagonize the crowd. I photographed him when the crowd was calming him down and talking to him and telling him that that wasn't the way. [White photojournalists are] only looking for the anarchy.”

Black photojournalist Dee Dwyer has a similar story. “I can see they saw dollars and awards instead of using that time to understand the moment while they photographed,” she remarks of an incident in which she says two white visual journalists tried to push her out of a prime spot to document a protest. “I feel if you're genuine and care about what you're documenting, especially

in a time like this, you would not do those things. For them, it's just their money shot. For Black photographers like us, it's for the culture.”

Photojournalism requires a variety of techniques for various circumstances, spot news coverage being one of them. But spot news is a skill, not a permanent mandate of the profession. And from the standpoint of visual communication, it's wholly inadequate on its own.

In the past, it may have been enough to shock people into caring, but in our modern era of news fatigue and desensitization the shocking has diminishing value. The problems we face in this Age of Emergency are prolonged, systemic, and nonstop. A spot news mentality is great in the heat of the moment, but can become quickly detrimental when used as the only approach to capturing events that stem from a chronic issue. Protests are often in response to longstanding freedom struggles and systemic issues, so it may help photographers to adopt systems thinking.

Systems dynamics, the study of the interconnectedness of life, employs a “continuous view” when approaching problems. It's a perspective where “events and decisions are seen as surface phenomena that ride on an underlying tide of system structure and behavior,” according to the Systems Dynamics Society. This is especially important when visualizing social movements led by people who are overlooked. The news media's emphasis on conflict is part of a feedback loop that maintains stereotypes about the Black experience in America. Photographers of color are acutely aware of this dynamic and often create work to counter narrow and incomplete narratives.

Some people would consider this a bias but, really, it's an informed perspective that can be duplicated by out-group members — that is, white photographers — who use a continuous view to contextualize moments of spot news.

Social work researcher and author Joy DeGruy explains it another way: Respect. In her research of African-American male youth, she discovered that, after victimization and witnessing, the third highest marker for violence is a lack of respect, which she reminds us is derived from the Latin meaning “to look again.” Looking again is the difference between catching a Black person in a moment of anger and staying around long enough to see that person's anger turn into anguish and then into tears.

When photographing protracted struggles, the story can't always be told in the heat of the moment. When our images are myopic, so is the overall framing of our news stories. Similar to a camera's lenses, the frameworks we use in our work must be interchangeable. ■

Melissa Bunni Elian has worked as an independent visual journalist since 2013 and is a board member of the Authority Collective

DOUG MITCHELL

“THE PIPELINE PROBLEM”

Build relationships that will “broaden the look, feel, and sound of your work and workplace” BY DOUG MITCHELL

Some years ago, I was turning in my invoice for payment to NPR at the end of a month. I haven't been a full-time employee at NPR, where I spent 20-plus years as a producer and live-show director, since 2008. I was chatting with a colleague when it occurred to me that I've never explained my current status: an independent contractor with a set number of hours each year.

I think some of that leads to confusion, as during our conversation, the words “transactional” and “relational” were said. These words helped me better understand the role I play and what I see as a systemic flaw that's playing a leading role during this period of reckoning (“honesty” my preferred descriptor) in journalism and media.

Some people look at my work founding and directing Next Generation Radio as strictly transactional, meaning, I'm here to find people of color to fill holes in staffing. I don't entirely agree. And, that's not how I work.

Journalism and media are tightly focused on what I call transactionalism. Generally, we turn ideas into consumable products. We are trained — willingly, eagerly — to deliver such products to distribution channels on a highly predictable timeline. Our products are stories for digital download and streaming, radio, print, and TV. We all accept this, and we work hard to meet those delivery demands, all in the name of journalism, to “feed the beast.” As if this beast is a 19th-century combustion engine that won't run unless we keep shoveling.

I think this focus on the transactional bleeds over into almost everything we do, and for the most part, this is subconscious. These months at home have made me examine the systems and processes we use and adjust my thinking about our digital media camps, how and why we found our people and what we do that is “post-transactional.”

I think my work has evolved to be mostly relational. Meaning, sure, we find people, but we're now focused on professional development in hard skills (reporting, interviewing, editing, producing) and soft skills, personal and professional growth, mental health, and building the confidence to add value no matter where you sit at the table. We can call this work “community development.” For the last 20 years — and especially within the previous eight — we have built a small town of alumni and professional journalists who feel they belong to a community of like-minded people and come from a cross-section of very different life experiences. Our “town square” is NextGen.

We — myself and 70-plus working journalists and media makers — have been selecting and training ris-

ing journalists and creating pathways for them to enter public media, officially beginning in 2000. Since 2013, we have 450-plus NextGen alumni, and now professional journalists across non-profit and for-profit media, who have been part of Next Generation Radio. We've gone from a series of projects that created a community to a community that produces projects with a fixed lens on inclusivity. 72% of our alumni are women, and about 60% are women of color. Of the 15 to 20 trainees and staff per project, our average is for me and maybe one other to be the only men in the room. Our managing editors and most of our digital producers and editors are women of color.

Who are we? Our alumni include Lee Hill of WNYC; Taylor Allen and Paolo Zialcita of Colorado Public Radio; Stephanie Kuo of PRX; Alejandra Martinez of KERA; DaLyah Jones of the Texas Observer, and Carla Javier of KPCC. Other alumni include Audie Cornish, Shereen Marisol Meraji, Gabriela Saldivia, Nicole Beemsterboer, Jason Fuller, and Gus Contreras of NPR. We have 90 or so alumni working in non-profit media in the U.S., and one who hosts a radio program in Santiago, Chile. Yes, I keep a spreadsheet.

NextGen is ALL about creating and maintaining journalism relationships, not executing transactions. I've taken to using #WorkDad on social media.

During the past four months, I've concluded that



Next Generation Radio reporter Diana Khosrovi (right) of Salt Lake City's KUER interviews Lian Xue about how the pandemic affects her status as an international college student

NextGen is not meant to be transactional. We're not the supply store, and I'm not its manager. We're a collection of people who have a deep affection for telling stories of people and looking for companies, stations, outlets that are interested in our ideas and seeing those ideas through.

Going forward, when you're looking to hire a journalist of color, this isn't to say you should stop asking, "Doug, do you know anyone?" I know a lot of people.

But can I suggest you work at changing your script? Ask yourself if YOU know anyone. Seriously. Because, if you don't, whose fault is that? It's not mine. And I'm not here to absolve you of that or create a shortcut on your behalf.

I am a big fan of the author and dot-com executive Seth Godin. He often writes about the "drip, drip, drip" of slowly and transparently creating quality work and work cultures with cultivated and supported teams. It's called "the long game." It's a commitment to building the relationships needed to broaden the look, feel, and sound of your work and workplace.

Daily — yes, every damn day — commit, beyond public statements. Then, you will be seen as far less transactional and more relationally trusted. Drip, drip, drip...

And this is not easy. It's going to be hard, often frustrating. You might get angry, and you might want to give up. Recent Twitter threads by former and current colleagues, on blast at their previous leaders/workplaces, have shown the difficulty. The product and rapid delivery-based philosophies that guide hiring and promotion in our institutions are highly ingrained.

So, take responsibility and reduce your outsourcing. Make diversity, equality, and inclusion a business imperative. Don't separate it as if it's a luxury item or "shiny object" to be deleted when it gets tough out there.

As Seth titled a recent book of his — and it's one I keep on my desk at NPR — "What to Do When It's Your Turn. (and It's Always Your Turn)." Yes, it is. ■

Doug Mitchell is the founder and director of Next Generation, a digital-first, multimedia journalism training project

THE CASE FOR EMOTIONS

Fostering more empathetic, honest, and grounded newsrooms will produce deeper storytelling BY DILSHAD D. ALI

can't remember his name now, but I remember the abject fear of getting something wrong and having to face his wrath — the classic editorial anger meted out to a journalist who got a fact wrong, misspelled someone's name, or made some other cardinal mistake in reporting and writing a story.

I was a senior in the College of Journalism at the University of Maryland at College Park in my last semester before graduating, doing a reporting internship in the Howard County office of The (Baltimore) Sun. And I was on strike two with my editor, having made an error in a previous reporting assignment. This time, I had pitched and written a story on the *Qurbani*, or animal sacrifice, that takes place annually during the Eid-ul-Adha holiday, and how local Muslim farms and businesses handled it.

After the story ran in the weekend edition, I went into the newsroom on Monday, excited to hear feedback. Only it was my editor who called me to his desk, which was never a good thing. You only got called to his desk to either be berated or questioned about your reporting. I knew it was the former. The name of one of my interview subjects was misspelled. That was an unforgivable journalism 101 mistake, and my editor took me to task.

"We're going to have to print a correction," he told me. "And if you make a mistake like that again, your internship is done." I apologized, promised it wouldn't happen again, and shamefully returned to my desk in the back of the newsroom. A few minutes later, when

no one was looking, I slipped out to the bathroom to cry. That was standard fare when I started out. The relationship between a reporter and editor was no-nonsense. You were expected to do your work, do it flawlessly, swallow the edits made to your article(s), and above all, check your emotions and excuses at the door. The berating I received was humiliating but effective: I've never forgotten to triple check a name spelling.

A few years later, when I was covering the aftermath of 9/11 for Islam Online, a Muslim media site at the time based out of Cairo, I never told my editor that I was worried for my safety while covering various aspects of the tragedy. It just wasn't done. How to manage or be mind-

ful of a reporter's emotions — whether reprimanding a young staffer or addressing concerns around personal safety — was never part of the equation of what we were taught in J-school or learned in newsrooms in the first half of my 25-plus years as a journalist.

But now, as an editor running my own virtual newsrooms for the latter half of my career, it's essential to acknowledge one's feelings. Once upon a time, if I was reporting on, say, anti-Muslim bias and struggling to process my emotions, my editor would have probably said, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen." But to do that now is to deny reporters their right to own their feelings and apply that to their work.

With Black Lives Matter and ongoing coverage of other charged issues, reporters and writers are speaking up about racism they've faced on the job, opportunities denied them, how the stories they reported affect them, and the stress they endure in their work. These are necessary conversations. We are not automatons. Not only is it okay to have feelings about your work, it's essential to do so to elicit deeper storytelling, thorough reporting, and impactful writing. How we manage those emotions within the reporting/writing/editing process is how we build more empathetic, honest, and grounded newsrooms where better stories are told.

This weight is one I've seen my writers carry — and carried myself — in covering issues of race, xenophobia, Islamophobia, violence against women, and a myriad of other stories, especially as members of those communities themselves. All this has informed how I manage my team of writers and our editing process at Haute Hijab, a hijab company with an editorial arm where I have the freedom to coordinate comprehensive coverage of Muslim women and communities. I also spent much of my career working for multifaith and Muslim independent media sites, like Patheos, Altmuslim, and Beliefnet.

What I've come to believe from my experience is that the mental and emotional health of journalists should be a priority. With proper justification, journalists shouldn't have to take on an assignment if they feel compromised, not up to it, or are emotionally laden. Editors should also consult with writers on story assignments to make sure they feel they can take a story on. Yes, sometimes stories have to be assigned even if a reporter may be struggling. That's the nature of this work. But we can build newsrooms where emotional health is considered, too.

In a study conducted by the American Press Institute on creating an empathetic newsroom, P. Kim Bui argued that empathy helps journalists better cover neglected communities and issues:

"A newsroom's relationship with underserved communities can be harmed by all sorts of editorial and business actions: mishandled interactions between reporters and sources, story selection that takes a one-dimensional view of some communities, continual downsizing in the newsroom, diversity in entry-level positions but not on the masthead. Those problems can persist even with a press for diversity. But they can be addressed by a newsroom that embraces empathy."



That sort of empathy should be extended to what journalists themselves feel and endure, especially for journalists of color covering their own communities. In a Washington Post article, Dorothy Tucker, president of the National Association of Black Journalists and an investigative reporter for Chicago's CBS 2, talked about reporting on BLM stories in Chicago. While she considered the risks her Black community and family faced for "simply being born with darker skin," she said it doesn't keep her from doing her job: "But at the end of the day, I think we all go home and weep, and pray, and hope, and deal with the anger and disappointment. The attack on press freedom is disheartening on its own — but imagine the terror of wearing both a press badge and Black skin in this country at the same time."

As with most media outlets, we also upped our coverage of Black Lives Matter and specifically issues facing Black Muslims when the horrific death of George Floyd was first reported out of Minneapolis. Reporting on BLM, especially issues and stories affecting Black Muslims, isn't a novel thing for us. But like other media outlets, we realized we had a lot more work to do. We didn't want to produce stories in wake of the ongoing protests and then go back to business as usual. So, I've worked with my writers to continue to highlight Black Muslim women and explore issues of racism within Muslim communities, among other coverage.

Besides in-house writers at Haute Hijab, my team consists of four dynamic contributing freelance writers, all Muslim women, one of whom is Black. A lot of articles focusing on Black Muslim women and issues fall on her, some out of choice, some out of necessity. A few weeks after BLM protests erupted nationwide, with so many of us reckoning with our biases as a society and in our coverage of these issues, I had my monthly one-on-one assignment meeting with this particular writer. She told me, "Please don't assign me those kinds of stories for a while. I'm calling in Black." And so, I didn't, because her emotional well-being matters to me and because I know how exhausting it can be to write on issues and stories that are also yours to deal with when you come home. ■

Dilshad D. Ali is the editor of The Haute Take at Haute Hijab and the former managing editor of Patheos Muslim at Patheos.com and of Altmuslim at Patheos.com

NOT ONLY IS IT OKAY TO HAVE FEELINGS ABOUT YOUR WORK, IT'S ESSENTIAL TO DO SO TO ELICIT DEEPER STORYTELLING AND IMPACTFUL WRITING

March organizers Marilyn Aleem-Shamikh, right, and Moji Sidiqi, center, chant and march in St. Louis with about 100 other Muslims in a mosque-to-mosque rally in support of Black Lives Matter

ROBERT COHEN/ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DIVERSIFY INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

Having a variety of backgrounds on investigative teams is key to accountability journalism **BY RON NIXON**

The killing of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis, Minnesota has created a racial reckoning for the country.

That reckoning has expanded to America's newsrooms. Across the country, journalists of color have called out their employers for the lack of diversity. News organizations have responded by creating teams of reporters to cover issues of race and inequity across the country.

In numerous cases newsrooms have also created masthead positions to coordinate coverage and increase diversity across the newsroom. These are all good first steps.

But what remains missing in these newsroom changes are concrete steps to diversify investigative teams.

Media surveys done by the American Society of News Editors for years have shown that newsrooms overall remain overwhelmingly white, even in major metropolitan areas where people of color make up a significant number or even a majority of the population.

Comparable surveys for the racial makeup of investigative or project teams at major news outlets have not been done. But anecdotal evidence suggests that they remain overwhelmingly white and male.

There have been some recent hires or promotions at mainstream and nonprofit news outlets which have increased the number of journalists of color in the field of investigative journalism in both management and reporting.

Kimbriell Kelly is investigations editor for the Los Angeles Times Washington bureau. (Kelly was recently named bureau chief of the paper, as of November 4). Marlon A. Walker was recently named investigations/politics editor at the Jackson Clarion Ledger in Mississippi. Denise Smith Amos is the watchdog/accountability editor at the San Diego Union-Tribune.

Patricia Wen made history by becoming the first person of color to lead the legendary Spotlight Team at The Boston Globe.

Dean Baquet, who made his reputation as an investigative reporter when he won a Pulitzer Prize in 1988, is executive editor of The New York Times.

In the nonprofit sector, Susan Smith Richardson

was hired as CEO of the Center for Public Integrity, and Matt Thompson was tapped as editor-in-chief of Reveal from the Center for Investigative Reporting. Both are the first African Americans to lead two of the country's oldest nonprofit investigative news organizations.

Mark Rochester is the editor-in-chief of Type Investigations, a nonprofit newsroom that has done joint investigations with The Guardian, The New York Times Magazine, and others.

Several news organizations now feature young investigative reporters of color as part of their investigative or watchdog teams. Vernal Coleman is an investigative reporter at The Boston Globe. Kat Stafford is an investigative reporter on the Associated Press's Race and Ethnicity team, and Aura Bogado is a reporter for Reveal from the Center for Investigative Reporting.

Despite these reporters and many others, the overall number of journalists of color in investigative reporting in management or on investigative teams remains abysmally low. The reasons for this are many. In numerous cases, journalists of color aren't looked at as potential candidates for investigative reporters and aren't given the opportunity to pursue stories that would give them the chance to show that they can do investigative work.

That was one of the main findings of a survey of members of the Ida B. Wells Society, an organization that I co-founded four years ago to address the lack of journalists of color in investigative reporting.

ADREES LATIF/REUTERS



During a June vigil honoring George Floyd, held on the Yates High School field where Floyd played football in Houston, Texas, local residents and alumni raise their hands in solidarity

In addition, the hiring for many investigative jobs, like many jobs in the newsroom, is done through informal networks and groups that often don't include journalists of color. And in newsrooms, journalists of color are less likely to find mentors who can help guide their careers or create opportunities for them to be investigative reporters.

Several journalism organizations are also trying to address the issue, including established organizations such as the Asian American Journalists Association, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, the Native American Journalists Association and the National Association of Black Journalists, led by president Dorothy Tucker, an investigative reporter for CBS 2 Chicago.

Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE), under the leadership of board president Cheryl W. Thompson of NPR and executive director Doug Haddix, also has grown its efforts to diversify the field of investigative reporting.

In recent years, IRE has expanded the number of fellowships and scholarships it offers to journalists of color to attend national conferences and weeklong data boot camps. The organization launched a new yearlong Journalist of Color Investigative Reporting Fellowship and increased the number of journalists of color tapped to speak at conferences and regional workshops.

As I mentioned, the Ida B. Wells Society was created specifically to address the lack of reporters of color

in the field of investigative journalism. The society has a number of training programs, fellowships, and mentorships needed to be fully prepared for investigative reporting.

Nikole Hannah-Jones, an investigative reporter for The New York Times Magazine and co-founder of the society, said one of the society's missions is to "take away the excuse" of many news organizations that they can't find journalists of color who can be investigative reporters.

Why focus on investigative teams? Investigative reporting plays a crucial role in holding those in power to account. From Watergate to exposés of the Catholic Church, slavery in the seafood industry, the disproportionate killing of African Americans by police, and recent reporting on the Trump administration, just to name a few, investigative reporting has the potential to right wrongs, spark reform, and change lives.

In a nutshell, diversity in newsrooms can't just be about numbers. While it is important to have journalists of color in the newsroom, just as much, if not more, attention needs to be focused on WHERE they are in the newsroom. As we look to make newsrooms look more like the population at large, it's important that we don't forget about investigative teams. ■

Ron Nixon is global investigations editor at The Associated Press

THIS MOMENT REQUIRES RADICAL IMAGINATION

We shouldn't settle for diversity committees and revised hiring policies when it is ground-up, revolutionary change that we need **BY MANOLIA CHARLOTIN, CIERRA HINTON, AND LEWIS RAVEN WALLACE**

Since the recent uprisings, we at Press On have been hearing and witnessing an increasing sense of urgency from journalism organizations and institutions to address their internal cultures and structures that uphold oppression and racism. This urge is excellent news, but we see the urgency as a mixed bag: Urgency is one aspect of white supremacy culture, as defined by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun in their influential essay, “The Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture.” In this moment of reckoning, urgency can lead to makeshift solutions that often center white guilt and white needs rather than repairing harm, rebuilding trust, and centering Black, indigenous, and people of color.

We witness that urgency as organizations that have pushed out countless people of color move to bring in anti-racist trainers without first repairing the harm they have done; as organizations quickly hire people of color to fill new positions or quotas, without addressing the white-dominant internal culture; as individuals ask people of color again and again to do unpaid work to help change the industry. Black and indigenous people have been dying at the hands of police and state violence, and as the victims of pandemics, for centuries in this country. And they have been calling for change the entire time.

An awakening, as a sudden prioritization of diversity, equity, and inclusion without foundational work and structural change, risks minimizing the historical harm that has been done and producing solutions that are shortsighted. And with so many solutions in the field of journalism being borne out of the same oppressive structures, practices, and gatekeepers, this culture of urgency encourages short-term, Band-Aid solutions not grounded in community.

This Great Reckoning demands a transformation of the systems that got us here. The way we approach systems change is as important as the new systems we are envisioning. This calls for the kind of problem-solving that gleans from the lessons and practices of social movements.

We at Press On believe that this moment calls for radical thinking — for fundamentally reimagining the role of the journalist. By seeking a rigorous understanding of history, learning how to work collaboratively with shared trust and agency, and building collective power, journalism can rise to meet this moment in a spirit of liberation and resistance.

This rethinking is already happening in communities of color, and across the South.

When Wendi C. Thomas founded MLK50, it was clear from the outset that to carry on the legacy of those who sought justice in Memphis, she needed to prioritize journalism that would disrupt the status quo in her city. Taking inspiration directly from the cause that brought Martin Luther King Jr. to Memphis where he was assassinated, Thomas and her team centered stories about the unjust practices that exploited workers and enforced systemic poverty.

Initially, MLK50 was envisioned as a year-long project coinciding with the 50th anniversary of MLK's death. Being guided by the history of that specific community led to stories that held major institutions accountable and uplifted the local businesses with fair labor practices. It also informed how MLK50 would manage its team, ensuring that women and people of color got opportunities and that writers were paid fairly. MLK50 became a

ANDREA MORALES/MLK50

fixture in Memphis journalism, doing accountability reporting while also pushing for accountability from other news organizations whose coverage of communities of color has been poor.

At Press On, we support journalists in cultivating relationships with the communities they serve in order to develop shared trust and agency — and we see that shared trust not just as an outcome of good journalism or diverse voices in journalism, but as a key part of the process of reporting. In the Freedomways Reporting Project — our fellowship for Southern journalists of color — journalists report on communities in which they have deep connections, and our curriculum helps them build on those connections to develop deeply collaborative reporting processes.

This approach was instrumental for the stories Freedomways Fellow Aminata Traoré-Morris wrote about her South Georgia Gullah Geechee community. She spent months talking with people to find out the issues they were most concerned about. Traoré-Morris found that the artisans she wanted to profile were concerned about obstacles to continuing their craft. Land development was limiting their access to natural materials. Local laws against street selling were criminalizing their businesses.

At the same time, she heard from Gullah Geechee families in Liberty County, Georgia, where she lives, that kids aren't learning about their heritage in school. That led Traoré-Morris to write an article for a local magazine, *Liberty Life*, about ways to incorporate Gullah Geechee culture and history into the curriculum. In the process, she engaged with teachers and administrators who are now taking those ideas into consideration.

Shared trust leads to shared agency, which leads to community-driven action. The relationships she forged with members of the local school district led Traoré-Morris to organize the First Annual Lowcountry Culture and Literacy Forum in rural Liberty County. This had a lasting impact on how Gullah Geechee history and culture is taught in local schools. Her journalism was an act of community-building.

In addition to grounding ourselves in history and developing shared trust and shared agency, journalists can help build collective power as a means to building better news systems. Over at News Voices: North Carolina, a program of Free Press, Press On board chair Alicia Bell is leading efforts to use community organizing methods to reshape local media ecosystems across the state. After a series of workshops and dream salons between community members and local journalists in eastern North Carolina, residents started a newsletter to fill the information gap. And, as Bell often points out, the lack of resources local residents experience in terms of local news and information are connected to broader systemic inequity and racism. We hear a lot about disinvestment in news, about news deserts — but Bell says we can't address the problems of revenue for news in low-income areas without addressing income inequal-



MLK50 founder Wendi C. Thomas launched the site to continue the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. and to bring accountability journalism to Memphis

ity itself. Journalists and journalism benefit from more equitable power structures, which means saving journalism actually requires us to invest in collective power.

When we call for more vision and imagination in journalism, we honor Black traditions of radical imagination — traditions that don't call only for imagination about the future, but that require us to imagine a different present. People imagined, in fact, they knew, that a life beyond enslavement was possible. People imagined, knew, embodied life outside of legalized Jim Crow segregation. And right now, here, we must imagine, know, create our way out of the multiple disasters we are facing. Journalists have a role to play, not by imagining what is true or factual, but by imagining a new way of being as storytellers right now.

If imagination is using stored images to create new ideas, radical imagination is to uproot the images and systems we are given in order to create new ideas — thus a tool and a practice for decentering white-dominant culture. We can imagine and create liberatory media now. In doing so, we can draw on the movement journalism traditions of Ida B. Wells, Marvel Cooke, Claudia Jones, John Mitchell Jr., and many others who fought slavery, exploitation, and segregation through their words. Radical imagination demands that we value process as much as outcomes, understanding that focusing on outcomes often results in leaving the most targeted and oppressed folks out.

Finally, we must demand more from ourselves and our work. We need to harness the urgency of the Great Reckoning with intention, not settling for diversity committees and revised hiring policies at a time when we need ground-up, revolutionary change. Our intervention must get to the roots of the problems, not just their symptoms. As our colleague Mia Henry often says, journalists are always using our power either to oppress, or to liberate. How are you using your power in this moment? ■

Manolia Charlotin, Cierra Hinton, and Lewis Raven Wallace are co-directors of Press On, a Southern media collective that advances justice through the practice of movement journalism

SHARED TRUST LEADS TO SHARED AGENCY, WHICH LEADS TO COMMUNITY-DRIVEN ACTION

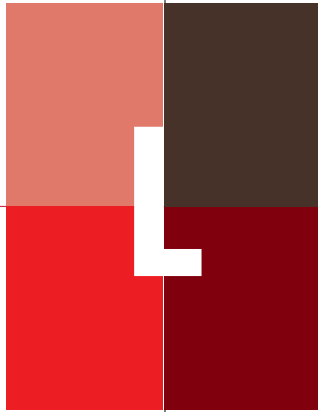
MOVEMENT JOURNALISM

ON THE MOVE

**Movement journalists
aim to produce
community-focused,
solutions-based
reporting — and challenge
the status quo**

BY TINA VASQUEZ





LAST SUMMER I found myself at the M.W. Stringer Grand Lodge in Jackson, Mississippi. Considered “the epicenter of the civil rights movement,” the well-worn building was once the training site for the Freedom Riders and home to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. It seemed a fitting place to launch Freedomways, a journalism fellowship prioritizing women of color and LGBTQ+ people rooted in the American South and committed to doing reporting that advances justice.

Named after the journal that published the work of Black freedom fighters, Freedomways is a program of Press On, a Southern media collective that supports movement journalism — journalism that meets the needs of communities directly affected by injustice.

I am now a board member of Press On, but I began with the organization as a mentor in the inaugural Freedomways cohort, along with journalists Ko Bragg and Cynthia Greenlee. With the help of Press On co-founders Anna Simonton and Manolia Charlotin, we spent eight months helping eight fellows tackle reporting projects about complex issues like reproductive injustice in Georgia and how Black history is taught in America.

When we first met the fellows in Jackson, we focused on learning about movement journalism, which required unlearning transactional and extractive practices and doing away with the myth of objectivity. Fellows were asked to conceive of reporting that centered the most impacted people, urged to think through strategies for engaging the local community, and encouraged to talk through the kind of intervention or contribution they wanted their reporting to make. We spent hours listening and learning from Press On staff, but the fellows and mentors couldn’t seem to escape teary conversations about navigating racist colleagues and toxic newsrooms in an already stressful industry rife with instability.

While we found solace in each other, there was a heaviness in the Stringer Lodge, a collective trauma experienced by journalists of color who’d been passed

over, demeaned, dismissed, and, too often, discarded.

There was no way for us to know that in a year, a nationwide uprising would unfold during a pandemic, laying bare systemic inequalities that would lead to a disproportionate number of Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people — the same communities that comprised our fellowship — dying from Covid-19. Soon, our country would be on the precipice of what feels like a revolution, and it would force the journalism industry to face a reckoning of its own.

I’ve tried writing this article for months, committing the ultimate journalistic sin of ghosting my editor when the going got tough. The problem has been two-fold: My own ups and downs in the industry, and the overwhelming task of defining an emerging movement that I am very close to but in no way the creator of.

My understanding of movement journalism and my newly-embraced identity as a movement journalist have been shaped entirely by the work of journalist Lewis Wallace, a co-founder with Charlotin and Simonton of Press On, and a report written by Simonton for Project South, an organization focused on cultivating movements around social, economic, and political issues in the South.

As part of her own fellowship at Project South, Simonton set out to write “Out of Struggle: Strengthening and Expanding Movement Journalism in the U.S. South,” with the ultimate goal of launching a media organization that would — in part — produce investigative journalism in service of social, political, and



Many consider Nikole Hannah-Jones’ “1619 Project” for The New York Times Magazine to be a pivotal piece of movement journalism

PREVIOUS SPREAD: KIRAN MISRA/PRESS ON
JAMES ESTRIN/THE NEW YORK TIMES

economic transformation, using input from organizers and culture workers throughout the South to identify under-reported or badly reported stories.

According to the report, movement journalism has several lofty goals; chief among them are prioritizing stories that amplify the power of people, producing news that is based on the experiences and identities of oppressed people, and developing shared political analysis between journalists and communities. Traditional journalism, on the other hand, regularly upholds oppressive and harmful ideologies. In mainstream immigration reporting, for example, more space is given to the architects of inhumane policies that brutalize immigrant communities than to the survivors of this state-sanctioned violence. Immigrants essentially become a footnote in stories about the circumstances shaping their lives, and the root causes of migration are rarely addressed.

What is needed now more than ever is communi-

ty-focused, solutions-based reporting — and this reporting is at the core of movement journalism.

But shifting into this framework can be especially dicey for journalists of color, who are often dismissed as activists and advocates if they report on communities to which they belong. In fact, when Simonton engaged older journalists of color around her Project South report, this was a primary concern. “They had to fight for years to have a certain credibility as a journalist at all. [A]ttaching some adjective to it, whether it’s ‘movement’ or something else, is going to detract from that hard-won title of just ‘journalist,’” Simonton says.

Simonton’s fellow Press On co-founder Charlotin does not have a traditional journalism background, and she’s never been particularly concerned about how she is perceived by mainstream journalists. She was a youth activist before she began working on political campaigns. More than a decade ago, she was tapped to be the editor and business manager of the Boston

Movement journalism is journalism that meets the needs of communities directly affected by injustice

Haitian Reporter, a local paper she contributed to after the earthquake that decimated her parents' home country. Her reporting focused on how local organizers were getting aid to Haiti. When she eventually moved on to The Haitian Times, she focused almost exclusively on community reporting that prioritized covering local movements that worked to improve the conditions of Haitian peoples' lives.

This was movement journalism, she says; she just didn't have the language to call it that.

"Movement journalism is about putting the community at the center. The stories have a purpose. They're supposed to expose, hold accountable, help do a narrative shift, or move something forward. We're not movement megaphones, but we are record keepers. We are accountability holders," Charlotin says.

To fully understand the framework, one must also consider movement journalism's Southern origin story.

For Press On, Charlotin says, it's important to make clear that the organization's work is rooted in the South and Black freedom struggles and aligned with current movements trying to change conditions and expose unjust systems. Press On's co-founders' articulation of this form of journalism and its political home may not resonate with journalists who work in the media anchors of New York and Washington, D.C. or people who see the South as a "backwards" monolith, home to "Trump country."

"Press On upholds the traditions of Black freedom struggles in the South because Black people have led every major freedom struggle in this country. Ida B. Wells [is] the mother of investigative journalism and movement journalism. Lynching was a terrorist campaign and she used journalism to expose it," Charlotin says. The South "is a part of the country that has always forced the country to look at itself more clearly. It's always been more radical. The way the oppression works in the South, it actually requires a different kind of courage, a different kind of principled movement, and a different kind of innovation."

I couldn't have known what Charlotin meant before I moved to North Carolina four years ago. I don't believe any place in the South is more racist than anywhere in the North, but I cannot deny the particular way that oppression slithers and stagnates here.

Reporting on injustice in the South simply requires a different way of working. I recently wrote about my evolution as a journalist and how I came to embrace movement journalism. What was missing from that story was the Southern context. It was only once I was in North Carolina building trust within immigrant communities in areas where there was less collective organizing that I had to learn to develop contingency plans and additional systems for keeping people safe. I learned to approach my work collaboratively and do whatever is humanly possible to reduce harm.

These principles — cornerstones of traditional journalism but of heightened importance in movement journalism — have never failed me, and following them has led to some deeply sensitive reporting that remains some of the most powerful and personally meaningful I've ever

done. I'm thinking in particular about a recent series in Prism, a BIPOC-led nonprofit news outlet that centers the people, places, and issues currently underreported by national media, where I am a senior reporter. I wrote about immigrants working in poultry processing plants during the pandemic, but the reporting that gave me the skillset to complete that series was developed when I wrote in 2018 about Colectivo Santuario, an undocumented immigrant-led collective comprised of people in sanctuary nationwide who were facing deportation.

After months of talks, organizers invited me to join an unprecedented gathering in Durham, North Carolina. Undocumented immigrants took the risky decision to secretly leave their sanctuary churches so that they could gather, learn to organize, and develop their own deportation defense campaigns. For more than two days, I was the only reporter in the room. It required an enormous amount of trust on behalf of the people in sanctuary and the organizers working with them, and endless negotiations about what was safe to publish and when. (It was imperative that the reporting was published only once everyone safely returned to their sanctuary churches; otherwise ICE could have detained and deported them when they were en route.) The series helped the public understand that immigrants in sanctuary weren't simply victims of the Trump administration, but rather leaders in the immigrant justice movement who were organizing for their freedom.

Because of Project South's report and the work of Press On, movement journalism seems at home in the South. But can movement journalism exist outside the South? Can it exist inside mainstream journalism?

Yes, but it's complicated.

Wallace is based in Durham, North Carolina where he is an independent journalist and works alongside lead trainer Mia Henry to run Press On's journalism trainings for newsrooms. Given the reckoning currently rocking the journalism world, Wallace and Henry are particularly busy with their "Strategies for Transforming Journalism" training, developed with the goal of pushing people in the industry to think beyond "diversity" and instead delve into the systems of power and oppression that shape newsrooms and the communities they cover. The training is part of a larger strategy to transform journalism by helping people in the industry identify and disrupt oppression in their newsrooms and begin shifting narratives.

These are tall tasks, and this work is ongoing. I've attended a few of Press On's trainings and recently helped facilitate a training for the Allied Media Conference about shifting narratives with Migrant Roots Media's founder Roxana Bendezú, all of which has allowed me to connect with journalists nationwide about their experiences. It has become very clear to me that mainstream newsrooms can feel like deeply unwelcoming places, both for journalists with marginalized identities and journalists sincerely invested in shifting narratives about communities of color. But there are powerful examples in mainstream media of people successfully working at these intersections.

In reporting this article, there was a single piece of



mainstream journalism that was repeatedly cited by the people I interviewed as a pivotal piece of movement journalism, the author of which has become a sort of positivity model for BIPOC journalists.

Nikole Hannah-Jones' "1619 Project" signaled the potential for a fundamental shift in the journalism industry. The initiative was published nearly a year before the nationwide uprising as part of the Movement for Black Lives caused revolts in big newsrooms — including Hannah-Jones' — forcing the industry to grapple with the growing disconnect between "a tradition that aims to persuade the widest possible audience that its reporting is neutral and journalists who believe that fairness on issues from race to Donald Trump requires clear moral calls," as The New York Times reported.

When I spoke to Hannah-Jones, a staff writer covering racial inequality for The New York Times Magazine, which published "The 1619 Project," I defined movement journalism as journalism in service of liberation and journalism that seeks to advance justice. I wanted to know: Did this resonate with her?

"I have never heard that term before. I have not identified myself in that way, but based off of that definition, it's certainly how I would describe my work," she says.

A fundamental goal of movement journalism is shifting narratives, which aligns with "The 1619 Project"'s goal of reframing American history and the way we understand it. Hannah-Jones says it means something when reporters like her use the platform of The New York Times to "force a type of reckoning" that the country has "largely refused to have." Part of what enabled her to tackle the task is her distinctive voice and posi-

tionality at The New York Times, both of which played roles as important as her investigative skills.

"[B]roadly it would be dishonest to say there aren't some tensions around that, tension with editors and other journalists. People within the institution are probably uncomfortable with how I operate, and they are maybe right to feel that way," Hannah-Jones says. "We're in an environment where people want to find reasons to discount our reporting and being very explicit about your perspective in your reporting can make journalists fighting for credibility uncomfortable. I understand that."

In other words, exact attributes that can usher groundbreaking reporting into existence can also be attributes that make colleagues in the journalism industry uncomfortable.

I have never worked at the kind of outlet that would have an issue with me openly identifying as a movement journalist, which is to say pronouncing that I do not adhere to the myth of objectivity and that I am consciously choosing to operate in and engage with the journalism industry in a fundamentally different way. For these reasons, I can almost understand why more traditional journalists or older journalists of color who've had to fight to be seen as "legitimate" may recoil at the thought of their industry embracing movement journalism. There are trade-offs depending on what area of the media industry you work in. Those of us who work in small, nonprofit newsrooms or as part of independent media don't have the same restrictions that reporters at legacy outlets do. Broadly speaking, we can openly question objectivity, for example, or tweet "defund the police," and at the end of the day no one is calling for our termination.

L.A. Times reporter Esmeralda Bermudez at home with her family in 2018. Though Bermudez doesn't identify as a movement journalist, her reporting on Latino communities resonates deeply with movement journalism's core principles

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Can movement journalism exist outside the South? Can it exist inside mainstream journalism?

While New York Times reporters have unprecedented access and extensive resources, the journalists who work there largely cannot operate as freely. But Hannah-Jones acknowledges she operates “in a unique space” at The New York Times, one where magazine journalists have more “voice and leeway” than those working on the newspaper side.

Part of this comes from the way that she has covered her beat. Hannah-Jones says her editor encourages her to do work that is “deeply reported and personal,” which makes the “facade of objectivity impossible to maintain.” But on social media, she also admits she’s more willing to reveal what she thinks about things and has been given the space to do that, perhaps more than journalists at the outlet who have more traditional beats. In my estimation, one of the true allures of movement journalism is that it doesn’t require journalists with more traditional beats to pretend they are not appalled by what they cover. While mainstream journalists may not embrace this movement entirely, it is my hope that it spirals out in some small way. For example, it would be powerful if our industry didn’t have to pretend that reporting the president “lied” about something was controversial.

Hannah-Jones argues that there needs to be space for outspoken people to do high-quality journalism at institutions like The New York Times. She says that for her, this means following in the tradition of Black journalists who could not be objective observers in a country that has tried to keep Black people from full citizenship. The “overarching argument” in all of her work is the same, she says.

“The argument [I am always making] is that Black people have never been the problem,” Hannah-Jones says. “All of my work is trying to show that the condition of our lives has been in response to conditions that were created and sustained for 400 years, yet we are posed as the problem when the real problem is that we are a country [imposing a] racial caste. If we could learn that lesson it could be transformative for all of us.”

My conversation with Hannah-Jones led me to think about the role of a reporter’s identity and why I was more apt to assume journalists of color writing about communities of color would more easily embrace movement journalism. It was a deeply flawed and unhelpful presumption, especially given how hard journalists of color have to fight for their reporting to be seen as valid.

This was brought to the surface when I spoke to Esmeralda Bermudez, who joined the Los Angeles Times in 2008 to write narrative stories about the lives of Latinos, which allowed her to tap into subjects editors once deemed “too insular” — even in a city where Latinos comprise half the population. I deeply respect Bermudez’s work and the way she engages the communities she writes about on social media. Learning that she does not identify as a movement journalist helped me understand that there are aspects of movement journalism already present in the basic motivations of many people who enter the field, including those who are invested in social justice or want to see more accurate portrayals of their communities in reporting.

Bermudez told me she imagines that openly iden-

tifying as a movement journalist would be especially challenging for reporters of color, based on how much readers already project onto her reporting. This includes regularly being asked if she is concerned about being “pigeonholed” because she is a Latina journalist covering Latinx communities.

“The question itself is just such a farce of a question because you would never ask that question to anyone of just about any other beat,” says Bermudez. “You would never ask an environment reporter, ‘You’re so attached to the environment, how come you don’t want to write about something else?’ It’s such a racist question, really, that only people covering communities of color who happen to be [journalists] of color get asked.”

Bermudez almost never writes personally about her experiences as an immigrant who came to the U.S. as a child in the 1980s fleeing El Salvador’s civil war. In fact, during her 12 years with the Los Angeles Times, she has written just five personal pieces and three of those were in recent months. Her first personal piece, in 2018, is about a stranger demanding she speak English to her trilingual daughter, and her second, in 2019, is about why she and her husband — immigrants from El Salvador and Armenia — stopped celebrating Thanksgiving.

It is this latter piece that lulled me into thinking Bermudez would embrace the title of “movement journalist.” The crux of the piece is about Bermudez and her husband’s discomfort in realizing their daughter is being taught a sanitized, dishonest version of American history. “[I]f we couldn’t begin telling our children this nation’s story, how could we ever speak to them about our personal histories?” Bermudez writes.

Even though her identities are not at the center of her work, they inform Bermudez’s reporting lens, which is why her reporting on Latinx communities resonates so deeply with Angelenos — and with movement journalism. It is my firm belief that the more layered a reporter’s identity is, the more nuanced their work. In fact, one of journalism’s greatest scams was making marginalized reporters feel like our identities are a detriment.

Jose Antonio Vargas says that when he was coming up in journalism, the mere fact that he was openly gay and not white made it “extra hard” for his work to be seen as legitimate journalism.

Vargas is an undocumented Filipino journalist, author, and filmmaker who has worked in newsrooms since he was 17 years old, eventually landing at The Washington Post where he was part of a team that won a Pulitzer Prize in 2008 for reporting about the aftermath of the Virginia Tech shooting. For the entirety of his time in the traditional journalism industry, Vargas was in the U.S. without authorization.

Keeping up the facade became too much, so he “came out” as an undocumented immigrant in a June 2011 essay in The New York Times Magazine. In the piece, Vargas sheds light on the complexities of living as an undocumented person and the painful decisions he had to make to stay off the radar of federal immigration authorities. In my eyes, it is a pivotal piece of movement journalism that humanized the usually maligned decision immigrants make to work using fake papers in a country



Jose Antonio Vargas, who wrote about being an undocumented immigrant in a 2011 New York Times essay, believes journalism can be a primary tool in changing narratives about immigrants

that has made it illegal to knowingly hire undocumented people.

In the years since his New York Times story, Vargas is rarely referred to as a journalist anymore, something that makes him bristle, given that his organization Define American operates from the understanding that journalism is a primary tool in shifting narratives about immigrant communities. Vargas says he is intrigued by movement journalism, but mostly because it’s what traditional journalism should have been in the first place.

“We are supposed to be fighting for justice. That’s what we do. That’s what we’re supposed to do [as journalists],” Vargas says. “I feel like in many ways what we’re fighting against is media as a corporate consumeristic capitalistic institution, when at heart it’s supposed to be about movement journalism. What we’re living through right now is the rise of countless movements: Racial justice and income inequality, climate change, the MeToo Movement, feminist movements, immigrant rights movements, the LGBTQ movement — all of this is at the heart of this changing world that we’re living in.”

This is an “extraordinary” time for journalism, Vargas says, one in which journalists of color are moving toward being able to embrace their identities in the context of their work.

Movement journalist Jonece Starr Dunigan says that in her newsroom in Birmingham, Alabama, this shift is happening. Dunigan was a fellow in Freedomways and is

a reporter with AL.com’s Reckon, “a place for big ideas and tough conversations about Alabama.”

For Dunigan, movement journalism isn’t just about the writing. For example, she has pushed important conversations to the forefront in her state, including her launch of AL.com’s Black Magic Project, which highlights African Americans in Birmingham who “embody the bold and empowering spirit of those who fostered the civil rights movement.”

Dunigan serves as a necessary reminder that movement journalists don’t just cover stories a particular way; they make a concerted effort to connect with communities and shift how their newsrooms operate. As a Black reporter covering racial injustice, Dunigan admits that operating in this way can feel risky, but to her it’s worth the risk.

“The work that I’m doing affects me as a person and affects my identity. People may say to me, I’m only working this way because I’m a Black woman, or you’re only working your way because you’re a Latina. Part of that is true, but the other part of that is that we’ve seen the consequences with our own eyes when journalism gets it wrong,” Dunigan says.

“We’re at a pivotal point in journalism. I don’t want to see movement journalism get co-opted or become tokenizing; I don’t want to see it being used as another tool for ‘diversity.’ We’re talking about a real reshaping of how we think of journalism; what we thought of as journalism may crumble. You have to be ready to deal with that.” ■



EQUAL PAY, EQUAL WORK

**Journalists' pressure
to close racial and
gender pay gaps
may be a boon for
diversity in the
newsroom**

BY KRISTEN CHICK

ILLUSTRATION BY PEP MONTSERRAT

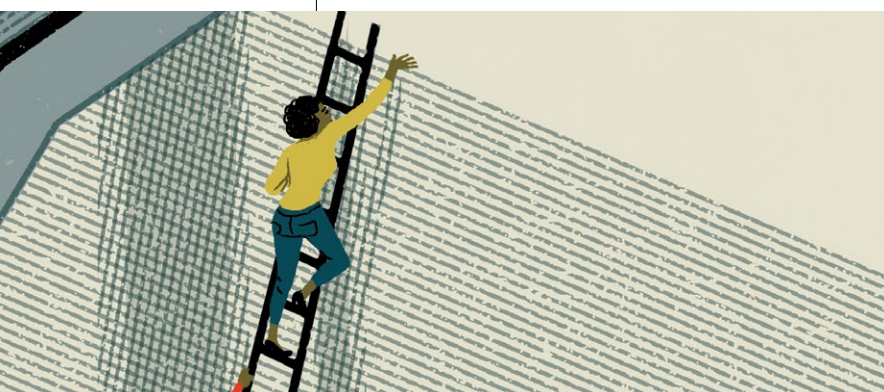
AS AN UPRISING against racism and discrimination swept across the nation's newsrooms in recent months, one of the issues raised at many of the organizations in upheaval was pay equity.

At The Philadelphia Inquirer, where executive editor Stan Wischnowski resigned in June after the paper published an offensive headline and dozens of journalists of color called in "sick and tired" in protest of long-standing inequities, the paper hired an outside firm to conduct a pay study, one of five actions journalists of color asked management to take to build a more equitable newsroom.

BuzzFeed also hired a firm to conduct an independent pay study after pressure from employees, including in the news division, that persisted after the company standardized pay in 2016, doubling the salaries of some underpaid staffers.

At the Los Angeles Times, where anger in the newsroom has also spilled into public, Black and Latino journalists demanded the paper correct pay disparities for Black, Latino, and other journalists of color, among other changes, and the paper is settling a proposed class-action lawsuit by six journalists claiming pay discrimination.

And at The Washington Post, more than 500 staff members signed a letter asking the paper, among other requests, to create a fund for correcting pay disparities. The Post disputes the findings of a union pay study spearheaded by a Pulitzer-winning data journalist at the paper.



ending the practice of underpaying journalists in internships and early-career fellowships for underrepresented groups, bringing them into newsrooms at low salaries that can lead to career-long disparities.

The refusal of many media companies to address the pay problem head-on has contributed to the current crisis in newsrooms: Inequity is one of the reasons many organizations have trouble retaining journalists of color, contributing to the lack of diversity in the top ranks, where decisions are made and coverage is shaped.

Just 18.8% of newsroom managers are people of color among the organizations that responded to the American Society of News Editors' 2019 Diversity Survey, while 40.5% are women. (People of color make up about 40% of the U.S. population, and women make up about 51%.) People of color made up 21.9% of all salaried employees at the responding organizations, while 41.8% of employees were women. The levels at newsrooms nationwide are likely lower, because these numbers reflect only the 22.8% of organizations that responded to the survey.

A full reckoning on equity must also take into account the extra, unpaid labor journalists of color are often asked to perform, such as translation, cultural explanation, sensitivity reading, and correcting their white colleagues' mistakes, as well as the way that resources are distributed. "It's about who in the newsroom is getting their ideas supported, who is getting resources, who is getting a travel budget, who is getting their calendar cleared so they can work on the big stories," says Los Angeles Times culture reporter Carolina A. Miranda.

Many journalists see the fight for pay equity as essential for the credibility of their work: How can they hold other institutions to account when their own houses are not in order?

PAY INEQUITY IS not limited to journalism. Across most industries in the U.S., people of color generally earn less than white people, and women less than men. Wage gaps — the difference between the average hourly wage paid to two groups — are widest for women of color. According to calculations by the National Women's Law Center based on U.S. census data, women overall are typically paid 82 cents for every dollar paid to white men. But that drops to 62 cents for Black women, 57 cents for Native women, and 54 cents for Latina women. Asian women on average make 90 cents for every dollar a white man makes, but the gap is much higher for some subgroups of Asian women. The overall wage gap between Black and white workers has grown since 2000.

Wage gaps can reflect multiple factors, including education, and an underrepresentation of one group in high-paying jobs and vice versa. But research suggests part of the gender and race wage gaps in the U.S. results from unequal pay for equal work. While pay discrimination on the basis of sex and race is illegal, it persists.

Workers can't fight pay disparities if they don't know they exist, and companies rarely admit to them because of legal liability. But union contracts allow them to request salary data for union-eligible employees. That, along with the leverage unions have to push for solu-

tions, makes them key to the fight for pay equity.

Jon Schless, president of The NewsGuild, a sector of the Communications Workers of America, says pay equity has become "a huge issue" with the thousands of media workers the union represents at about 180 news outlets. "We see it in a lot of the organizing conversations that we have with people who are joining our union," he says. In the past four years, dozens of NewsGuild unions, mostly in larger newsrooms, have conducted pay studies, says Schless.

The Los Angeles Times is an example of the pivotal role unions can play in the struggle for pay equity — and their limits. The union's 2018 pay analysis showed that women and people of color among Guild-eligible employees earned less than white men. Women of color, who had the largest pay gap, earned on average less than 70 cents for every dollar earned by a white man. Some of the gap could be attributed to the fact that many of the paper's most senior journalists were white men, while many of the women and people of color on staff were younger, and in more junior positions — a problem in itself.

But the study also found gaps even when comparing women and people of color to white male colleagues in the same jobs and age group. The gap between median salaries of white reporters and reporters of color between the ages of 21 and 30 was nearly \$7,000, and for employees ages 41-50 it was \$14,322. The gap between male and female reporters ages 31-40 was nearly \$5,000, and in reporters above the age of 61 it was \$10,669.

Despite the hurt and anger many in the newsroom felt when they saw the data, there was also relief that the disparity was finally proven, says Miranda, the culture reporter. The union's bargaining team negotiated wage scales and pay minimums into their first contract, after the sale of the paper to Los Angeles billionaire Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong. That raised the salaries of many underpaid employees — some by up to 60%, says Anthony Pesce, who was a data journalist at the paper and the union chair before taking a job at The Washington Post in June. The Guild also negotiated contract language that allows it to enforce California's robust equal-pay law, says Pesce. If members lodge a grievance, they are entitled to the civil remedies they would normally be eligible for through the courts.

Matt Pearce, a Times national reporter and president of the Media Guild of the West, which represents Times employees, says pay disparities will likely remain a problem as long as there are no pay ceilings and managers can choose to pay some employees more than the minimum.

A Black Times journalist who asked not to be named received a \$12,000 raise under the new contract, but some colleagues at the same level make more. The journalist was hired through Metpro, a training program for journalists of color that is a source of pay inequity at the Times because journalists hired from the program start at rock-bottom salaries. "So there's still that feeling that I won't be able to catch up to some people, which is kind of disappointing," says the journalist.

The Guild contract raised Metpro pay rates, and the pay minimums it established for the newsroom mean the paper can no longer hire journalists from the program

at salaries below that. A Times spokesperson said the paper is settling a proposed class-action lawsuit filed by six Times journalists claiming pay discrimination, which described Metpro as "a source of cheap labor to depress the salaries of women and minority journalists."

In open letters in June and July to Soon-Shiong, the Guild's Black Caucus and Latino Caucus not only asked him to fix pay disparities but to hire enough Black and Latino journalists to reflect the makeup of the city they cover, along with other requests. While Los Angeles is nearly half Latino and about 9% Black, just 13% of Times journalists are Latino and 5% are Black. The Latino Caucus also called on the Times to stop "relying on Spanish speakers and other multilingual journalists as translators without providing a byline or additional pay."

In a response to the Black Caucus promising to address many of the issues they raised, Soon-Shiong said the Times would review compensation annually "to ensure all employees are paid equitably. Pay disparities on the basis of race are unacceptable."

A T THE PHILADELPHIA Inquirer, pay disparities remain despite the paper giving raises since 2016 to underpaid individuals identified in the union's annual analysis of pay data. What jumped out as the biggest disparity in the 2016 study was a gap of \$10,000 to \$15,000 between men and women among new hires with five or fewer years of experience, says Bill Ross, executive director of the NewsGuild of Greater Philadelphia, which represents Inquirer employees. He says the gender pay gap among new hires has been closed and some other gaps have been narrowed.

Employees say the paper has not gone far enough to address disparities for journalists of color, and the lack of transparency left many employees frustrated. Two female journalists who asked not to be identified say they received raises they later realized were meant to correct disparities. But their managers did not say so when awarding the raises, and the women say they do not know whether they are paid equally to their white male peers now.

Now the company has hired human resources consulting firm Mercer "to conduct a statistically sound pay equity analysis and to help determine how to best address any issues that exist," says Timothy N. Spreitzer, a public relations consultant acting as a spokesman for the paper. That is one of the actions requested by journalists of color at the paper, who in June sent a letter to management laying out five steps the paper should take to create a more equitable newsroom.

Jonathan Lai, an Inquirer data reporter, says it's important the study be conducted by a neutral third party and that its methodology and findings are released to staff. "While I think guilds have done really important work in holding companies to account to try to address some of these pay disparities, they're somewhat limited in how far they can go," he says. "In order to really identify the systemic ways that the pay disparities arise, and to really be able to address them moving forward, the companies that can actually get the holistic picture have to do that work."

"NOW IS THE TIME FOR MAJOR SYSTEMIC CHANGES... IF WE CAN'T MAKE BOLD CHANGES NOW, IT SEEMS LIKE WE NEVER WILL"
MICHAELLE BOND
THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Pay equity is just one aspect of the larger reckoning now underway. But it is a key part of the conversation on diversity and inclusion, and it's an issue that journalists have been raising increasingly in recent years. Over the past four years, dozens of unions at news organizations across the country have conducted pay studies, proving what many had long suspected: Women and people of color often earn less than their white male colleagues.

Now more journalists are pushing their institutions to address these disparities. That momentum was threatened when the coronavirus pandemic dealt a devastating blow to the industry this spring. In the wake of pay cuts, layoffs, and closures, many feared news organizations would turn to a familiar tactic: sidestepping pay equity demands by claiming financial strains prevent them from addressing the issue. But the revolt shows that many journalists are no longer willing to accept that.

"Now is the time for major systemic changes at the paper," says Michaëlle Bond, a real estate reporter at the Inquirer. "If we can't make bold changes now, it seems like we never will."

Many of the efforts to eliminate pay disparities associated with gender and/or race are a work in progress, but already a number of lessons and potentially discriminatory practices have been identified. Companies should address the issue transparently and systemically, with steps like hiring outside parties to conduct a pay analysis to determine the extent of the problem. Manager discretion over pay should be reduced via wage scales and setting pay minimums, and scrutinizing biases in merit pay. Other initiatives include ending the practice of asking prospective employees for their salary history, which has been shown to perpetuate disparities and which is now illegal for some or all employers in more than 15 states, and

The union's most recent report, completed in July, says that average salaries for people of color are lower than average salaries of white people when comparing employees with similar jobs or years of experience, but it does not include those numbers. According to the report, of 24 people who received merit raises since March 2019, just three were people of color, and just six of 14 new hires at the paper in the same time frame were people of color.



“THE COMPANY SHOULD TAKE IT SERIOUSLY, AND THEY SHOULD TAKE US SERIOUSLY BECAUSE... AT THE END OF THE DAY, WE HAVE THE SAME GOALS”
KATIE METTLER
THE WASHINGTON POST

“The Guild has done tremendous work in closing some of the gaps. But minorities are still drastically lagging behind white reporters. That’s the reality,” says Melanie Burney, an Inquirer reporter who says she is one of those underpaid and filed a grievance through the union. A spokesperson for the paper declined to comment on her case.

In an email to staff promising to do more to ensure diversity and equity, publisher Lisa Hughes wrote, “We must continue to review our hiring and compensation practices, and work to build an organization that reflects the demographics of the city it serves.” Just a quarter of the journalists at the Inquirer are people of color, compared to nearly two thirds of Philadelphia.

Bond, the real estate reporter at the Inquirer, noted that diversity strategies must include retention. “We need to make sure we pay people equitably and make sure we retain our journalists and especially journalists of color,” she says. “It’s on the company to figure out how to keep their talent. I think a pay analysis will go a long way to show that the company is committed to knowing where there are inequities, and hopefully the company is committed to fixing them.”

AT BUZZFEED NEWS, the union, part of NewsGuild of New York, which has represented employees since 2019, negotiated partial furloughs to avoid job cuts in the face of the pandemic and the economic slowdown.

When BuzzFeed faced an internal uprising on pay equity in 2016, it conducted a pay study which determined the company did have pay gaps. It “leveled” jobs across the company, including the news division, standardizing positions and creating levels based on job title, experience, and skills, with a salary band for each level. Many employees, including many women of color, received significant raises, some up to 50%.

But BuzzFeed won’t release pay data, meaning employees have to take CEO Jonah Peretti’s word that, ac-

ording to his annual diversity update in 2019, gender pay equity is within 2% at “all of our major divisions,” and the gap between white employees and employees of color is within 1%.

The employee furor over pay inequities began with hushed conversations around the office or over after-work drinks that revealed stunning disparities. In March of 2016, Jessica Testa, who was a BuzzFeed News reporter at the time, and another BuzzFeed News employee invited about 20 women from the newsroom to Testa’s apartment to discuss the situation. At one point, they went around the room and each woman shared her salary.

“It was really powerful,” says Testa, who now works for The New York Times. “Even though this was a private scenario, we were making it a little more public than these one-on-one conversations.”

Three people at BuzzFeed News who discussed salaries with colleagues after the leveling said inconsistencies remained, and that without transparency, they aren’t sure that BuzzFeed’s claim of pay equity is correct. And when BuzzFeed News unionized in 2019 weeks after the company laid off 15 percent of its workforce, members said “un-fair pay disparities” were among its grievances. In July, after former BuzzFeed employees tweeted critically about their experiences at the company as people of color, and staffers raised the issue internally, Peretti said in an email to staff that BuzzFeed was working with an outside company called Grey Scalable on a pay equity review and would publish an equity and diversity report in September, and annually thereafter. “We will make any necessary adjustments to increase compensation as a result of this analysis by September,” ahead of when the company will start the annual performance review and merit raise process.

A company spokesperson said BuzzFeed will share with employees a summary of the report’s findings, but not the entire report, for confidentiality reasons. She added that in recent months BuzzFeed News made pay adjustments for some international journalists after changing the way it conducts market analysis to compare their salaries to those of global media outlets, instead of comparing them to local media in the countries in which they are based.

Rachel Sanders, who was the BuzzFeed News union unit chief until July, when she left the company for a job with the NewsGuild of New York, welcomes the company’s decision to conduct an outside study on pay equity. “I think the hope is that they continue to look at it all the time, and not just when they’re in trouble for it,” she says. The union still plans to conduct its own pay study, she adds.

WHEN THE WASHINGTON Post Guild conducted a pay study last year, members didn’t want to just illuminate the problem — they wanted to be part of the solution. So their study included recommendations for ways the Post could correct the disparities they found and prevent new gaps from arising. But the paper’s leadership insists there are no disparities to address and has not implemented most of the Guild’s recommendations.

The Guild’s analysis of pay for Guild-eligible em-

ployees, led by Pulitzer-winning data journalist Steven Rich, found that overall, women are paid less than men, and people of color are paid less than white people. It showed a 35% gap between white men and women of color in the newsroom overall.

Some of the gap appears to be a result of the fact that white men are overrepresented in the top ranks of the newsroom, while the under-40 age cohort is the most diverse. But even when controlling for age, the study showed that people of color are paid less than white people, with women of color experiencing the worst disparities. White men in the newsroom are paid an average of 7.27% above the median for their age group, according to the report, and women of color are paid an average of 3.26% lower than the median for their age group.

It also showed discrepancies in merit raises and in performance reviews, which are the basis for most merit raises — highlighting one of the ways that bias perpetuates disparities. Men receive a higher percentage of merit raises, despite making up a smaller proportion of the newsroom, and those who score the highest on performance reviews are overwhelmingly white.

And it found that pay disparities exist largely among journalists younger than 40 — which is also the most diverse age group. Alice Li, a video reporter at the Post and co-chair of the Guild’s equity and diversity committee, says that highlights how equity affects retention. “When people who are being undervalued are young women and young women of color, it becomes really problematic because you can’t keep those diverse voices within your news organization,” she says. “And our work is so much better when we retain those voices and really have those diverse perspectives included in our coverage, and in the conversations that we have about what we choose to cover.”

In the interest of transparency, the union published the study, including all the code used to analyze the data. Rich, who spent about four months working on the study, says he frequently advises journalists from other organizations on how to tweak the code for their own use.

Katie Mettler, a Post reporter and the Guild co-chair, says one of the most important solutions is “changing how the company pays people when they walk in the door.” To that end, the Guild recommended the simple step of removing questions on salary history and desired salary from job applications. Such questions are shown to perpetuate pay gaps, and many states and cities have banned them. The union also recommend-ed allowing managers to know how much their direct reports make so they can be aware of pay disparities.

Other recommendations include strengthening the Post’s salary review process, which helps employees understand how much they are paid in relation to their peers; reviewing the Post’s internship program; improving diversity at the company; and hiring a third party to conduct an annual pay study and share results with employees. And in a June letter signed by more than 500 staffers outlining 11 steps they want management to take to address discrimination and inequality at the paper, employees asked the company to set aside a pool of funds to correct pay disparities for women, people of color, and other underrepresented groups.



But the Post does not accept that those disparities exist. “We believe the Guild’s 2019 analysis and methodology were flawed and unreliable, and that the study they released is misleading to Post employees,” Post spokeswoman Kristine Coratti Kelly wrote in an email. “The Guild’s analysis did not appropriately control for factors like job title and job performance, and the Guild failed to simultaneously control for all relevant variables when assessing Post salaries, an issue that is clear from their report.”

Kelly says the Post takes issues of pay equity “very seriously” and believes it pays employees fairly. “We also have a robust process in place for reviewing employee salaries in the event that individual employees raise concerns.”

Rich says the study did not control for job titles because they are “an unreliable variable” because of how unspecific they are at the Post, and noted the study found that performance evaluations appear to be skewed. The response from management was “similar to the pushback I get on investigative pieces,” he says — critical without offering evidence that the study was wrong.

The changes announced by Post publisher and CEO Fred Ryan in June included some the Guild sought, including adding a managing editor and a human resources director focused on diversity and inclusion, an annual diversity report, and bias training. But none were specifically focused on pay equity.

It is not lost on employees that the Post can afford to address pay disparities. While many news organizations are laying off employees or cutting pay, the Post recently handed out a \$1,000 bonus to each employee to show appreciation for their work during the pandemic. In the end, Mettler says, ending pay disparities would be worth the investment. “The company should take it seriously, and they should take us seriously because ... at the end of the day, we have the same goals, which is to make The Washington Post the best news organization in the country,” she says. “And we do that by creating systems that ensure fairness and equality.” ■

1974

Ellen Goodman is the co-host of the podcast “She Votes!,” which explores the history of the women’s suffrage movement. Goodman, a former Boston Globe columnist, co-hosts the Wonder Media Network show with her friend, journalist Lynn Sherr.

1993

Rick Bragg is the author of “Where I Come From: Stories from the Deep South,” which was published by Knopf in October. The book is a collection of Bragg’s personal columns.

1994

Christina Lamb is the author of “Our Bodies, Their Battlefields: War Through the Lives of Women,” which was published by Scribner in September. In it, Lamb — who has reported from combat zones for over three decades — examines how women worldwide experience war, including addressing the devastating scale of rape and sexual violence in modern conflicts.

2010

Beth Macy’s “Dopesick,” her bestselling 2018 book chronicling America’s opioid

epidemic, will be adapted by executive producer Danny Strong into a limited series starring Michael Keaton. The series is slated to premiere on Hulu in 2021.

2014

Issac J. Bailey’s new book, “Why Didn’t We Riot?: A Black Man in Trumpland,” will be published by Penguin Random House in October.

Anna Fifield has been appointed editor of The Dominion Post, a daily newspaper in Wellington, New Zealand, a role she’ll begin in October. A New Zealand native, she had previously been a Washington Post bureau chief in Beijing and Tokyo.

Allissa Richardson is a fellow at Harvard’s Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society for the 2020-2021 academic year. An assistant professor of journalism at the University of Southern California, she will work to design a platform to ethically archive smartphone footage of journalist-activists.

2017

Jeneé Osterheldt is the winner of a 2020 Excellence in Features award from the

Society for Professional Journalists. She was honored in the arts and entertainment commentary category for her work at The Boston Globe.

2019

Mattia Ferraresi is the managing editor of a new Italian newspaper, Domani, that launched in September. He previously served as a correspondent for Il Foglio.

John Sutter is a fellow at MIT’s Knight Science Journalism Program for the 2020-2021 academic year, where he will continue to work on “Baseline,” his generational documentary about the climate crisis that he worked on during his Knight Nieman Visiting Fellowship.

2020

Anne Godlasky is the new politics and international editor at USA Today, focusing on justice coverage. She has been with the paper for over a decade.

Nour Malas has been appointed as a news editor for The Wall Street Journal’s Health & Science section. Previously, she covered economic development on the West Coast for the Journal.

**Introducing the
2021 Class of
Nieman Fellows**
The 16 journalists
studying at Harvard this
academic year are the
Nieman Foundation’s
83rd class



Bukola Adebayo
A senior producer for CNN Digital in Lagos, Nigeria, will study the media coverage shaping narratives that expose sexual harassment and gender inequality in Africa, where the #MeToo movement has been struggling to find its footing.



Yasmin Amer
Most recently a senior podcast reporter and producer for WBUR’s iLab in Boston, will examine how local newsrooms can use location-based media to create new interactive storytelling environments as a way to increase audience engagement.



John Archibald
A columnist for the Alabama Media Group, will examine coverage of police and crime in the digital age and how the changing media landscape affects perceptions of crime. He will seek to determine whether algorithms that often favor crime stories contribute to a culture of fear.



Joseph Bernstein
A senior technology reporter for BuzzFeed News in New York, will study the ways recent technological change has contributed to alienation in 21st-century American life.



Marc-Olivier Bherer
A staff editor and reporter for the Ideas-Debates section of French daily Le Monde, will study the weakening of the international liberal consensus, focusing on deficiencies in democracy exposed by the rise of the far right and exacerbated by growing social inequalities.



Austin Bogues
A reporter for the Asbury Park Press, part of the USA Today Network in New Jersey, will study the impact of political, cultural, and social polarization on news consumers and best practices for journalists wishing to engage readers in constructive dialogue.



Samantha Broun
A radio journalist and managing editor for Atlantic Public Media’s Transom.org, will study public perceptions and expectations of those who survive or commit violent crime and the role radio journalism might play in providing more nuanced narratives and transformative justice.



Emily Corwin
A Vermont Public Radio reporter and editor, will study how the wealth gap influences equity in rural New England’s judicial systems. For her Abrams Nieman Fellow for Local Investigative Journalism fieldwork, she will create a serial podcast that explores different aspects of the justice system.



Scott Dance
An environment reporter for The Baltimore Sun, will study the factors shaping responses and adaptations to climate change, with a focus on rural Maryland communities. As an Abrams Nieman Fellow, he will cover related stories about how climate change is affecting vulnerable communities.



Robert Frederick
Digital managing editor for American Scientist, will study how people reason about science and what evidence they need to trust that reasoning. He plans to develop interactive web projects that both engage the public in scientific reasoning and generate data for new journalism projects.



Sarah L. Kaufman
Chief dance critic for The Washington Post and author of “The Art of Grace: On Moving Well Through Life,” will study ways to connect arts and culture journalism with emerging media technologies in order to shape arts coverage for new audiences and platforms and increase the viability of arts journalism.



Vidya Krishnan
An investigative journalist based in India, will research how behavioral economics can be used to change antibiotic consumption and combat superbugs, with a special focus on the link between self-medicating habits in Asian cultures and the rise of antimicrobial resistance.



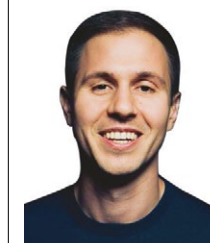
Willoughby Mariano
An investigative reporter for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, will study how post-World War II concepts of home and housing have shaped U.S. policy and finance, focusing on how shifts since the 2008 housing crisis have influenced popular ideas of home, shelter, and identity.



Amber Payne
An executive producer at BET Digital in New York, will examine the cultural scaffolding needed to empower marginalized communities to share their stories in a way that does not reverberate in an echo chamber but resonates across the borders of race, faith, and culture.



Alissa J. Rubin
The current Baghdad bureau chief and past Kabul and Paris bureau chief for The New York Times, will study the religions, culture, history, and literature of the Middle East, including Iran. She also plans to explore medical anthropology and poetry.



Maxwell Strachan
A senior features editor at Vice in New York City, will study the venture capital-fueled digital media bubble of the 2010s, with a particular focus on whether the investor-led pursuit of scale ultimately undermined the long-term sustainability of the industry and its workforce.

When the Story Hits Home

A reporter who covered news around the world faces new pressure when the investigative story is right around the corner

BY MATTHEW DOLAN

used to be the king of the N-S-A:

No.
Strings.
Attached.

I was single. I had no children. And I was a renter.

When the discount plane fare to Japan arrived in my inbox, I flew to Tokyo on a week's notice. When war broke out, I volunteered as a reporter to go to the front lines. I've had datelines from everywhere from Guantanamo Bay, Cuba to the Suez Canal to the DMZ dividing North and South Korea.

I always took my next job to explore the world, find the most compelling stories, and move up the career ladder.

Then I met Mike.

We fell in love, got engaged, and married in 2012.

But I didn't just get hitched to Mike.

I also became joined at the hip to his alma mater, the University of the Michigan, in my new hometown, Ann Arbor.

Mike graduated from the university more than 25 years ago, but not much has changed. He has gone to every home football game with more than 100,000 other rabid fans.

Our neighborhood is filled with the Michigan faithful. The university's chief fundraiser, who lives two doors away, made a special point to greet us warmly. The university's president sat beside us in the second row at the men's basketball games.

About four years ago, I left The Wall



Street Journal to join the Detroit Free Press as an investigative reporter (where I am now an editor).

Trouble started innocently one morning.

The paper's higher education reporter asked me for help understanding how the University of Michigan was investing its money.

The story about a leading public university sounded juicy and important, but would it hit too close to home?

I decided to dive in.

Discovering thousands of pages of U-M's financial records stored in hundreds of cardboard boxes enabled me to create a database of every published investment made by U-M since 1998.

Soon I found evidence about key executives at companies controlling university dollars. Many of those executives were also major donors to the university. Experts called it a major conflict of interest.

Billions of dollars were at stake. I found the university also hoarded money in funds

controlled by donors while some students were scraping to get by.

At home, during the months of reporting, Mike had questions: "Of all of the stories you could have done, why choose Michigan? And didn't every big university do it? Was it illegal? If not, what was the big deal?"

I didn't feel comfortable telling him what I had found until I published. But I was anxious.

Living in Ann Arbor, living with Mike, every word of every story would be subject to scrutiny by the Michigan faithful.

When we published our stories, the impact was immediate. The university criticized our reporting, complained to the paper's editor, and demanded retractions and apologies. But we stood by our stories and didn't issue any corrections. And the university under pressure enacted reforms.

Whistleblowers inside the university leaked internal documents to us about more financial problems. More stories came and more reforms followed.

Finally, we found two members of the university's board of directors had accepted political donations from those who had received university investments. They lost their re-election bids after the stories came out.

What about the impact closer to home? Jerry, the university's fundraiser, stopped waving to me when I walked our dogs by his house (He has warmed up since his retirement.). The university president fell silent as he shuffled by my basketball seat.

I realized there was a new cost to this kind of watchdog reporting. I was confident the stories were a public service, but was it worth making myself an outcast? I had faith in the work I've done that the tradeoff that would be worth it. And the extra pressure I felt to make sure every word and headline was accurate and in the right context only helped my journalism.

As for Mike? He learned more about why I did what I did and in the end thought I was fair and balanced. When the stories received acclaim with readers and contests, he said he was proud.

When I started my next investigative story, Mike had only one question for me: How come I wasn't pursuing something as exciting a subject as the University of Michigan? ■

Matthew Dolan, a 2020 Abrams Nieman Fellow for Investigative Journalism, is an investigations editor at the Detroit Free Press



AFTERIMAGE

"I met this family at a prayer vigil they held outside the hospital for Leonor "Nora" Rangel, who was on a ventilator. Wearing an N95 mask, I was allowed into the home of her daughter Vanessa Dyer, her sister, Alex, and their father, Enrique, who had recovered from Covid-19, as they talked to Nora on Facetime. This moment evolved as Andy, another sibling, also on Facetime at his home, told their mother if she was tired it was okay to go. She had been in the hospital for 37 days and on a ventilator for 17. She passed that Sunday with her family by her side on Facetime."

Lisa Krantz, a 2020 Nieman Fellow and photographer for the San Antonio Express-News

NIEMAN ONLINE

NiemanReports

The Risks of Relying on Citizen Journalists to Cover the War in Syria

In an excerpt from her research on coverage of Syria's civil war, Megan Lebowitz examines how, after Assad's regime made the country inaccessible for journalists, citizens stepped in, creating safety concerns and ethical dilemmas.

NiemanLab

A New Era at The New York Times

As Meredith Kopit Levien takes over from her mentor Mark Thompson as CEO of The New York Times, news analyst Ken Doctor examines how she and Thompson have built the Times into a world-class digital media business, and talks to Levien about what's ahead in her new role.

NiemanStoryboard

The Enduring Power of the First "Nonfiction" Novel

Seventy-five years after the dropping of the world's first atomic bomb in Japan, a look back at John Hersey's taut, unflinching book "Hiroshima," which tells the stories of six survivors and remains a masterpiece of narrative reporting.

THE NEWSROOMS WE NEED

NOW

Dilshad D. Ali **Emotions are OK in newsrooms** Melissa Bunni Elian **Respect means “looking again”**

Manolia Charlotin, Cierra Hinton, and Lewis Raven Wallace **Make radical changes**

Erika Dilday **Let communities own the story** S. Mitra Kalita **First, fix your life** Rob King **Commit to constant evolution**

Marc Lacey **What color is your reader?** Doug Mitchell **Make your own pipeline** Ron Nixon **Diversify investigative teams**