Nieman

A NEW FOCUS
Why we need more visual journalists and editors of color
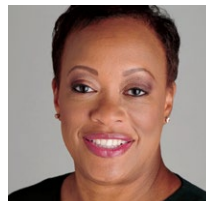
Contributors

Tara Pixley (page 22), a 2016 Knight Visiting Nieman Fellow, is a freelance photojournalist, documentary filmmaker, photo editor, and media studies scholar. She has worked with Newsweek, The New York Times, and CNN Digital. She is completing a Ph.D. in visual media studies at University of California San Diego. Her research examines how news imagery reinforces implicit bias and the role of digital images in contemporary news coverage.

John Dyer (page 8) is a deputy editor for Associated Reporters Abroad. His work has appeared in The Boston Globe, USA Today, and Vice News. His experience as a journalism professor at universities in the Balkans made him all too familiar him with the difficulties of teaching news literacy.

Maggie Koerth-Baker (page 14), a 2015 Nieman Fellow, is a senior science writer for FiveThirtyEight. Previously, she was a columnist for The New York Times Magazine and science editor at BoingBoing.net. Her work has appeared in Discover, Popular Science, and other publications.

Debra Adams Simmons (page 36), a 2016 Nieman Fellow, is a contributing editor and media consultant for news organizations and foundations. She previously was vice president of news development at Advance Local, the parent company for a group of metro news organizations.
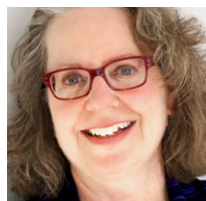
Ricki Morell (page 44) is a Boston-based journalist who has written for The New York Times, The Boston Globe, The Wall Street Journal, WBUR's CommonHealth website, and The Hechinger Report, among other publications. Previously she was a reporter for The Charlotte Observer.

Feyisola Oduyebo gets ready for her prom in Brooklyn, New York. More visual journalism that evades stereotypical depictions is sorely needed

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COVER: Monrovia, Liberia, 2016
Yagazie Emezi/Native Agency

The Sting of the Lie

For reporters, deception often is a formative experience

BY ANN MARIE LIPINSKI

Asked about clergy abuse in Boston, Cardinal Bernard F. Law repeatedly denied any knowledge

I FIRST READ THE LIE UNDER A COMPETITOR'S byline: the results of DNA testing on a rape case I was covering. My reporting partner and I didn't know it was false but believed we'd been beaten on a story. We phoned the source, who repeated the lie, and we put it in the paper.

I was a young reporter, this was a long time ago, and some of the details of the deception have faded. What I can't forget is the mix of fury and nausea that followed the realization that a public official had intentionally deceived us and, in turn, our readers, on a matter of criminal consequence. The official died in my eyes as a source that day, a protest that did no damage to his career. Of lasting consequence was the effect the story had on me. I acquired a wariness that I wore like a second skin, baptized into a fraternity defined by the motto of the old City News Bureau of Chicago: If your mother says she loves you, check it out.

Recent attacks on journalists as lying, fake, and failing have rained down from the White House, echoed by an approving chorus of political courtiers and sycophants. In an especially twisted display, some Donald Trump supporters resurrected a Nazi term for lying press, "Lügenpresse." Many of these same accusers will routinely supersize a crowd estimate or issue unsubstantiated claims of wiretapping, seemingly without irony.

Certainly there are bad reporters and editors. Journalists themselves will call out the cheats among us and make public the wrongdoing, a value codified in the work of media critics, ombudsmen, and public

editors. But the bigger scandal is found in the everyday fraud that officials and story subjects try to perpetrate upon journalists and, by extension, the public. While news organizations debate whether it is appropriate to use the word "lies" to describe the president's baseless claims, reporters on lower profile beats are routinely facing down deceptive sources with less fanfare.

I've been asking journalists to tell me their stories of being lied to on assignment. In emails, Facebook posts, and private conversations, they've confirmed what other journalists might suspect but that the average news consumer may underestimate. People lie to us—a lot—and in surprising ways. We don't always catch them.

A Boston writer told me he interviewed a man who misappropriated someone else's data "so he could get mentioned in The New York Times." A feature subject gave a Chicago writer his boss's name rather than his own because he "thought it would be funny." A journalist in Warsaw found that

After being lied to by a source as a young reporter, I acquired a wariness that I wore like a second skin

a war camp survivor's elaborate biography crumbled upon examination. A reporter profiled a congressman who claimed graduation from a prestigious university—not the school's summer course for undertakers.

I was struck that the sting of the lie was not dependent on the scale of the story—or even whether the falsehood had been published. Pulitzer Prize winner Julia Keller wrote me of an incident early in her career that she regarded as both "trivial compared to other" tales of betrayal, yet still a "watershed" in her journalistic development. She had phoned a Columbus TV station to check a rumor that a popular anchor had been fired. The general manager denied it and Keller moved on, only to discover later that he'd already sacked the anchor.

"I called the GM and said, 'But you said'— and he replied, 'I lied.' And he laughed," recalled Keller. "It was the laugh that got to me. I was in my early 20s and the idea of being deliberately lied to was just unthinkable. I can't believe I was ever that innocent."

The Nieman Foundation recently hosted a discussion among four of the country's most decorated investigative reporters and I asked them if they could recount a deception that formed them as journalists. No one hesitated.

The Chicago Tribune's Michael J. Berens described being "greatly embarrassed" by lies he unwittingly published while covering the police beat early in his career. Once,

cops took credit for catching a rapist who in fact had been captured by the victim's family. "It's actually what drove me to investigative reporting," he said.

The New York Times's Audra Burch, who once investigated the deaths of children in Florida's welfare system for the Miami Herald, recalled the discrepancies between what state officials told her and what she could plainly see in records. "What I have does not match what you're saying," she explained to them.

The Washington Post's Dana Priest, winner of two Pulitzers, described her search for the "many good people in government who want to do the right thing, who don't like lying" and her avoidance of Washington's "huge public affairs apparatus." She said, "They are there... to spin you, and if that includes lying to you, so be it."

The Boston Globe's Michael Rezendes was on the Spotlight team that won a Pulitzer for its investigation into sexual abuse by Catholic priests. More than 14 years after Cardinal Bernard F. Law resigned as Boston's archbishop, Rezendes still seemed disquieted by the memory of Law's notorious denials of clergy abuse. "It was extraordinary to see this man, the moral authority of our community, get up and lie over and over again," Rezendes said.

I asked Rezendes how that impacted him. "Well, I like to say I'm not cynical," he answered, "but I am skeptical pretty much all the time."

He describes many of us. Sometimes I'll listen to press conferences or televised interviews and detect an indignation beating just beneath the surface of the questions. I know how it looks—that journalists are combative. But often, I think, it springs from an impatience for the truth and too much familiarity with its enemy. We should be more transparent about these experiences that have formed us. We should be more emphatic about the value of skepticism in the public interest.

Reporting requires a curious crouch— open to people's stories at the same time we're steeled against deceit. It's a worthy pose. ∎

Ann Marie Lipinski, a 1990 Nieman Fellow, is curator of the Nieman Foundation

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Have you been lied to as a journalist?
Send your story to nreditor@harvard.edu.

HONORING JOURNALISM THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

The Nieman Foundation this spring recognized winners of three journalism awards and, in concert with the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, honored authors of two books and a work-in-progress.

I.F. Stone Medal for Journalistic Independence

Victor S. Navasky is the winner of the 2017 I.F. Stone Medal for Journalistic Independence in recognition of his dedication to journalistic integrity throughout his career and for speaking truth to power beyond the confines of mainstream media. Publisher emeritus of The Nation, Navasky spent nearly three decades at the helm of the weekly magazine, first as editor and then as publisher. Established in 2008, the I.F. Stone Medal honors the life of investigative journalist I.F. Stone.

Taylor Family Award for Fairness in Journalism

The Oregonian/OregonLive won the 2016 Taylor Family Award for Fairness in Journalism for "Toxic Armories," Rob Davis's series exposing that hundreds of National Guard armories across the U.S. have been contaminated by dangerous levels of lead dust from indoor gun ranges. Taylor judge Michael Grabell said the series "demonstrated fairness by doing something that the National Guard had failed to do: informing the public that they had been exposed to dangerous levels of lead that the military had known about for years, but did little to stop." The Taylor Family Award for Fairness in Journalism was established by members of the Taylor family, who published The Boston Globe from 1872 to 1999, to encourage fairness in journalism.

Worth Bingham Prize for Investigative Journalism

The Chicago Tribune won the 2016 Worth Bingham Prize for Investigative Journalism for "Suffering in Secret," a three-part series resulting from a yearlong investigation into the abuse and neglect of adults with disabilities in Illinois. The series, by reporters Michael J. Berens and Patricia Callahan, led to reforms and new protections for that population. The Worth Bingham Prize honors investigative reporting of stories of national significance where the public interest is being ill-served.

J. Anthony Lukas Prize Project

Gary Younge won the J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize for "Another Day in the Death of America: A Chronicle of Ten Short Lives." **Tyler Anbinder** won the Mark Lynton History Prize for "City of Dreams: The 400-Year Epic History of Immigrant New York," and **Christopher Leonard** won the J. Anthony Lukas Work-in-Progress Award for "Kochland" about Koch Industries. The Lukas Prize Project, established in 1998 and co-administered by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, honors the best in American nonfiction writing.

S. Mitra Kalita: "[The] diversity theme that runs through my career ... really is how I live my life and how I commit journalism"

The VP for programming at CNN Digital on bringing change to the LA Times, experimenting on different platforms, and her company's role in the digital age

A LEADER IN DIGITAL INNO-vation and editorial strategy, S. Mitra Kalita has had reporting jobs and leadership roles at news organizations spanning multiple platforms and locales, from New York to D.C. to India to L.A. She's worked for The Washington Post, Newsday, and the Associated Press, and was the founding editor of Mint, a business paper in New Delhi. After directing global economics coverage at The Wall Street Journal, she was the executive editor at large—as well as the first ideas editor—at Quartz, where she helped oversee the launches of Quartz India and Quartz Africa. Most recently, Kalita was the managing editor for editorial strategy at the Los Angeles Times, helping latimes.com traffic nearly double in the year she was there, reaching nearly 60 million unique monthly visitors in 2016.

Currently Kalita is the vice president for programming for CNN Digital, a role which she assumed last June. Leading CNN Digital's efforts to share content across platforms, she also oversees the network's News & Alerting, Projects & New Initiatives, Mobile & Off-Platform, and Real-Time News teams.

Kalita spoke at the Nieman Foundation in March. Edited excerpts:

On the refrain of her career

There's a diversity theme that runs through my career. It's not a strategy. It's not just a thing I talk about at conferences, but it really is how I live my life and how I commit journalism.

I think part of the reason is because of how I got into journalism. When I was 16 years old, I attended a minorities journalism workshop. On the first night, they gathered the group of us, kids from across New Jersey who all had worked on their high school newspapers. We watched a movie called "Boyz n the Hood" as an activity in the dorm. There was the scene that changed everything, [where the character played by Ice Cube says of society and, more pointedly, the media,] "They don't know. They don't show. They don't care about what's going on in the hood." Basically, he's just saying no one cares about us. No one cares about people in the hood.

"They don't know, they don't show"—those words just penetrated me. It was partly the environment. You're probably the most idealistic you're going to be when you're 16. So I thought: If I were to just show stories and show people themselves, what would that look like? "They don't show" has been the refrain of my career.

On CNN in the digital age

I used to think of CNN as like a utility. Something happens and you turn to CNN. That's such amazing power and reach. What does that look like in a mobile age? Is it actually that [mobile] isn't the second screen for a CNN, but is the first? These are the philosophical questions that we talk about.

As we're trying to cover this administration, it plays into design decisions that we're making. For example, our homepage used to be largely driven by one big story. But what do you do on a day when Trump is giving a press conference, Steve Bannon might be at the National Security Council, there's a congressional hearing for a cabinet confirmation, and we're trying to offer context of what this all means? You'll see that the CNN homepage now might look busy, but I would like to think that our design and philosophy show an ability to be in many places at once. We don't have the one story imperative of television.

On change at the LA Times

Moving to the LA Times from Quartz was the chance to take the lessons of a start-up environment, specifically a digitally native outlet, [and apply them to local journalism].

I felt like I might be able to have the newspaper's coverage reflect the phenomenon of our times, which might mean not covering beats, buildings, or institutions in the traditional way. LA, which is so vibrant and so creative, is a majority-minority city. So, it felt like a tremendous opportunity to draw on all of my lessons about communities of coverage and having those communities inform your storytelling along the way as we did with Dexter [Thomas's] work [covering black Twitter], where he is out among the community even as he's reporting on them. I would say we were very successful. I can't think of another newspaper in America where I would have been able to hire somebody to cover black Twitter.

Decision making is very much platform by platform, which is really resource intensive

CNN

The challenge is that, in a publicly traded newspaper chain, you don't have a terribly long runway or the ability to make the investment of what it takes to sustain daily relevance in a city like Los Angeles. It is a tremendous challenge to see a newsroom go from—I think at one point it had over 1,000 people—to less than half that today, and still do ambitious journalism.

There's also the reality of, for someone like me, who's a change agent, feeling caught between the model that you've inherited and a newsroom that you're trying to change even as you're trying to defend it against forces. I think a part of the reason I was able to make fast changes is because the newsroom understood it needed to change and I had a lot of conviction about what we needed to do to become more relevant to new audiences.

In a majority-minority city, if you're not reaching a Latino population, you're doing something wrong. When there is a massive gas leak, you've got to reach out to that community. During the Aliso Canyon gas leak, we used a Google Form to gauge health effects: "Do you have bloody noses? Do you have problems breathing?" To me, that feels like just good community journalism, but those were things that we were able to do because we hired a community editor. We did things that, I think, made the LA Times again feel palpable, as "We are your paper." If you know yourselves and what you stand for in a newsroom, you know your readers and your readers start to identify themselves in the stories that they're seeing. They see themselves. So you start to see a refrain of how I like to approach things.

I was able to make quick changes, because I think I was naïve about what I was up against, and maybe that's a good thing. I read the LA Times now pretty much still every day, and I marvel at what I'm seeing. They did a great series about Trump, arts, and the election, "Has Hollywood lost touch with American values?"

Lasting change is really hard, which is perhaps why I have gravitated to start-ups, because you're able to establish the mission. You want newsrooms to always expect change, with a constant of embracing audiences and stories. Your allegiances are to audiences and to stories versus fiefdoms and who reports to who, and this and that, which, of course, all newsrooms get obsessed with.

You definitely want to create more flexible ways of thinking, and I think that's been the narrative of this stage of my career.

CNN Digital's S. Mitra Kalita says she's open to redefining the role of the journalist

On redefining "journalist"

Someone like Van Jones on CNN has seen great success on air as well as online. A lot of people see him as speaking the words that they're thinking.

Van Jones is also a big social media hit for us because people share his video, his opinion pieces, or his series on "The Messy Truth" where he's sitting down and talking to Trump voters and understanding motivations and so forth. He suddenly represents readers in a way that the traditional journalist might not.

I know that there are people who say, "Oh, that's not really journalism." It was really at Quartz where I became open to redefining the role of the journalist. ... It might be a different lens on the story than you're used to. That's OK as long as there's real clarity and transparency for the audience. I give a lot of credit to audiences.

On experimenting with platforms

We have some intentionally experimental journalists on the social media team. My colleague, Masuma Ahuja, for example, she's on Kik, which is the teenage messaging service. She does a lot with quizzes and delivering news in shorter bursts on that platform.

She is intentionally experimental on those platforms. Now, and importantly, she does use what she's learned from messaging and brings it back to the main platform, which is cnn.com. We will do things like voicemail projects—we did this after the election, where we asked people to call us up and tell us how they were feeling, and we got like 10,000 voicemails.

To me, her experimenting has everything to do with her success on our main platform, just because she's talking to people all day long in a different form. It informs the way that she's doing journalism. She's opening up our platform and is informed by messaging apps and some of the other platforms that she's on.

For something like Google Home [the voice-activated speaker powered by Google Assistant], we're making nominal money off of it but we feel we need to be there. I don't yet know how it's going to be consumed. That's where we went to a third party vendor, and they're taking CNN content, and we are there. Then in the second quarter of this year, I'll have something to work with and then figure out do we devote resources to it and what do I know about this audience.

That's how the decision making goes. It's very much platform by platform, which is really resource intensive. We do need to figure out how are we going to customize our content to meet people in the places that they are, in the way that they want to get news. ■

Border Patrol

Panama Papers veteran Wahyu Dhyatmika, NF '15, finds a way forward with another cross-border investigative story

BEING AN INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER used to be a lonely job. You rarely talk about your story to colleagues in your newsroom, let alone a journalist from another publication. You guard your story like a bear protecting its cub. But all of that has changed now.

Working on the Panama Papers has deeply influenced my ideas about investigative journalism. The collaborative spirit, the ease of working with hundreds of other journalists, and the impact worldwide of the stories we produced was striking.

My next opportunity to get involved in a cross-border collaboration arose last September when I was one of the more than 350 journalists attending the Global Investigative Journalism Network's conference, "Uncovering Asia," in Kathmandu, Nepal. Between meetings, my colleague Philipus Parera at Tempo magazine in Jakarta, Indonesia and I met Sherry Lee, editor of The Reporter, an online news site in Taipei, Taiwan.

She said she had a story that might interest us. It was a human trafficking case involving poorly paid Indonesian sailors on Taiwanese fishing vessels. Many of these young sailors died after enduring cruel treatment. Dozens tried to rebel against their captains, sometimes plotting to kill their bosses, and were imprisoned in Taiwan. When I heard this story, I was intrigued.

Back in Tempo's newsroom in Jakarta, we started working on the story with the rest of the investigative team. The Reporter sent their team from Taipei and we all shared our initial findings, discussed possible angles,

Being an investigative reporter used to be lonely. You guard your story like a bear protecting its cub. But that has changed now

and set up interviews. On the ground, the real challenge began. Since Sherry's team had only a few days to wrap up their reporting in Indonesia, they didn't have time to nail down all the details. We agreed to share responsibility: we will make sure the story sticks on the Indonesian side, while they will do the same on the Taiwanese side.

We published the story in January. A couple of days later, the government and the National Police in Indonesia created a task force to fix the loophole in the system which the human traffickers exploited. They also officially demanded better treatment for Indonesian workers in Taiwan.

This successful collaboration bolstered my belief that cross-border investigative projects are the way forward, especially when newsrooms are tight on resources. Moreover, collaborating with likeminded journalists from other countries who share your passion and vision reminds me of memorable moments as a Nieman Fellow. ∎

Anton Septian (far left) and Philipus Parera (far right) of Tempo stand with Yu En Lin and I Ting Chiang from The Reporter in Tempo's newsroom
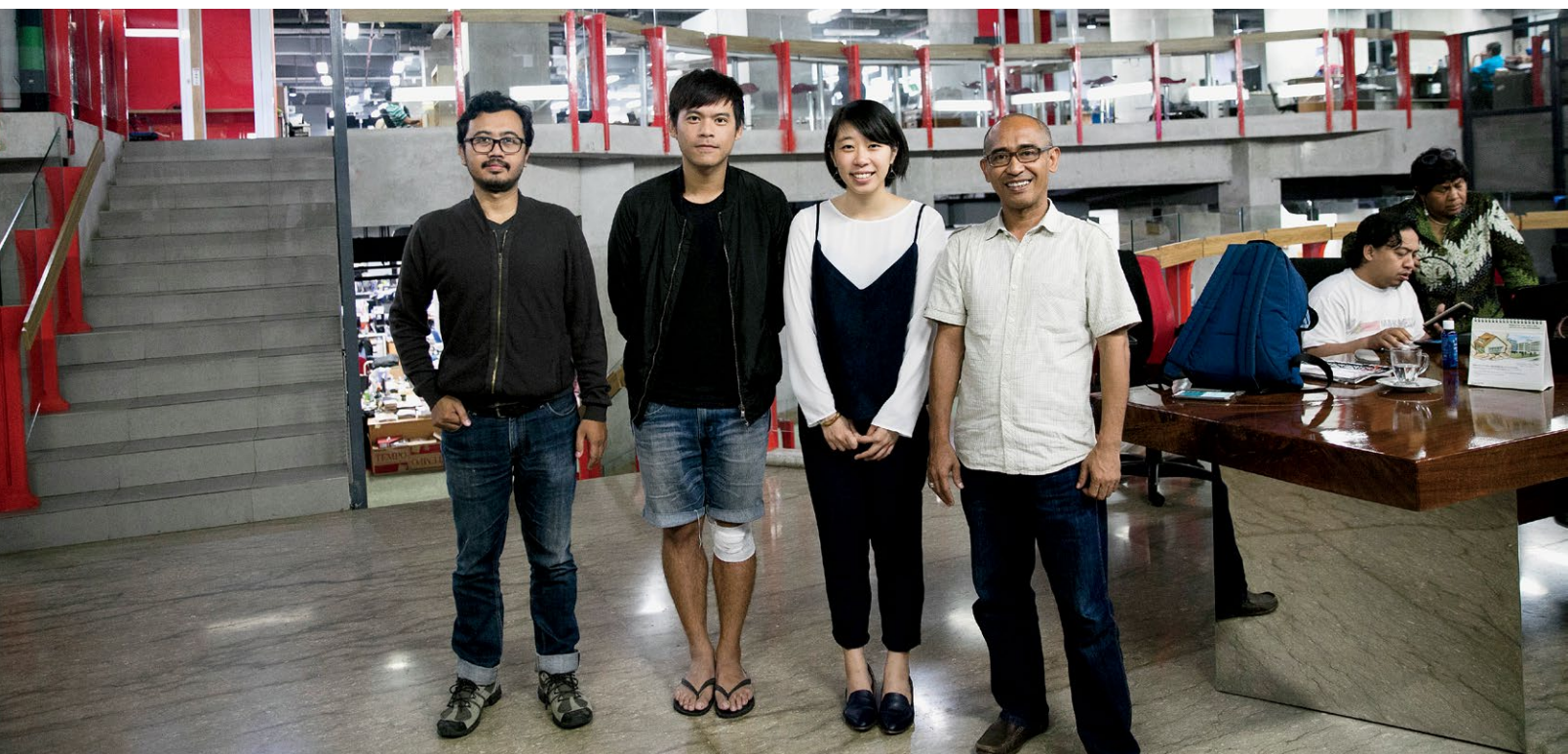
A Winning Turnaround

Betsy O'Donovan, NF '13, is leading the charge to reverse the deficit at a college newspaper

I BECAME EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT THE University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill's Daily Tar Heel in August 2016, at a make-or-break moment for our nonprofit newspaper. We'd lost $272,000 in the previous fiscal year, and hadn't broken even since 2011. Everyone sensed that money was tight, but the extent of the problem wasn't discussed—and that secrecy posed a serious threat to our organization.

It's frustrating to see so many newsrooms boxed out of their organizations' financial decision-making. Without information, journalists can't be effective participants in our own survival. So, in January, we instituted a weekly meeting to get everyone up to speed on our finances, and to improve them. We began with basics: Exploring our P&L line by line and answering questions, including about salaries and perceived inequity between departments. It took weeks, candor, and patience.

Next up: Small sessions in which cross-department teams came up with one thing they could do to create revenue without a cash investment, or to create savings without disrupting quality. The cross-building teams were important; we had to bring different knowledge bases together. Our ad side rarely sits with our news side; our new brand studio needs to work with both.

After the brainstorming comes group discussion, a consensus about which ideas to pursue, and—this is key—assigning a team to execute each idea and a deadline to report back for a postmortem. So far, students have created new photo sales teams, a sponsor-supported March Madness vertical for our website, pop-up shops for merchandise, and plans for an events model. Rent is too high, so we're searching for new digs.

We had to establish transparency about our books, commit to answering uncomfortable questions, and give not-very-experienced people both the power to push ideas forward and the structure in which they will succeed.

And while we're still working on it—thanks to the national championship win for the UNC men's basketball team and the thousands of extra papers we sold, we expect to break even this year—it's a hell of a lot better, for me and for our organizational culture, to share both the struggle and the successes. ■

A special March Madness edition of the paper

SOUND BUSINESS

MARY MEEHAN, NF '16, MASTERS THE ART OF STORYTELLING ON RADIO AFTER A LONG CAREER IN PRINT

IN POWELL COUNTY, Kentucky, a nurse, a preacher, and a physician assistant challenged deep religious beliefs to combat HIV infection by starting a needle exchange program for heroin users. In the process they taught me both the importance of meeting people where they are and the power of public radio.

As the children of the Clay City First Church of God practiced their Christmas pageant, pastor Brad Epperson and I talked for 45 minutes after turning off my recorder. (A radio no-no I will never repeat.) Epperson, also a school bus driver, said one student told him that his parents, both addicts, would be out of prison for Christmas. No child, he said, should live that life. Although masked in mountain stoicism, the anguish, passion, and conviction of Epperson, nurse Mandy Watson, and physician assistant Troy Brooks told a richer audio story than printed words ever could. It is the power of people giving voice to their own truth. That's the power of radio.

At the Ohio Valley ReSource, where I work in radio and multimedia after 30 years as a print reporter, reporters work across seven stations in three states—Kentucky, West Virginia, and Ohio. I cover health.

In the transition from print to radio, grappling with the technology has been a challenge. I'll admit there have been interviews I could barely use and that a recorder left running has captured solo car karaoke that no one should hear.

Using my own voice in storytelling has been a huge leap. It's a long way from reading aloud in my first Nieman fiction class, so nervous I could barely breathe. I am staggered by the dozens of pieces of audio that go into a 3.5-minute piece. And humbled by the patience of those helping to teach me.

The greatest gift is hearing the world in a different way. I see now that well-done radio stories are a kind of haiku with intent and nuance in sound and structure that I think has made me a better storyteller. I have a lot to learn and I am benefitting from the passion of the other reporters on the team for capturing that precise bit of perfect sound. But I am seeing how my journalism experience is transferable.

The Powell County story was radio story number five. I struggled to hold the recorder correctly, to save sound to a file, and wait a beat before engaging so edits could be clean. ReSource managing editor Jeff Young, NF '12, stitched my raw work into compelling radio. ReSource digital reporter Alexandra Kanik anchored it in stats for the web. And the voices of a nurse, a preacher, and a physician assistant were heard across three states. ■

CAN NEWS LITERACY BE TAUGHT?

Pat Winters Lauro, a journalism professor at Kean University in Union, N.J., teaches a class about fake news

At a time when more critical media consumption is sorely needed, news literacy can be a difficult skill to impart

BY JOHN DYER

IN THE RUN-UP TO LAST YEAR'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, KENNADY WADE found herself challenging her peers on the dubious stories they posted on social media, like links to obscure conservative blogs that claimed Hillary Clinton was a money-laundering devotee of the late radical activist Saul Alinsky who would flood the country with refugees if she won the White House.

But even though—or perhaps because—she was one of the top editors at The Kirkwood Call, the news website and magazine of Kirkwood High School in suburban St. Louis, she rarely if ever tried to debunk those myths. Politically conservative kids resisted her skepticism of the news they shared online because they considered the Call to be liberal.

"I know what they believe," says Monique Foster, Wade's then-classmate, now a freshman at Mississippi State University. "I see it all the time. Nothing is going to change my opinion. I don't feel like I need to get into an argument. Your politics are right side or left side, and it's not going to shift. If I knew someone had a different viewpoint on something, I would try not to bring it up. I would rather talk to my conservative friends about it."

Exchanges like those between Wade and Foster dismay veteran journalism teacher Mark Newton of Mountain Vista High School near Denver. He has been trying to instill an appreciation for truth, accuracy, and the First Amendment among young people in classrooms for most of his life. With the advent of smartphones and social media, he's seen a new information ecosystem flourish among students. Now, in the "post-truth era," it seems as if that ecosystem embraces values that are the opposite of everything he's been teaching.

"I felt like I failed as a teacher for 32 years," says Newton, who is president of the Journalism Education Association, a group that includes many of the 8,000 journalism teachers at high schools across the country. "It's clearly evident that what I'm teaching about the media—a vast number of people don't get it."

Newton is right. And studies of both education initiatives and cognitive biases suggest that, at a time when more critical media consumption is sorely needed, news literacy can be a difficult skill to impart.

A Stanford University study released late last year found that most middle school, high school, and college students were functional news illiterates. Eighty-two percent of middle school students couldn't distinguish between a "sponsored content" advertisement and a real news story on the same website, the study found. More than 30 percent of high school students argued that a fake Facebook post masquerading as Fox News was more reliable than a real

Fox News post. And more than 80 percent of college students believed a website was a trusted, unbiased news source when a simple Google search would have revealed its ties to a Washington, D.C. lobbying firm.

The study showed that most young folks are completely unprepared to be responsible news consumers in the Internet age, says study lead author Sam Wineburg, a Stanford education professor. "What we need to think about educationally is a way that we cultivate, irrespective of which side of the political aisle we fall on in our educational system, a commitment to accuracy," he says.

In the fight against misinformation and disinformation in the news ecosystem, journalism students like Wade and educators like Newton are struggling to understand not just the supply of "fake news" but the demand for it. It makes sense that impoverished Macedonian teenagers would spread lies online to make a buck. But why do people keep reading, watching, and sharing the stuff? Journalists, educators, foundation officers, and tech wizards are focusing on news literacy as a solution, despite questions about its effectiveness.

"No one is born with news literacy," says Arizona State University journalism professor Eric Newton. "They learn it. The question is, how can they learn it well and enough of it so that it helps them get the news they need to run their governments and their lives?"

Stony Brook University's Center for News Literacy is a leader in the emerging field. News literacy is among the pool of required courses at the Long Island university, and the center has partnerships with New York City's public schools, the University of Hong Kong, and other institutions where news literacy is part of media, social studies, civics, and English classes. "I don't think it's sufficient anymore for journalism schools just to teach journalism," says Howard Schneider, a former Newsday editor who is dean at Stony Brook University's School of Journalism. "Given these transformative changes under way, we need to take on a second mission that

STANFORD PROFESSOR SAM WINEBURG SAYS MOST STUDENTS ARE NOT PRIMED TO BE RESPONSIBLE NEWS CONSUMERS

nobody has taken on. We need to teach the audience."

The Trust Project at Santa Clara University, the American Press Institute, Poynter, and others have launched news literacy campaigns in recent years as the rise of fake news became a major story. Working with media outfits, fact-checkers, and journalism watchdogs, the new Facebook Journalism Project is now holding events around the world to determine how best to fund efforts to cultivate news literacy. Among the most high-profile groups working with Facebook is the News Literacy Project, a Bethesda, Maryland-based nonprofit that develops multimedia school curricula and other materials for thousands of educators around the world. Led by Alan Miller, a Pulitzer Prize-winning former reporter at the Los Angeles Times, the group is developing public service announcements on fake news and news literacy. "When I was a reporter, we had a saying: 'Facts are stubborn things,'" says Miller. "Now it seems opinions are more stubborn things than facts."

Foreign news organizations have launched similar initiatives, according to a study by the World Association of Newspaper and News Publishers. In France, the investigative news agency Premières Lignes produced an educational video showing the difference between a real conspiracy, like American tobacco companies lying about the dangers of smoking, versus a conspiracy theory, like whether the French government was involved in the Charlie Hebdo attacks in 2015. In South Africa, Media24 created an app that helps students and citizen journalists follow professional standards and post their stories to local news sites. The Indonesian daily DetEksi conducts a youth poll run by college and high school students that has been a major draw for young readers, inculcating the values of quality journalism.

The News Literacy Project and other American groups' courses include lessons in identifying the difference between straight news, opinion, advertising, and propaganda, and classifying primary, secondary, and other sources. They often include online testing where students must

distinguish between news and other media. They also put students in the role of reporters, giving them firsthand experience in identifying and acquiring sources for a story. Lastly, they usually review the press's role in a free society, a concept that news literacy teachers say is critical.

Too many students don't appreciate the media because they don't understand its special role as the Fourth Estate, a lack of understanding that has profound ramifications for democracy. "Finding a way to agree on what are the facts as a basis of discussion is essential for the country to reach any consensus on how you move forward," says Miller. "We seem unable even to do that."

One might argue that news literacy efforts face the same challenge.

In a field participants repeatedly describe as in its early stages, it is not clear if news literacy can actually be taught. Few argue that news literacy courses provide no benefit to students. Educators have demonstrated that, on a limited scale, they can make students a little savvier about the media. But whether those same educators can train large audiences to unmask fake news in the Internet age is an open question.

News literacy courses can make people appreciate the value of the press and accuracy and the importance of a well-informed electorate. Surveying around 600 Stony Brook undergraduates who took a news literacy course and about 400 who did not, a Center for News Literacy study conducted in 2010 found that the number of students who believe journalism protected democracy rose from 72 percent to 93 percent after a news literacy course. The number who believed the media played a watchdog role in society increased from 69 to 84 percent.

Those studies also suggest that the benefits of news literacy courses dissipate in the long term. A year after the course finished—the last time researchers polled students—those who believed journalism protected democracy dropped from 93 percent to 85 percent. Their faith in the watchdog role declined from 84 to 79 percent. A similar drop-off occurred in students' critical thinking skills.

Stony Brook's Center for News Literacy study found that slightly more students could better assess the reliability of information and the fairness of evidence after a news literacy course compared to those who did not take the course. A year later, however, more than a quarter were less likely to make that distinction. At the same time,

students who did not take the course were more likely to correctly perceive whether a source was reliable and evidence fair a year after they were first tested—meaning they become in a sense more news literate over time than students who took the course.

Teachers corroborate these mixed results. They repeatedly say their students vacillate between news literacy and citing bad information. "The kids will get sucked into stuff," says Liz Ramos, who includes News Literacy Project lessons in her 10th- and 12th-grade history classes at Alta Loma High School near San Bernardino, California. "It's about constantly going over ideas with them. It's something you need to constantly go through."

One or two courses in news literacy won't overcome the misinformation young people navigate every day, Wineburg argues: "The approaches that are being bandied about are doomed to fail. We are in a freaking revolution. We bank differently. We date differently. We shop differently. We choose a Chinese restaurant differently. We do our research differently. We figure out what plumber to come to our house differently. But school is stuck in the past. What we need to do is … think hard about what the school curriculum really needs to look like in an age when we come to know the world through a screen."

Cognitive biases—the mental blocks, predispositions, and prejudices that lead consumers to choose between news sources—help explain why news literacy advocates face an uphill battle. Everyone has them, but some are more dangerous than others. "Thinking that snakes are dangerous is an adaptive bias that helps us stay alive," says Matt Motyl, a psychologist at the University of Illinois at Chicago. "Thinking that anyone who disagrees with me is crazy or evil is not so adaptive, and is threatening to the health of democracy."

Confirmation bias leads one to seek news that appeals to our preexisting beliefs (for example, liberals flocking to The Nation but eschewing The National Interest). Biased assimilation involves responding to news that challenges our beliefs more critically than news that confirms them (panning a critical report about genetically modified foods because one believes GMOs are key to ending world hunger). Negativity bias leads people to pay more attention to bad news than good, a possible defense mechanism that might also lead one to believe illegitimate sources claiming that, say, vaccines are harmful.

Cognitive biases can cause news consumers to segregate themselves into online echo chambers where they embrace reporting that appeals to their sensibilities and reject whatever runs counter to them. The more one is personally invested in a point of view, the more emotional one is likely to become defending that perspective from alternative worldviews. That's happened as mainstream viewers have segregated themselves among Fox News, CNN, and MSNBC. Now a new separation has opened between mainstream viewers and those who trust InfoWars and Breitbart News.

It's hard to change people's cognitive biases, perhaps one reason news literacy efforts achieve such mixed results. Exercises that force people to consider alternative viewpoints before making a decision sometimes blunt confirmation bias, research shows. But those exercises can also backfire as folks conclude, after considering other views, that they, in fact, have been right all along. "It's really hard to break people's cognitive tendencies in a lasting way in real-world contexts," says Motyl.

But people are still trying.

Both Stony Brook University and the News Literacy Project attack cognitive bias head-on, defining it for students, testing for it, and developing strategies to recognize and correct for it, including knowing how social media algorithms often filter information to cater to the user's interests.

At Indiana University, computer scientists Filippo Menczer and his colleagues are developing a website called Hoaxy that aims to help readers fact-check stories on the Internet. It's not a replacement for news literacy, but it could be a learning tool that provides background checks for online stories, including whether anyone has raised flags about their truthfulness.

Menczer's childhood in Rome was partial inspiration for Hoaxy. He grew up watching heated debates in his living room. "My father was communist. My uncle was a fascist. Every Christmas, they had huge fights. They would yell at each other and storm out of the house," he says. "I'm worried the way we are currently using social media may make it more difficult for those situations to arise."

The executive director of the American Press Institute, Tom Rosenstiel, has taken a different tack. He believes transparency can help journalists improve readers' news literacy. Providing lists of interviewees and copies of notes and documents alongside a story online gives readers proof the piece was based on sound reporting. Newsrooms might include that verification for enterprise stories or investigations.

A journalistic bibliography might feel too academic to journalists. But—noting

*At I.S. 303 Herbert S. Eisenberg middle school in New York, news literacy teacher Marisol Solano (**holding papers**) is encouraged that her students judge the reliability of sources of news*

that The New York Times recently used a footnote in a Jim Rutenberg article on "alternative facts"—Rosenstiel argues that reportorial endnotes over time would train readers in what to expect from quality journalism. "They are being conditioned to learn these are the things that make a story worthwhile," he says.

Taking time to peruse interview transcripts or plug a headline into a fact-checking website requires the foresight and wherewithal that comes with mindfulness, a mental state that experts view as important for news literacy students. Mindfulness is a nonjudgmental mental state, a kind of objectivity achieved by resisting the tug of one's emotions on decision making. Mindful readers or viewers are less likely to react strongly to unpleasant stories or images or fall prey to distractions while consuming news. Whereas folks mostly operate in a world of "motivated perception," seeking stimuli that reflects their desires, the mindful take a more open-minded, equanimous approach to new things.

Studying around 230 mostly well-educated people in North Carolina who took a weekly mindfulness course and practiced meditation at home, Laura Kiken, now a researcher in the Psychological Sciences Department of Kent State University, determined that one could remain mindful and resist cognitive biases for short bursts of time, like 10 minutes, with training that included meditation. Permanently altering cognitive bias could take two months of meditation exercises, she says.

Kiken is quick to note that she can't prove that her work fosters news literacy, but she suspects it would. Mindful readers might be more open to quality news that contradicted their biases. "I suspect mindfulness may help," she says. "If you are short on time, motivational energy, you're cognitively packed, you're more likely to rely on your biases to guide your information processing and you're maybe not going to be more careful. When mindful, you do not fight emotion. But you notice it and the very act of noticing it makes you less immersed in it."

At the I.S. 303 Herbert S. Eisenberg middle school in New York City, teachers felt they had found a formula that works. Around five years ago, the school partnered with Stony Brook University to develop a news literacy

THE MIXED RESULTS FROM NEWS LITERACY EFFORTS MAY BE LINKED TO THE DIFFICULTY OF CHANGING COGNITIVE BIASES

program, including a dedicated classroom and lessons from sixth to eighth grade that are part of the school's Common Core curriculum.

Principal Carmen N. Amador and the school's news literacy teacher, Marisol Solano, recalled how students analyzed the provenance of their sources in a classroom discussion about the ethics of zookeeping. They decided that an administrator from the National Zoo was trustworthy but biased, while students were split over the trustworthiness and bias of a former trainer at Sea World. Solano couldn't produce studies proving her students had improved their news literacy, but the kids' discussion made her positive that they are sharpening the skills they need to spot and shun fake news.

"The students, when they are not prompted, are asking each other questions and using that language: 'Is that biased? Where did you hear that?'" says Solano. "That they are asking questions is one piece of evidence that they are becoming more news literate." ∎

Students at the New York City Eisenberg middle school take on news literacy assignments developed in partnership with Stony Brook University

FLAGGING **FAKE** NEWS

A look at some potential tools and strategies for identifying misinformation

The Trust Project

Based at California's Santa Clara University, The Trust Project is led by journalist Sally Lehrman, who conceived the effort with Google News executive Richard Gingras in 2014. Their idea: to develop digital tools to signal trustworthiness and ethical standards in reporting—for audiences, but also for news distribution platforms. Funded by Craigslist's Craig Newmark, Google, and the Markkula Family Fund, the project collaborates with nearly 70 global news outlets and media institutions, from The New York Times and Mother Jones to the American Press Institute and Poynter. Based on interviews with the public, senior news executives developed a list of 37 "trust indicators." They prioritized eight of them, including correction notices, ethics and diversity policies, conflict of interest disclosures, and labels to distinguish news from opinion and sponsored content. The project is working with news outlets to integrate the indicators into content management systems and build plug-ins to present them to the public, possibly displaying check marks showing which indicators a given news outlet fulfills. Lehrman says the system will also provide signals to search engines and social media platforms including Google and Facebook, which have agreed to use the indicators to surface high-quality news. The project is testing readers' responses to mock-ups of trust indicators.

Factmata

With Factmata, researchers originating from the University of Sheffield and University College London are taking an automated approach to statistical fact-checking and claim detection. Automation, the Factmata team believes, has the potential to keep up with the speed of the Internet, minimize errors, and eliminate the expense and time of manual verification. For now, the project, which is backed by Google's Digital News Initiative, is focusing solely on statistical claims, which are often used to support political statements. One example is "Greenhouse gases in the U.K. have fallen by 6.2 percent this year alone." Factmata is building a widget that, using natural language processing, can identify such claims and verify if they can be validated by checking reliable databases. Last year, Factmata's co-founder Andreas Vlachos and his Ph.D. student James Thorne built a prototype extension of their research in numerical fact checking. The prototype was among more than 80 entrants from around the world in a fact-check challenge put on by investigative journalist Diane Francis and HeroX, a U.K. crowdsourcing technology provider. The project was one of three finalists. However, after being asked to check 50 claims, none of the competitors was able to meet the contest's goal of 80 percent accuracy—an indicator of the limitations of the technology.

RumorGauge

RumorGauge began in 2013 as an effort to predict the veracity of rumors on Twitter, using computational models that considered the content of tweets and how viral they are, as well as characteristics of the users involved. Soroush Vosoughi, a researcher at MIT's Lab for Social Machines, programmed RumorGauge to evaluate rumors associated with events, such as the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings. Vosoughi is now focusing his work on examining political rumors, using filter bubbles as a starting point. The same people tend to repeatedly share fake political news. So, when a rumor is shared, RumorGauge examines the histories of the sharers— what they've shared, and whether those items turned out to be true or false. It will consider how long the social media account has been active, since accounts are often set up for the express purpose of spreading misinformation. While integrating RumorGauge into social media platforms would be the most effective route, that isn't likely to happen. Instead, Vosoughi is considering a website, where users could check rumors they've seen on social media. Therein lies a problem common to many projects tackling misinformation: Before someone even visits such a website, they have to not only doubt the truth of something they've seen on social media, but know such a website exists to check that rumor—and trust it to deliver sound information.

First Draft

Formed in 2015 to address challenges relating to truth and trust in the digital age, First Draft trains journalists and others in finding and verifying content sourced from the social Web, providing resources, case studies, and best practice recommendations. Last fall, the nonprofit launched the First Draft Partner Network, enlisting newsrooms, human rights organizations, and technology companies from around the globe to develop solutions for improving ethical sourcing, verification, and reporting of stories that emerge online. The core partners include, among others, The New York Times, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, the Associated Press, Facebook, Twitter, Amnesty International, YouTube, and ProPublica. Among the initiatives to come out of the partner network is CrossCheck, a real-time collaborative verification tool. Hosted on Check, a platform designed by Meedan—a company focused on global journalism and translation—CrossCheck lets news organizations establish and share common verification tasks to streamline work. So, for example, rather than having dozens of newsrooms independently verifying whether a single photo is fake, one person does it quickly and then shares it with the virtual network, freeing others to focus on reporting and telling stories.

—ERYN M. CARLSON
WITH REPORTING BY TAMAR WILNER

A memorial service pays tribute to explosion victims in Tianjin, China in 2015

With sensors, journalists can broaden the range of stories they take on—and increase the authoritativeness of their accounts

BY MAGGIE KOERTH-BAKER AND ERYN M. CARLSON

MINING THE DATA

The "Losing Ground" investigation documents the loss of land that threatens Louisiana communities like Isle de Jean Charles, shown here

They nailed the story by analyzing data collected by sensors. "It was using the technology from SunPass, the electronic tolls, that made us able to pull off this story. We wouldn't have been able to do it without sensor journalism," says Maines.

A sensor is any device that in some way detects and responds to a signal or stimulus. A sensor can be simple, like a thermometer, or be a more complex device that collects data, whether it's the electronic tolls that detect the transponder in your car, the satellites miles above earth that take images of the world below, or a hand-held device that measures lead contamination or radiation. As part of a data-driven reporting approach, sensors can broaden the range of stories journalists take on and increase the authoritativeness of their accounts.

"There's a great deal of potential for sensors in journalism in specific areas," like environmental reporting, says Kathleen Culver, director of the Center for Journalism Ethics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "Sensors can help us with things like water quality, water level rise and decline; they can sense air quality, temperature changes, and, in the event of catastrophes, things like radiation or gas leaks."

Sensors can help journalists hold individuals and institutions accountable, and be used to keep journalists themselves in check. Such was the case when John Broder's review of Tesla's Model S electric car for The New York Times claimed poor performance. Tesla responded by releasing vehicle data—captured by sensors monitoring charging, travel times, and distances, among other factors—to suggest Broder misused the car and exaggerated its issues.

Culver, who studies the ethical implications of data, sensors, and drones in journalism, notes that sensors are a powerful means for "serving people and helping them understand the environments around them." Sensing tools also raise a number of ethical concerns, especially when it comes to sensors that collect and share personal data.

Take, for instance, the cell phone you might be using to read this article. That cell phone is a sensor. It tracks your location and can share that information with other people, journalists included. That sensor can be a powerful tool that gives journalists access to sources with firsthand knowledge of what is happening at an event the journalist isn't attending. But it can also represent an infringement on that person's privacy. "We're seeing a growing resistance to that," says

O N OCTOBER 11, 2011, Florida Highway Patrol trooper Donna Jane Watts clocked a car driving down the Florida turnpike at 120 miles per hour, well over the zone's 70 mph speed limit. She tried to pull the car over, and the driver led her on an 8-minute chase. When he finally did stop, he expected that she would just let him go. He was, after all, a police officer in a marked squad car.

The traffic stop was big news in Miami-Dade County, mainly because the trooper arrested the off-duty Miami police officer, Fausto Lopez. Many people had seen police break the law, driving with excessive speed when they weren't responding to a call.

"No lights. No sirens. Just speed," says South Florida Sun Sentinel database editor John Maines, who saw that behavior himself when driving home from work late at night. However, despite the public perception that law enforcement officials were among the most reckless of Florida's drivers, there was no definitive evidence to back the claims.

But the incident involving Lopez gave Maines and reporter Sally Kestin an idea: Maybe they could prove that Lopez, though an extreme example, wasn't just an outlier—that, in fact, many police officers were speeding for no good reason.

Culver. "People saying, 'What are you doing?', and reporters saying, 'This is our job.' But I think that's an insufficient answer."

Though sensor journalism is still in an early stage, newsrooms are beginning to navigate the terrain, with some journalists cobbling together their own measuring devices or, more often, using data collected by existing sensors. ProPublica and The Lens have reported on Louisiana's disappearing coastlines by analyzing satellite imagery of the state's changing land patterns, while The New York Times has used data collected via satellites to bolster its reporting on conflicts and breaking news abroad.

Many outlets have taken on environmental projects with help from sensors. USA Today's investigative unit employed a handheld device that measures soil contamination to undertake a comprehensive examination of the legacy left by lead factories, while WNYC has tackled crowdsourced DIY sensor projects to both predict the arrival of cicadas and measure the effects of heat stress in Harlem. In India, the nonprofit IndiaSpend has teamed up with Twitter to monitor air quality in real time.

"Speeding Cops," the series that resulted from the Sun Sentinel's three-month investigation, led to the disciplining of speeding officers and an 84 percent drop in police speeding a year later. It was recognized with a 2013 Public Service Pulitzer. Data automatically collected by sensors provided the backbone of the reporting for the series but the reporters, armed with a Garmin GPS device, traveled 2,700 miles to measure the distances between toll stations.

Thanks to a reader tip, Maines and Kestin knew that SunPass, the state's prepaid toll program, registered the dates and times when cars passed through tollgates, and they also knew that each state-owned police car was equipped with a special transponder that allowed them to travel Florida's tollways for free. Tollgates would "read" the transponders, each with a unique ID, and register the time of passage through each toll plaza; that data would then be sent to SunPass so it had a record of vehicles authorized to travel for free.

This information, Maines and Kestin argued, was public record since the government owns the tollways. With some prodding, they convinced SunPass to provide them with about a year's worth of data—totaling more than a million records. By plugging the SunPass data and the distances between tolls into an algorithm

Maines created in Microsoft Access, he was able to produce a list of police officers who drove well above the speed limit. The results were staggering: Maines and Kestin documented nearly 800 officers who in the span of a year drove between 90 and 130 mph on the highways.

A few hundred miles away from the Florida turnpike, in Louisiana, journalists took a deep dive into the state's disappearing coastlines, drawing on a very different kind of sensor: Landsat, the world's longest-running satellite imagery program. A joint NASA-U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) initiative that began in 1972, it provides journalists with an opportunity to make comparisons and see how natural resources and land use have changed over time.

Landsat data was key to "Losing Ground," a multimedia investigation into the massive loss of land in southern Louisiana, produced by ProPublica and The Lens, a non-profit public-interest news outlet based in New Orleans. Historically, land-building sediment deposited by the Mississippi and its tributaries or carried from offshore by storms and high tides ensured that these areas would remain above the Gulf of Mexico. But, as levees were built to prevent floods and canals were dredged for oil and gas extraction, these landscapes no longer received the sediments that once sustained them. Coastal Louisiana was about 25 percent larger in the 1930s than it is now; the USGS estimates that nearly 2,000 square miles of land has disappeared.

To illustrate these facts, ProPublica—with guidance on what areas to focus on from The Lens' Bob Marshall, who had long covered Louisiana's coasts and wetlands—combined modern satellite data they pro-

cessed themselves, USGS interpretations of historic satellite data, and maps and aerial photography that preceded the satellite era. The result is a layered map that allows readers to toggle back and forth through time, watching as land turns into water.

"You could actually see that this land had been disappearing over the course of the decades," says Brian Jacobs who, while the Knight-Mozilla Open News Fellow at ProPublica, worked on the story with news applications developer Al Shaw. "Bob's story provided the on-the-ground [aspect of] how this was affecting people. That worked hand-in-hand with these intense graphics that really showed from a bird's-eye view what was changing. Those fed off of each other to give it a little more emotional weight."

Satellite data is a lot easier to access than it has been in the past. Jacobs and Shaw obtained the Landsat data from free, searchable online catalogs. That said, the project is also a prime example of how reporting on data somebody else collects is not as simple as newbies might hope. The Landsat images, after all, are not typical photos. Instead, what you're getting is data on the fuller spectrum of light—both visible and invisible—that passes through the atmosphere.

That's important, because it means the satellites collect information you could never get from a photo, allowing the reporters to offer an unprecedented level of detail about the changes over time. For instance, green leaves reflect more near-infrared light. That information can tell you something about the health of a forest. "By using these two different types of imagery, it allowed us to get better contrast between land and water," says Jacobs, "that allowed us to visualize this land loss data on top of this other imagery. It made it a lot more obvious what was changing."

Besides providing a historical view as shown in "Losing Ground," satellites can give journalists a look at breaking news that might otherwise go unreported. When a chemical warehouse in China's port city of Tianjin exploded in August 2015, satellites gave journalists around the world the ability to see and analyze a site that they would have had trouble accessing any other way.

Satellites captured the flare caused by one of the blasts, which—registering as a magnitude 2.9 earthquake—altogether killed 173 people, injured hundreds of others, and wreaked havoc on industrial and residential buildings miles away. Within

A DEVICE THAT MEASURES LEAD CONTAMINATION WAS A KEY REPORTING TOOL FOR USA TODAY'S "GHOST FACTORIES" INVESTIGATION

Satellite imagery is a reporting tool for news in difficult-to-access locales such as Tianjin, China, where a chemical warehouse exploded in 2015

hours of the explosion, The New York Times used private satellite images collected by Terra Bella (a Google company formerly known as Skybox Imaging) to show the extent of the damage, publishing before and after imagery of the disaster zone.

That imagery not only illustrated for remote audiences what was going on, but helped the journalists on the ground further their investigation. Andrew Jacobs, a former China correspondent for the Times, had taken a two-hour cab ride to Tianjin from where he was based in Beijing after his editor in New York called in the middle of the night to alert him to the explosion. In the days and weeks that followed, Jacobs and other reporters relied on the satellite imagery gathered by their colleagues back in the U.S. to navigate the port and surrounding areas impacted by the blast.

"It was a very disorienting place. Like everything in China, it's mega-enormous. There's usually not many landmarks, and it's hard to figure out where you are. The Chinese weren't, obviously, helping us find anything—they'd try to keep you away from things," says Jacobs. "So [the imagery] defi-

nitely helped us find back ways into the explosion area, find ways to get around police, maybe get better vantage points, and understand which residences would be affected based on where they were facing from the explosion." By examining satellite imagery and public records, the Times determined that the annihilated warehouse was one of many across the country that, in violation of safety regulations, stored toxic chemicals in close proximity to residential areas, schools, and highways.

For Jacobs, who's now based on the international desk back in New York, covering the Tianjin incident demonstrated how useful satellite imagery can be in reporting, especially in a country like China, where authorities make it difficult for outsiders to do their jobs and the state media limits coverage and often downplays the magnitude of tragedies. "The local Tianjin media was trying to do a good job—they sent their reporters out there, but then only after a few hours, they got pulled back or their coverage got squelched," says Jacobs. "In China, [satellite imagery is] very useful since things are intentionally non-transparent."

At the Times, similar efforts have been applied to projects ranging from assessment of damage to Gaza's infrastructure after an outbreak of fighting to a visualization of how ISIS came to control large portions of Syria and Iraq—both stories that journalists wouldn't have been able to fully report, much less tell, without the use of satellite imagery.

While remote sensing, especially the use of satellite imagery, is probably the most popular way news organizations are currently practicing sensor journalism, reporters can also take an off-the-shelf tool and collect original data themselves. That tool could be something simple, like a thermometer, or a piece of scientific equipment worth thousands of dollars.

The latter is what USA Today investigative journalist Alison Young used to report her team's "Ghost Factories" series about the health risks posed by more than 400 forgotten lead factory sites. The series prompted the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to announce it would reexamine many of the former lead factory sites and launch cleanup efforts where necessary.

Young began the work by digging into reports that hundreds of former lead smelter operations—which, for much of the 20th century, melted scrap products like lead-acid batteries in order to isolate the lead from other compounds—across the U.S. were unrecognized by federal or state authorities. That posed a potentially serious risk to public health since lead dust and other toxic metal particles released into the air during the smelting process can seep into surface soils and remain there long after most smelting operations were shuttered in the 1970s and '80s. Children playing on grounds befouled with lead slag are especially at risk since inhaling or ingesting even small amounts of contaminated soil or lead dust can result in severe physical and developmental problems; lead toxicity can be fatal.

Young based much of her work on a 2001 research study, conducted by environmental scientist William Eckel, listing 464 lead-smelting sites that appeared to be unknown to the EPA or state regulators. When she joined USA Today's investigative unit in 2010, she embarked on a nationwide probe of the forgotten sites.

Young relied on an X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) Analyzer, a hand-held device that can be used to measure the chemical composition of soil. After getting training in the use of the device, she pointed a XRF Analyzer at a soil sample and pulled the trigger. At the time, the XRF devices cost $41,000 each; they negotiated a rental agreement with the manufacturer, Thermo Fisher Scientific. She paid $2,250 per month. The data gathered by the XRF Analyzer—proving that the soil in many of the investigated neighborhoods was indeed contaminated with lead levels well above what the EPA considers safe—was at the crux of "Ghost Factories," the series resulting from Young's investigation, but it had little meaning on its own.

"You have to do your gumshoe traditional reporting," says Young. Long before she tested soil with the XRF Analyzer, she and her team spent months at the Library of Congress, examining historical Sanborn maps, which—originally created for fire insurance liability in U.S. cities—contain a wealth of detailed information about buildings and their surroundings. Along with city directories, phone books, property records, and archival photographs, the maps helped the reporters eliminate some of the sites on Eckel's list that turned out to be business offices; they narrowed the list down to 230 questionable sites in 25 states. But that was just the beginning.

"Once we got that, we needed to assess which of these might be good candidates to do soil testing at. That involves taking a look at what we could find about the years of operation, how big of a factory it was," says Young. "Separately, there was a massive FOIA effort that I was doing, that literally was requesting documents from state regulators as well as from the EPA to try to assess, 'What exactly did you do when Bill Eckel raised the flag about this thing? What did the assessments show?'"

In addition to the EPA action "Ghost Factories" prompted, the project served as an intensive course for Young in how to

An investigation into Louisiana's receding coastline drew on data from satellites and on-the-ground reporting in places like Port Fourchon

approach and carry out sensor journalism. "You really need to bulletproof what you're doing," she says, "because there will be those who will potentially raise questions about, 'Who are you as a journalist to be using scientific equipment or scientific methods?' You want to make sure that you've read up on the scientific literature, that you understand how others use the technology, what are the best practices."

Besides the importance of doing your homework, it is critical that reporters consult with experts to make sure what they're doing is scientifically valid. On "Ghost Factories," Young consulted with toxicologist Howard Mielke, one of the world's experts on lead concentration in soils. Young did her own testing, but sent some soil samples to Mielke's labs at Tulane University so he could do independent chemical tests to make sure the XRF Analyzer's readings were accurate.

USA Today spent thousands of dollars on the research for "Ghost Factories." Plenty of newsrooms can't afford that much. Yet DIY sensor journalism—sensors you build yourself, utilizing prototyping platforms such as Raspberry Pi or Arduino, hobby electronics that are relatively inexpensive—holds promise. "One of the cool things about this entire field is that the price of all this stuff is coming way down," says John Keefe, who recently joined the Quartz Bot Studio as a developer and app product manager after spending more than 15 years at WNYC. "You can do a lot for under 40 bucks."

For journalists, these low-cost sensors lend themselves to experimentation in collecting your own data, or even farming data collection out to crowdsourced armies of volunteers. Employing their listeners to tinker with tools and hardware, WNYC launched a handful of crowdsourced projects over the past few years under Keefe's guidance while he was the senior editor for data news at the station. The first effort involved, of all things, bugs.

Every 17 years, Brood II cicadas appear in swarms across the East Coast, tunneling their way out of the ground in order to lay eggs (making a lot of noise in the process). Knowing that the cicadas were due to appear sometime in spring or early summer of 2013, Keefe saw an opportunity to utilize some of the hardware he had been tinkering with over the previous year.

"When the discussion came up in the newsroom about what we might do around cicadas, I poked around online and wanted to see what we might learn or know about them," said Keefe. "It turned out that if you know the temperature of the soil eight inches down, you can actually predict pretty closely on what day or what week they're going to come out," since cicadas typically emerge when the temperature at that depth reaches 64 degrees.

Keefe wondered if he could build a temperature-sensing device that, if stuck underground, could help predict when the cicadas would arrive. He prototyped a model and tested it in a potted plant in the radio station's conference room. It worked. Buoyed by the success, he suggested Cicada Tracker, a project that invited WNYC listeners to buy or make their own sensors and report their findings in order to predict when the cicadas were due to appear. The Cicada Tracker received nearly 1,500 temperature readings from listeners, posting a map with the data and recording when cicadas started being seen and heard so audiences could see how accurate predictions were in their area.

WNYC is committed to DIY sensor projects. Last summer, the station partnered with AdaptNY news service and the iSeeChange weather tracker to study the effects of heat stress in Harlem, a neighborhood that is considered to be particularly "heat sensitive" due to the high concentration of heat-trapping asphalt, brick, and concrete infrastructure. For the Harlem Heat Project, WNYC built thumb-sized sensors that recorded the temperature, humidity, and the time every 15 minutes. Volunteers from a local community organization installed the sensors in 30 non-air conditioned apartments (since indoor temperatures are often even higher than outdoors) of friends and relatives around the neighborhood, and returned twice a week to collect data. This information was intertwined with stories about how people cope with the heat and the public health issue related to heat-related stress.

At the end of the summer, WNYC and their partners used the data to help them brainstorm ways to mitigate the risks of extreme heat in inner cities. One proposal was to expand the sensor network to create "personalized heat alerts," giving sensors to any residents who want them and creating a wireless network so that, when the heat in an apartment rose above a certain temperature, neighbors or relatives would be alerted to check on the resident.

Sensors—even DIY sensors—can test air and water quality, or collect data on radiation levels, industrial pollution, and climate change. One such example is #Breathe, a public service project to monitor air quality in cities across India. An initiative of nonprofit data journalism outlet IndiaSpend and Twitter India, the project launched in 2015 with a network of low-cost monitoring devices that allow citizens in a handful of cities to get instant air quality updates by simply tweeting "#Breathe" followed by their city. Those who do receive an auto-response tweet that, in the form of an infographic, includes various measurements of air quality and the possible impact current levels will have on health. The data is also visualized on a real-time dashboard on IndiaSpend's website, which displays a map with air quality index values for each location as well as an interface allowing users to look at historical data to compare air quality changes over different time periods.

Sensor journalism in its many forms raises numerous ethical questions, privacy being foremost among them. Minimization is also key when it comes to data collection via sensors. "It's a very important concept—that we're not just broadly going and gathering as much data as we can without a specific purpose," says Culver. "We should have reporting questions in mind, and then we should go out and sense data to help us in answering those questions. It shouldn't be a surveillance-type sweep. It should be very specified and minimized."

Our modern world is a sensed world. We are tracked by stores, by governments, by private institutions, by our neighbors. The ethics of sensors might not necessarily drive journalists to different choices, but it could drive them to find new ways of making those choices make sense to people who are not journalists. And that's an important part of building public trust in journalism as a whole. ∎

LOW-COST SENSORS LEND THEMSELVES TO EXPERIMENTATION IN DATA COLLECTION

A Different Lens

Why we need more visual journalists and editors of color

BY TARA PIXLEY

Demonstrators protest the police shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in August 2014

A TALL MAN—HANDGUN tucked in his waistband and face wrapped in a shirt leaving only his eyes visible—stares at the journalists staring at him. He is looting a Ferguson, Missouri gas station during protests of Michael Brown's shooting by police.

It is Monday, August 25, 2014, publication day for the international newsmagazine where I am a freelance photo editor, and my colleagues and I are huddled together around a computer monitor, surveying sets of images from Ferguson, including the one described above. It's time to select four photos—each deemed representative of the week's most important news stories. We've reached consensus that Ferguson must be among those stories. However, which shot of the escalating unrest will be selected is still under discussion.

Next up for consideration is a shot of several Ferguson protesters in the rain, their mouths open mid-yell and hands stretched high above their heads in the "hands up, don't shoot" position. Despite the emotional pull of the second image, several editors express a preference for the first photo because of the subject's intensely direct gaze. The editor who selected that particular frame from the photo wires agrees, insisting the shot of the man in the gas station deserves a place in the featured four.

Haltingly and with great trepidation, I disagree. All sets of quizzical eyes turn to me—the lone woman in the group and the only black person on the small news staff. I make a case for the second image, asking, "Do we really want to make a statement to the world that the most important thing happening in Ferguson right now is looting? Are we comfortable minimizing this developing protest about the treatment of blacks in America to a story about a small contingency of violent looters?"

The first image of the looter exemplifies the kind of stereotypical depictions of black Americans as criminal and suspect still so prevalent in news media. Despite my frustration at this personal reminder of how insidious implicit bias can be, even among the very well-intentioned, I choose not to verbalize that particular point. Thankfully, with almost immediate unanimous agreement, the editors selected the second image of rain-soaked protesters and moved onto the next set of news images—photographs documenting the Ebola crisis in West Africa.

Scenes like this one—in which a cadre of mostly white male photo editors discuss which images will make that day's web or print publication—are not uncommon. Throughout my 14 years working in seven different newsrooms, I have witnessed a dearth of diverse perspectives, both among those photographing news images and those selecting images for publication.

My personal experiences are not unique. In 2015 and 2016, World Press Photo Foundation (WPP) released annual state of news photography reports that highlighted an often overlooked problem: a lack of equity and inclusivity among those who work behind the documentary camera. Based on responses from about 2,000 news photographers worldwide, the reports included the statistic that only 15 percent of them were female. Though a troublingly unequal division of nationalities among news photographers was mentioned in the reports, no statistics on the photographers' racial identities were included. That will change this year because the WPP's annual survey (an informational snapshot of photographers entering the yearly contest) added a question about race

Peter DiCampo's photo of a man in an elevator in the Ivory Coast city of Abidjan led him to reflect on the many stereotypical images of Africa that are published

If we, as visual journalists, want to present difficult truths, we must address our industry's own difficult truths

and ethnicity. The results haven't yet been released. For too long, the way we as visual journalists represent and reproduce race has received no extensive analysis and critique within the field of journalism.

While photographs that grace the pages and websites of American news media are filled with images of black and brown people whose struggles for racial equality and civil rights are constant media fodder, those behind the images rarely share similar identities and experiences. Brent Lewis, senior photo editor of ESPN's The Undefeated, says recognizing there is a problem is the first step. "Being aware that when trying to cover stories in the vein of black life, you probably should have someone who actually lived it," says Lewis. "You need to have insight from someone who understands that realm." When both photographers in the field and photo editors in the newsroom are primarily white and male, news images will reflect that singular perspective.

Though the statistics appear grim, there are glimmers of change. Initiatives such as the African Photojournalism Database, Majority World, Native Agency, and Everyday Africa, paired with advocacy by professionals such as World Press Photo's David Campbell; Nicole Crowder, former photo editor for The Washington Post; and The Undefeated's Lewis, are effecting change. Rather than continuing to hold its legendary Joop Swart Masterclass in Amsterdam only, World Press Photo recently began offering the photojournalism workshop in countries such as Mexico and Ghana. Throughout her time as an editor at the Post, Crowder recognized the journalistic value of giving chances to unknown photojournalists of color. Under her watch, a knowledge and appreciation of the community a photojournalist was assigned to photograph was just as—if not more—important than being a well-known name.

One of the major stumbling blocks to having a breadth of photojournalists with diverse backgrounds is a difficult-to-eliminate class disparity. Those who have access to elite schools, financial security, and professional connections in newsrooms are more likely to succeed. Specifically in photojournalism, those who have the economic capital to purchase camera equipment, keep up with rapidly changing technology, and self-fund photo projects abroad are more likely to win recognition and assignments.

The connection between race and class is as prevalent in photojournalistic hiring as elsewhere in American society, a connection often underscored in our news coverage but overlooked in our newsrooms. Like so many of the social institutions they report on, the news media often reproduce the inequality they try to expose elsewhere. Shaminder Dulai, Newsweek's photography director, says, "As a person in a position to hire, diversity helps me identify and avoid blindspots. For a profession many enter to give 'voice to the voiceless' and 'shine a light,' we have to start by giving people a seat at the table to join the effort to newsgather and report."

The overwhelming whiteness of newsrooms was criticized recently in The New York Times and on CNN's website. Times public editor Liz Spayd and CNN race and equality reporter Tanzina Vega called out what they deemed insubstantial efforts to diversify newsroom staffs. Absent from many of these write-ups, however, is a discussion of how lack of access to journalism education, newsroom jobs, and the networks necessary to succeed continue to impede equity in our newsrooms.

If we, as visual journalists, want to present difficult truths, we must address our industry's own difficult truths. There are a growing number of individuals and organizations taking up this task. Their efforts toward that end are excellent examples of how turning the lens on our own practices can spur progress.

One of these is Everyday Africa (EA). As one of the first major interventions into photojournalistic inequity, EA has been doing work since 2010 that's proven vitally important in addressing both the nationality and racial disparities among photojournalists. Additionally, its collaborations with World Press Photo and global assignment platform Blink have produced opportunities, such as the African Photojournalism Database, for showcasing oft-overlooked talent. Dulai calls such efforts "excellent discovery engines for editors to be exposed to new talents."

American photojournalist Peter DiCampo and his writer colleague Austin Merrill have been working toward this end for several years. While on assignment together in 2012 for the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, DiCampo observed a man in an elevator surrounded by mirrored reflections of multiplied light and was struck by the scene's symmetry. According to him, the moment spoke to the beautiful simplicity of everyday life in the Ivory Coast city of Abidjan and he opted to snap the shot with his smartphone, forgoing the professional cameras slung across his chest. DiCampo says it later struck him this photo was at odds with the stereotypical images of Africa, unfettered as it was by ideas of poverty, war, and illness.

"We're reporting this conflict story but we used our phones to record daily life," says Merrill. It was that "sort of negative space around this story we were there to report," as he describes it, that spurred a new approach to storytelling for the two.

After snapping that first shot, he and Merrill began taking similar cellphone photos during downtime from their assignments across the African continent.

DiCampo and Merrill wanted to render Africa in shades of gray that the broad strokes of conflict and disaster photography so often miss. DiCampo identifies what spurred him to start the project as an issue "of the world and its various cultures and subcultures all being seen by a similar singular lens for a long time."

Those first images from the duo sought to represent African nations and citizens as both complex and nuanced entities whose lives were rarely depicted in their entirety by traditional documentary photography. Their Instagram account, titled Everyday Africa, grew in popularity, spurring lengthy conversations around the realities of daily life in Africa. "There's a sort of fascinating debate on how outsiders see a place versus how people who live there see themselves," says DiCampo about the commentary surrounding the Everyday Africa Instagram images. "We're still sort of on this contextualizing, broadening, transcending stereotypes kind of mission."

By using the democratic space of social media, they could offer alternate modes of understanding places and people who have been historically represented through a singular war-torn narrative, such as Kevin Carter's Pulitzer Prize-winning image of a starving Sudanese toddler stalked by a vulture.

When Everyday Africa took over The New Yorker Instagram feed for a week in February of 2013, an image of two African teens sharing an iPhone headset received the comment: "Look at the darkies." Merrill points to this kind of sentiment as the product of social media's anonymity, which allows commenters to say things they really feel. However, he sees it as an opportunity, saying it "allows us to get deeper into the things that constitute those ideas we have about each other. Sometimes it's blissfully ignorant, extremely racist, paternalistic, or funny."

Ultimately, what matters most is that The New Yorker's 1.4 million Instagram followers were exposed to images offering alternate viewpoints to the frequently negative depictions of African nations. Images such as Nana Kofi Acquah's shot of young girls taking selfies on a beach in Ghana, infused with youth's uniquely cavalier attitude as they offered duck-faced pouts to the smartphone camera; Girma Berta's brilliantly colorful shot of a man carefully stepping onto a city bus in Ethiopia; Malin Fezehai's photo of a stunning young woman backlit by windows open to Addis Ababa's rainy morning. These are the moments that undermine stereotypes.

Merrill sums up the influence of EA, saying, "If the only thing appearing in the [New York] Times for 15 weeks is Ebola, you can go to Everyday Africa and see

Nana Kofi Acquah's image of girls in Ghana was seen on Instagram when Everyday Africa took over The New Yorker's feed in 2013

a different story, told through the understandings of people on the ground and in the spaces they're showing."

When David Campbell, director of communications and engagement for World Press Photo, saw the compiled survey data that would become the first State of News Photography Report, he says he knew there was a problem that needed immediate addressing. Only 2 percent of the photographers who entered the 2015 WPP contest were from the continent of Africa. Only 15 percent of all entrants were women. Though the organization had already been making strides to improve diversity among photojournalists, the discussion then began about making a pivotal commitment in the WPP. Campbell says the organization's members asked themselves, "Can we get jurors from these countries? Can we make sure that it's 50/50 male/female?"

These conversations led World Press Photo to produce regional versions of the prestigious Joop Swart Masterclass, a long-running workshop taught by respected photojournalists to emerging professionals in the field, typically held yearly in Amsterdam at WPP headquarters. By extending the reach of the Joop Swart to Mexico City and Nairobi among other cities, photog-

To foster diversity, World Press Photo now hosts master classes in locations beyond Amsterdam

Malin Fezehai's image from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia is a counterweight to the many images from African nations depicting war and suffering

raphers local to those regions have direct access to the knowledge and network the master class provides.

In 2015, Campbell, DiCampo, and their colleagues began planning the Nairobi Joop Swart Masterclass and had the idea to create a list of African photojournalists that could serve as a database for photo editors the world over. WPP then partnered with Everyday Africa to create the African Photojournalism Database (APJD), now representing hundreds of photographers across the continent. Yagazie Emezi, a Nigerian Everyday Africa contributor and member of the APJD, sees this work as an important step. "For grossly too long, and even until this day, people still have a warped view of Africa," Emezi says. "Through platforms such as APJD, a lot more wholesome insight can be given."

Emezi's photographs are beautiful illustrations of what that insight can be. One image (on the cover of this issue) depicts African schoolgirls in a line, green and white uniforms highlighting gorgeous brown skin that glows with the vitality of youth. Intelligent eyes look out from the frame, challenging the photographer and, by extension, the viewer to diminish this young woman to any injurious cliché.

Both EA and APJD maintain pages marketing work from the collectives' photographers on Blink, a platform that connects visual content producers and photo editors looking to hire them. Blink co-founder Julien Jourdes says his organization is emphasizing photography initiatives that champion diversity. "We love Everyday Africa because they're producing everyday news, they're not exoticizing the people that they photograph," says Jourdes.

Through opportunities like representation on Blink, APJD photographers are getting exposure to assignments and well-deserved recognition previously difficult to achieve. Miora Rajaonary, an APJD photographer and writer, had her images of South Africa highlighted in a recent Blink newsletter to potential assigning editors. "In Africa, we still have a lot to explore so photographers, especially local photographers that have a decolonized vision of their environment ... their vision already is very fresh compared to what is currently shown in the media," says Rajaonary. Though there are no statistics available on how many photojournalists from APJD and EA are getting assignments via inclusion on Blink, the platform itself is indicative of a dedication to diversity spreading to various corners of the industry.

While World Press Photo, Blink, and Everyday Africa's joint effort to create and market the APJD is a vital intervention in the monopoly of Western/white photojournalistic viewpoints, the integration of diverse visions among American photojournalism appears stagnant. The problems of misrepresentation and one-sided depictions of Africa's nations and peo-

ple has long been the low-hanging fruit of critiquing photojournalism, yet the related and not at all dissimilar issue of representing African-Americans has mostly escaped the same level of attention. Nowhere is this more evident than in recent news images of protesters, from the Black Lives Matter movement against police shootings of unarmed black Americans to the Sioux "Water Protectors" blocking construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Media critics have often decried the overemphasis on violent black protesters—images that tend to play handily into the ever-present stereotype of blackness that finds its origins in post-slavery propaganda. Despite the fact that a huge cross-section of races, genders, and ages are present at Black Lives Matter protests, the most common photographs in news media capture black and brown bodies in moments of violence depicted or insinuated.

Lewis Diuguid, formerly of The Kansas City Star and a longtime advocate who has pushed for diversity at the Star and across the industry, identifies this problem as borne of the lack of diverse viewpoints in the newsroom. "When newspapers and other organizations lack people of color in their ranks, what that does is reduce the likelihood that stories of people of color will ever be told. If you're from a white, middle-class background, then your vision is limited to white, middle-class people." Rare is the published image that highlights peaceful protesting en masse and black communities working harmoniously. Yet it is precisely these photographs—evincing empathy rather than paternalistic sympathy—that capture the collective imagination.

New Orleans-based photojournalist Jonathan Bachman's viral image of Ieshia Evans facing off with Baton Rouge police joined a long tradition of the individual photographed at the decisive moment of their solitary stance against authority. Such moments allow black Americans to be humanized rather than demonized, and a cursory search of newswire photos available for selection from these events indicate moments of solidarity and community are just as readily available as depictions of rage and violence.

F reelance photo editor Crowder, formerly of The Washington Post, says she often had to advocate for including the diverse perspectives of women and people of color in her news organization's coverage. She recounted such an experience during the Freddie Gray unrest in Baltimore when she wanted to publish the work of a mostly unknown photographer who had been shooting the streets of Baltimore long before protests of the police began there. "I suggested that instead of

A list of photographers of color is in the works to help photo editors hire beyond the "usual suspects"

showing the work of one of our staff photographers—who was white—that we show this young black photographer who was in Baltimore … photographing his city with so much grit and beauty and humanity," Crowder recalled. Though she at first received pushback, the paper eventually ran the newcomer's photographs. "It's imperative for photo editors to look beyond their own familiar roster," she says.

Though both Crowder and I had success in swaying our newsroom's coverage toward more inclusive and less biased visual representations of people of color, the unfortunate truth is that there are few women and even fewer people of color—never mind women of color—in photo editor roles. A 2016 American Society of News Editors survey reported that only 13 percent of newsroom leaders were minorities. Among that already small group, black and Latina women represented 2.2 percent and 1.45 percent of news leadership, respectively. Consider that in contrast with the U.S. Census Bureau's latest statistics on America's racial makeup, which puts black and Latino/a citizens at 31 percent of the population.

Another intervention into this problematic lack of diversity has been initiated by Brent Lewis of ESPN's The Undefeated. He recently began accumulating names of editorial photographers of color for a list to circulate among photo editors. Lewis says he started the project after he realized how few black photographers were hired for editorial work. The idea for a database of minority photographers was born. Similar to the APJD, Lewis and his collaborators' list will feature American and Canadian

Jonathan Bachman's photo of anti-police brutality protester Ieshia Evans being arrested by Baton Rouge police in 2016 quickly went viral

photographers of color, offering photo editors a resource to find more than the "usual suspects."

Through the professional ethics and practices of objectivity in journalism, we have consistently found ways to humanize most members of American society, from convicted rapists to murderous white supremacists. Depictions of black Americans rarely receive such treatment in news media, however, whether in images or the written word. We must commit to challenging all prevailing and easy narratives, affirming a desire to do both good, accurate, ethical storytelling and to take into consideration a multifaceted perspective with which we may be entirely unfamiliar. This originates with the journalists on the ground

and continues with the editors making choices in the newsroom.

The dual powers that photojournalists and photo editors have as eyewitnesses and curators of knowledge cannot be overstated. We shape the world in our own image: our individual understandings of truth and reality, our personal experiences and backgrounds do play into the scenes we choose to capture, how we frame them and whether we find them deserving of public dissemination. There is so much more to the photographs we take, select, and publish than aesthetics and the reality of any individual moment. Rather, each frame captured is a single millisecond in a sociocultural, historical reality that predates subject, photographer, and viewer. As Crowder says, "The lens through which you tell the story matters as much as the story itself." ∎

BEYOND STEREOTYPES

A selection of images that offer fresh takes on minority communities

The best visual journalism displays the human condition as honestly and thoroughly as possible. The photographers highlighted in these pages give us more than overly simplistic depictions of violence, devastation, and criminality too often attached to minority populations the world over. From the images of Muslim women in Michigan and male church members in Arkansas praying to high school band members warming up before a football game and the playful exuberance of skateboarders on Atlanta city streets, these photographs depict lives much larger than the snapshots of war and disaster we see most often associated with black and brown people. This work reaches toward that goal of depicting holistic lives, evading stereotypes, and gesturing toward the possibility of shared humanity. —TARA PIXLEY

Zun Lee

Terence Mason in his old Ferguson, Missouri neighborhood in December 2014. The image is part of Lee's "Black Love Matters" series

Aaron
Turner
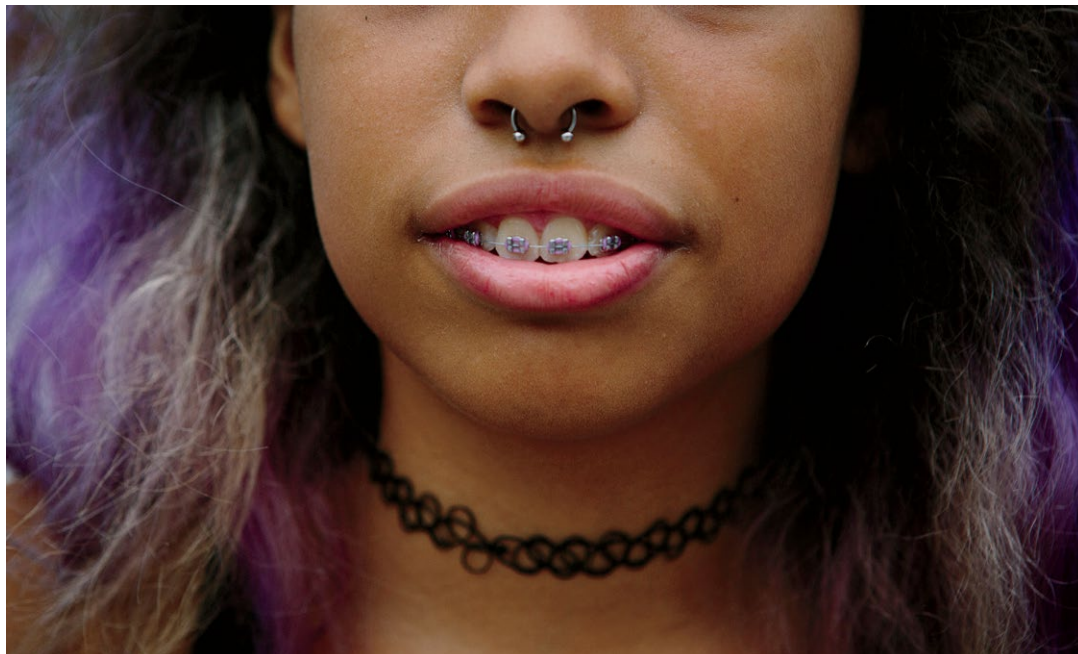
Cassandra
Giraldo

LEFT: A 14-year-old resident of Brooklyn, New York accompanying a friend getting her septum pierced in celebration of her 16th birthday

BELOW: In the town of Ollantaytambo in Peru's Sacred Valley, residents dress in traditional Andean garb in honor of a carnival in February

Dustin
Chambers

Two scenes from Atlanta, Georgia: Skateboarders and a beekeeper

Brittany Greeson
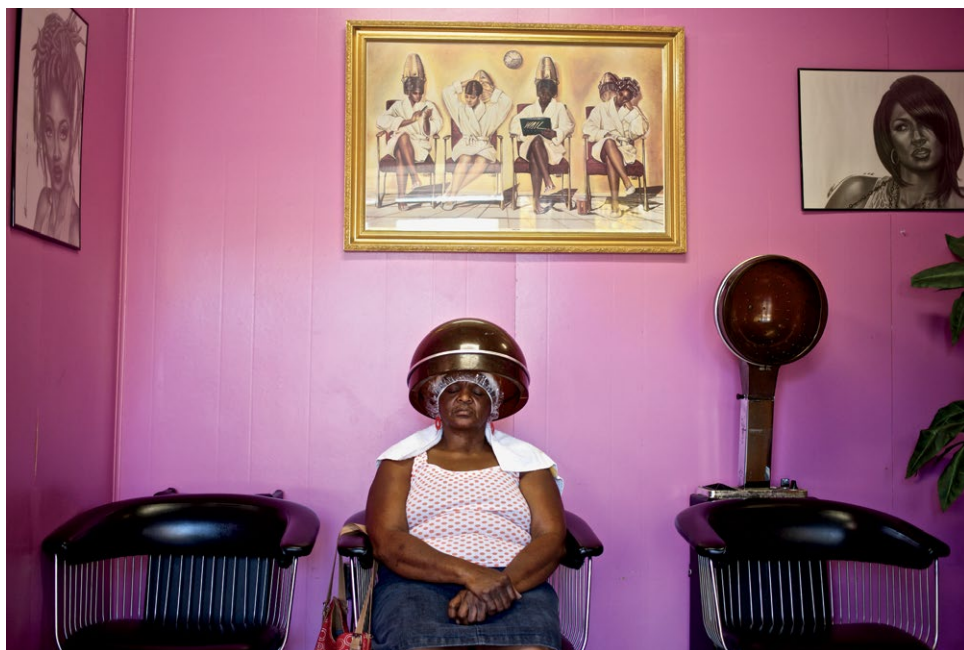
ABOVE: Mark Lumpkins rests at the Shaw Skate Park in Washington, D.C.
LEFT: Ms. Ann at the Shake Rag salon in Bowling Green, Kentucky

ABOVE: Congregation members pray at Michigan's Az-Zahra Islamic Center
BELOW: Friends dance at a school prom in Flint, Michigan

RETHINKING THE BEAT

How newsrooms are changing to cover the Trump White House and issues beyond the Beltway

BY DEBRA ADAMS SIMMONS

A protester at a weekly peace march through Chicago's South Side

FREDERIK OBERMAIER AND Bastian Obermayer, reporters on one of 2016's most important news stories, the Panama Papers, recently issued a challenge in an essay published in The Guardian to their American colleagues covering President Donald Trump: Unite. Share. Collaborate.

The reporting pair from Munich's Süddeutsche Zeitung newspaper implored journalists in the White House press briefing room to rally together. Keep repeating previously ignored questions. Work together on joint news projects, like examining Trump's ties to Russia or his international business connections. Partner with international journalists who may know more about a business affiliation in another part of the world. Take these steps "even if doing so might mean embracing something quite unfamiliar and new to American journalism," they wrote.

In 2016, Obermaier and Obermayer shared data from a leak of more than 11 million documents from one of the world's largest offshore law firms with more than 400 journalists. The resulting news stories—which, they declared in The Guardian, were "too big and too important to do alone"—showed how the rich and powerful exploited offshore tax havens and hid money.

The early weeks of the Trump administration highlighted the rocky relationship between the president and the media, prompting news organizations, already scrambling to shape new approaches to political coverage following the shortcomings of last fall's election, to develop new approaches to reporting on the White House. These efforts come at a time when trust in the press has plummeted to an historic low. According to a 2016 Gallup survey,

Americans' trust and confidence in media dropped to its lowest level in Gallup polling history, with only 32 percent saying they have a great or fair deal of trust in the media.

While some news organizations are reassigning a reporter or two, others are creating whole teams. The Washington Post doubled the size of its America desk from six to 12 to cover breaking news outside the Beltway, adding a "grievance" beat to report on the anger—and the systematic changes in government, industry, and culture that have incited it—that led so many Americans to vote for such radical change in the White House. The New York Times is creating an immigration team and plans to hire a religion and values reporter outside of New York City. CNN is launching a new investigative unit, with Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists Carl Bernstein and James Steele as contributing editors, and expects to add up to a dozen reporters. BuzzFeed hired a journalist to cover the relationship between the president and the press. Politico announced in December that it would have a seven-person team covering the White House, the largest White House coverage team in its history. Breitbart News wants to expand into television and plans to add staff focused on covering the new administration. The Marshall Project is hiring a bilingual reporter to examine immigration along the United States-Mexico border.

To explore how news organizations are innovating to continue being a check on government as well as to connect government policies to the people affected by them, Nieman Reports explored six newsroom initiatives: Spaceship Media, a California-based journalism engagement start-up, is connecting people across party lines using social media; NPR and The

Federalist are working to bolster coverage of middle America; The Arab American News is covering the experiences of Muslims directly impacted by the rhetoric and policies of the Trump administration; The Guardian is coaching readers in fact-checking skills; and MuckRock, a government transparency group, is strengthening the network of journalists working together to maximize access to public information.

These efforts move reporting out of the White House press briefing room and into local communities, offer more nuanced coverage of people impacted by government decision-making, strengthen watchdog journalism efforts, allow people to participate in journalism, and, ultimately, may also enhance trust in the media.

Covering the Partisan Divide

While national news outlets scramble to recover from stumbles during the presidential election, restore credibility, and adapt to a dynamic national political story, local news outlets are mapping ways to engage citizens and deepen trust.

Eve Pearlman and Jeremy Hay of Spaceship Media, a new California-based journalism engagement start-up whose mission is to spark dialogue between divided communities, wanted to do more than chronicle the divide between Trump and Hillary Clinton supporters after the election. They wanted to bridge the gap. So the co-founders of Spaceship Media reached out to Michelle Holmes, vice president for content at Alabama Media Group (AMG),

which includes The Birmingham News, The Huntsville Times, and Press-Register of Mobile, with the idea of connecting voters across state and party lines in moderated discussions. The day after the 2016 presidential election, they started to design what became the Alabama/California Conversation Project.

Pearlman, Hay, and Holmes recruited 25 women from Alabama who supported Trump and 25 women from the San Francisco Bay Area who supported Clinton and brought them together in a closed Facebook group. All the women were asked the same questions: What do you think of the other community? What do you think they think of you? What do you want them to know about you? What do you want to know about them?

Based on this information, the Spaceship Media/AMG team created a video of all the stereotypes each group applied to the other. Then the organizers brought the women together for moderated Facebook conversations. Some of the women participated daily, others jumped in every few days. The conversations continued at a rapid pace on issues that divide citizens: immigration, race, abortion, gun control, the role of the federal government, news sources. The conversations ebbed and flowed over the course of days and weeks. "Just like every other community, some people are very active, some not so much, and some active most about the topics that they were keenly interested in," Pearlman says. She adds that the women became a community, "concerned about and interested in one another."

Helena Brantley, an Oakland-based book publicist, decided to participate to gain a better appreciation of the perspectives of Trump supporters. "I felt like I did not know anyone in my family or social circle who voted for the president," she says. "I wanted some insight into what led people to vote for him."

Brantley expected the exchange would be challenging. The women talked about a range of topics, including Trump and Clinton. For many issues that emerged, journalists from AMG and Spaceship Media wrote news stories. When the discussion moved to immigration, for example, journalists wrote stories that discussed issues such as the amount of taxes undocumented workers pay.

As complex discussions heated up on issues like the Affordable Care Act (ACA), local journalists from both AMG and Spaceship Media introduced reporting to provide context and build understanding.

Efforts that move reporting out of the White House press briefing room and into local communities may help enhance trust in the media

One of the key reasons Alabamians gave for their support of Trump, according to Holmes, was that he promised to do away with the ACA. Clinton supporters, on the other hand, saw Obamacare as largely positive. "So we did reporting that showed how the rollout in California had reduced the number of people in the state without insurance and how premiums and out-of-pocket costs were rising less rapidly in California, while the reverse was true in Alabama," says Pearlman. "By introducing this reporting into the group women could see that the other's support/opposition to ACA was not crazy but rather an outgrowth of their experiences on the ground in their own lives."

Jaymie Testman, an Alabama transplant who previously lived in California, credited the journalists for providing meaningful context. "It was neat to get solid information," says Testman, a Marine Corps veteran and mother of three teenagers. "They did some fantastic research. You got knowledge. They just tried to provide facts without taking any sides."

Ultimately, the Alabama women were able to see how many more people have health care, and the California women were able to see how difficult it was for families in some areas of Alabama to pay the premiums. "Each side saw that Affordable Care Act looks different in each state," Pearlman says. "They trusted our reporting ... We see this as a victory for how relationships and deep engagement can help restore trust in the media."

Reporters from AMG say they had reservations about whether the approach would have any impact but came to appreciate the importance of the effort. "I was skeptical at first, it seemed like such a Pollyanna idea to put a bunch of women in a virtual room together to hash out the issues dividing our country," says Anna Claire Vollers, who wrote several of the stories for and about the group. "As the weeks wore on, we all started having 'aha' moments as we realized, through reporting and through their conversations, that where we live can have a profound effect on our firsthand experiences of immigration or healthcare."

Holmes says the response from readers has been encouraging and that convening women with geographic and political differences set a new standard for reporting on politics. "What we can do in local communities is facilitate the sharing of ideas and stories. We're only beginning to scratch the surface. Breaking the old journalism model gives rise to incredible possibilities. Regularly listening deeply without a specific story agenda will make us better journalists with deeper connections and a deeper understanding of the issues that matter most to voters."

The formal convening ended prior to the inauguration, but the participants selected their own moderators—one from each side—and are still talking. They also recently started a book club, which is reading "Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis." Of one of her favorite people in the group, Testman says, "We agree on almost nothing. Once we started having trust and getting personal, then people started asking questions. I started looking at their questions as just a question instead of an accusation."

Covering America Outside the Beltway

While Spaceship and the Alabama Media Group used social media to bring groups together, other news organizations are putting more boots on the ground to report on communities in so-called "flyover country." NPR is building on a model created during the election to expand its coverage. "We're now asking people around the country what they want the new president to know about them and their community," says Mike

Trump supporters at a campaign rally in Mobile, Alabama in August 2015

Oreskes, NPR's editorial director and senior vice president of news.

As an extension of "A Nation Engaged," a national conversation about politics and government in which 17 public radio markets participated during the election, NPR hosted simultaneous live town hall events in Texas, Wisconsin, California, and North Carolina prior to the inauguration. The community conversations allowed NPR to tap into the issues of real people in communities across the country. The conversations included discussions about identity and what it means to be an American, economic opportunity, and America's role in the world, among other topics. "We believe it's important to keep the conversation going among our audience, as well as with people who may not regularly be part of our audience," Oreskes says.

With more than 1,800 journalists in nearly 200 newsrooms across America, Oreskes believes NPR is uniquely positioned to facilitate those conversations. A major effort to do so is being made with the recent launch of the statehouse reporting project. Growing out of a reporting partnership with 18 member stations to cover the presidential election, the statehouse project—which currently has about 50 active participants at member stations—is helping bolster both local and national coverage by sharing resources and expertise among newsrooms.

For example, after Trump issued his executive order banning residents from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States, NPR teamed up with its member stations to find out where each member of Congress stood. The teams searched for public statements, looked at Facebook and Twitter posts, and recorded all the opinions they could identify. NPR's Congress tracker became a go-to place to discern congressional responses to the president's actions.

Similarly, in March, NPR worked with member stations to record congressional opinions on the proposed new health care bill, which failed to win enough support in the House to move to the Senate. The NPR analysis turned out to be accurate: Most Republicans supported the bill, though some conservative Republicans thought it didn't go far enough to repeal Obamacare; most Democrats opposed the bill but a few from districts won by Trump were less strident in their opposition.

NPR has gathered quotes to put all the information in one place—something that is beneficial for both local stations and NPR nationally, according to Brett Neely, NPR's state politics editor: "We're trying to find ways that we can take the local reporting and help [member stations] fashion a product that is a little deeper, so that it hits their local reporting needs but then also lets them compare other lawmakers state-by-state. It's also used for NPR's [national] reporting, because now we've got this Web tool that's telling us, yeah, Republicans don't really seem to have the votes for this bill.' We got that thanks to the contributions."

The Congress tracker is only one example that has grown out of the statehouse reporting project, which Neely oversees. NPR is leveraging its presence in local markets to report on emerging national trends, such as that of several state legislatures considering bills that would limit protests and increase penalties for protesters. NPR was able to cover the story ahead of other national outlets because station reporters were already closely following the issue, communicating with each other via a dedicated Slack channel and regular conference calls.

Beyond enhancing coverage, the fact that the project is connecting state political reporters and encouraging them to share what they're working on is beneficial, says Neely: "Having something where you can go and talk to your peers who cover state governments in 40-plus states, I think that's actually something quite unique, and it's really helpful ... The thing that I hear every time from reporters is, 'Oh my gosh, we should have had something like this 10 years ago.'"

Mollie Hemingway, senior editor at The Federalist, a conservative news analysis website, says while some news organizations are parachuting into communities to figure out what they got wrong, the strength of The Federalist is its inclusion of multiple voices from around the country. The Federalist started with four people three years ago and now has a dozen full-time staff members who work from different locations plus a network of hundreds of contributors in communities across the country.

Founded by Sean Davis and Ben Domenech, The Federalist provides news analysis and offers three daily newsletters—The Transom, for political and media insiders; Inbound, about national security and foreign policy; and Bright, by five "center-right" women on pop-culture news—a morning email update, and a podcast, "The Federalist Radio Hour," which has more than 40,000 subscribers, according to The Federalist's website.

The Federalist's 25 senior contributors are scattered across the country, in cities like Austin and Houston, Texas; Charlotte, North Carolina; Cambridge, Massachusetts; Brooklyn, New York; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Cheyenne, Wyoming; and in Illinois, Arkansas, New York, New Jersey, Virginia, and the state of Washington. Contributors include lawyers, professors, independent journalists, and those working for other

media organizations, stay-at-home moms, a Lutheran pastor, a director of a nonprofit that finds families for abandoned children, an artist, a musician, a Harvard Extension School professor, and a former counterterrorism intelligence analyst. The strength of The Federalist, Hemingway says, is that its contributors represent a diverse geography and lived experience.

"Having one or two reporters stationed in the middle of the country isn't going to cut it," Hemingway says. "When we started The Federalist we were intentionally decentralized. We don't have offices. We have people all over the country. We have the perspective that a lot of people inside the Beltway tend to be lacking."

Hemingway disdains much of the critical coverage of Trump and says The Federalist offers a nuanced alternative to the mainstream press. The Federalist's approach to covering the Trump administration builds on its strategy to elevate the voices of citizens outside New York and Washington. "Because they are not full time 'horse race' political reporters, they're not interested in the daily drama," she says. "They are very interested in the policy debates. Now, because everything is shaken up, people seem more receptive to outside thinking. It's a great opportunity to get new perspectives. We don't need to hire someone full time who's a generalist. We can surgically go out and get that different opinion."

Hemingway particularly highlights The Federalist's efforts to amplify women's voices. During the recent "Day Without a Woman," when the organizers behind the Women's March on Washington called on women to take the day off work on March 8, International Women's Day, to show the economic power and value of women, The Federalist published opinion and analysis pieces about not going to work being a privilege for elite women that took attention away from such human rights abuses as female genital mutilation, honor killings, and sex trafficking. One writer opined about everything from the missing girls kidnapped by Boko Haram to the Ladies in White, the Cuban women who were arrested for peacefully protesting the capture of their husbands, fathers, and sons. Another wrote about the important "people-focused" work women take on as teachers, health care providers, or homemakers for which there is little or no pay but high value.

"I want to support the disenfranchised and the voiceless, the marginalized and the

oppressed," writes Gracy Olmsted, an associate managing editor at The Federalist. "That includes women who encounter sexism in the workforce, or lack of appreciation in the home."

Olmsted continues, "But I will keep working: because being a mom isn't something you just stop doing. And I'm glad I don't get to take a break."

A 2014 Pew research report pointed to limited news options for conservative audiences, a business opportunity leaders of The Federalist were keenly aware of when the publication was started, Hemingway says. The Pew study found that conservatives and liberals turn to and trust different sources of news and information and that conservatives had fewer sources. In the study, people identified as "consistent conservatives" were "tightly clustered around one main news source" with 47 percent of respondents citing Fox News as their main source for news about politics and government while "consistent liberals" cited a range of primary news sources.

The Federalist attributes its dramatic growth to content that connects with an audience hungry to see conservative views represented. "Our media haven't done a good job of finding out why people are dissatisfied," Hemingway says. "A lot of people who write or work for us were not supportive of Trump but were supportive of ideas that come from outside the Beltway. We wanted to highlight the wisdom of the rest of the country."

Covering Minorities

While Muslims, Latinos, and Native Americans have been directly impacted by some of the new administration's most controversial policies, only a few news organizations have announced plans to expand coverage of race and ethnicity. Few resources are being permanently redirected to engage Muslim communities impacted by the Trump administration's travel ban or members of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe impacted by the executive order expediting completion of the Dakota Access Pipeline or Latinos affected by aggressive deportation policies. Many investigative and national teams have little staff diversity, renewing questions of trust and credibility in diverse communities. Frustrated by the historical absence of Arab American and Muslim voic-

By providing a forum for statehouse reporters across the nation to share information, NPR has been able to spot trends early

es in news coverage, Osama Siblani, publisher of The Arab American News, is pushing to make sure the experiences of Muslims are included in the national conversation.

The Arab American News, with a staff of 25, is focused on chronicling the life experiences of Muslims and Arab Americans locally and nationally who have been impacted by decisions of the Trump administration. Much of The Arab American News coverage since Trump's inauguration has focused on attacks on the rights and well-being of Muslims. In the month following the election, the Southern Poverty Law Center reported a surge in anti-Muslim hate crimes and hateful letters sent to mosques and Islamic centers, which follows a 67 percent increase in hate crimes against Muslims in 2015, according to the FBI.

Following the travel ban, news organizations scrambled to tell stories of everyday Muslims living and working in America, stories Siblani has worked to tell for more than three decades. He blames the press for what he calls a warped portrayal of Muslims, images that have ignited a "climate of hate" and intolerance and helped give rise to Trump. "Our community is under attack," Siblani says, adding that women who wear hijab are targeted most. "We are documenting all these attacks and all these violations of our civil liberties and civil rights. It has been like this for a long time. We came here because we wanted to leave trouble behind. People are not registering for their medicine

> The Federalist says its strength is that it doesn't parachute into communities; its contributors have always been scattered across the country

or Social Security benefits because of their fear of being targeted. They're not talking to other media or organizations. They feel comfortable coming to our organization because we have people who look like them, talk like them, and understand their needs."

The Arab American News's content priorities are to not only document attacks against Muslims but to capture new support of Muslims and Arab Americans, according to Siblani. One recent story focused on a Dearborn, Michigan woman who started a yard-sign campaign to show appreciation for her Muslim neighbors. Dearborn, a city of 98,000 residents that borders Detroit, is home to the Islamic Center of America, one of the largest mosques in the United States, and is considered the informal Arab and Muslim capital. The sign reads, "No matter where you are from, we're glad you're our neighbor." The group posting signs had grown to 500 people. Jessica Woolley has 10 volunteers who help distribute the signs. "These are social stories that help rally the entire community and stories that say you're not alone," Siblani says. Few, if any, other outlets are covering that story.

Siblani, who has described himself as an "activist journalist" and says his coverage is biased in favor of Arab Americans he feels are not represented or are misrepresented in the mainstream media, is hopeful that the coverage his outlet provides will increase civic engagement and political involvement. There are signs that change is happening. In

1985, Michael Guido won the race for mayor of Dearborn on an anti-Arab platform. Today, Arab Americans have leadership roles in several Dearborn municipal entities, and a 32-year-old Michigan-born Egyptian doctor, Abdul El-Sayed, recently announced a run for governor in 2018.

Collaborating on Coverage

The Guardian US's data editor, Mona Chalabi, has received so many requests from readers to verify information in the weeks since Trump's inauguration, she rolled out a step-by-step, do-it-yourself guide showing readers how to independently verify information on their own. "It's not enough to say, 'Take my word for it,'" Chalabi says. "Methodology is more important than ever."

Despite the many fact-checking services available, Chalabi finds that the questions she most often receives are about how people can find out for themselves. So she launched her "Just the Facts" column, which sets out to empower people with skills that will enable them to reach their own conclusions.

In one recent column, using President Trump's statement that violence in Chicago is worse than in most Middle Eastern countries, she instructed readers in how to research Chicago segregation data, pull crime maps to determine the city's crime rate, and to find data on homicide rates not related to armed conflict. She then told readers to make sure numbers from different sources compared the same things and to search for an historical perspective as well as context.

In one of her most popular columns, Chalabi decided to investigate the frequency of crimes committed by immigrants. Prompted by Trump's suggestion during his speech to Congress that the rate of crimes perpetuated by undocumented immigrants was so high that it required a federal office to address it (he announced that he had ordered the Department of Homeland Security to create VOICE—Victims of Immigration Crime Engagement), Chalabi didn't want to just tell readers what she found, but how she found it. She walked readers through each of the six steps of her process: find out what exactly Trump said, find out which immigrants he is talking about, research correlation, find out how often undocumented immigrants in the U.S. commit crimes, find out how of-

ten native-born people in the U.S. commit crimes—and find out if this matters.

Chalabi meticulously outlines her sources for each step, and links to each of them so readers can take a look for themselves. In step three, for example, where she researches correlation between crime rates and the number of unauthorized immigrants in the country, she writes: "I search for 'undocumented immigrant crime rates' which takes me to a New York Times article, but I don't spend much time there—I quickly click through to find the original source of that journalism. I end up on this page [with a report about the criminalization of immigration] from the American Immigration Council. Before I do anything else, I go to their 'about us' section and find out that this is a nonprofit organization, but its self-description sounds like it's pro-immigrant so I should keep that in mind." She goes on to cite the statistics she finds and where she double-checks this information.

Ultimately, Chalabi found that first-generation immigrants commit crimes at lower rates than native-born people in the U.S. For second-generation immigrants, the numbers are the same as native-born people. She ends her column with step six, finding out why this matters—referencing an article from Democracy Now that notes the link between the Trump administration's plans to publish a weekly list of crimes committed by undocumented immigrants and similar lists Nazis published on Jewish crimes. While Chalabi expects to continue this kind of work, she hopes her blueprint gives readers greater confidence to verify or refute the news they hear. "It's about not just walking away with information but walking away with skills," Chalabi says.

Her editor, Jessica Read, adds that doing so can help provide a foundation of trust for audiences, and at the same time help fight the misinformation swirling through people's newsfeeds. "We see Mona's column, and her skills, as the perfect antidote to the parasitic fake news currently engulfing our media landscape," says Read. "Not only can she demystify a quandary for our readers, but she can also teach them how to find the right resources and procedures to verify a story on their own. I can't think of a more pressing issue in journalism than the question of trust. Mona's column works to build the trust readers should put in any reputable news outlet."

What Mona Chilabi is doing for fact checking, Michael Morisy is doing for FOIA requests.

Morisy, cofounder of MuckRock, a government transparency group that helps media outlets access public records, thought the transition between administrations would be an ideal time to create a channel for news organizations to share information. Morisy issued an invitation for journalists to join the group's Slack channel. More than 3,000 people signed up. "We decided we wanted to show people the public records process," Morisy says. "It made sense to try to build up a stronger Freedom of Information Act community across newsrooms. Whether you are a traditional journalist, someone with an ideological bent or an individual, public records are for everyone."

Journalists are using the channel to request, analyze, and share information and to support, collaborate, and discuss how best to handle records requests. The immediate impact has been that journalists from different news organizations are working together rather than competing. Among the collaborations, journalists have screened 144,182 pages of Department of Justice documents on Neil Gorsuch, brainstormed on a "transition FOIA" thread about which stories to pursue on a GOP Obamacare Repeal talking points document, and helped each other craft a number of FOIA requests targeted at specific agencies based on different reporters' beats as well as announcements of the new administration.

Given how slow responses to FOIA requests can often be, many of the stories that may come out of those requests are still in progress. But just as interesting are the stories that come out of requests that have been rejected. This happened after Michael Best, a writer and analyst covering the intelligence community and national security issues (and an avid MuckRock member), requested FBI files related to media companies associated with Trump's pick for secretary of the treasury, Steve Mnuchin. The FBI denied the request, saying the documents requested were exempt from disclosure because they were involved in a law enforcement proceeding—something the Senate took notice of after Best reported on it. During Mnuchin's confirmation hearing, Senator Sherrod Brown questioned the hedge fund manager about whether he was involved in a federal investigation. Mnuchin denied it, but Best's further analysis of the language in the FBI's written response of their FOIA rejection suggested otherwise. Best's work was originally posted on MuckRock and on his own website, Glomar Disclosure, and was reported on by outlets including Deadline and The Hill.

Morisy also credits lively discussion on the Slack channel with bringing more exposure to issues like the FBI's new policy to no longer accept FOIA requests via email, forcing requesters to rely on snail mail and fax machines instead. Coverage of the subject by The Daily Dot and TechCrunch referenced MuckRock to illustrate what a huge step backwards it was for the FBI to revert to archaic communication methods for requests.

Morisy hopes the enthusiasm around public records requests will lead to greater collaboration among journalists. "We've pushed journalists and newsrooms to try to act more collaboratively and more transparently," he says. "We think it helps build trust with your readers. Making sure the public has access to what the government is up to is more important than ever."

Bastian Obermayer, who along with Obermeier led coverage of the Panama Papers, couldn't agree more. "We don't want this to make it seem like there's a war with Mr. Trump," he says. "For journalists, it's not being at war, it's being at work. The work is to check the government." ∎

Reporters across the country participate via Skype in a White House press briefing with press secretary Sean Spicer

What Happ

## How journalists are reinvigorating the long-form serial narrative

BY RICKI MORELL

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WHEN COLIN MCNULTY WAS DEVELOPING A POD-cast about Oprah Winfrey, the producer for WBEZ Chicago found inspiration in an unlikely place: "House of Cards," the Netflix series about a scheming Washington politician who eventually becomes president of the United States.

It's not that Winfrey, the billionaire high priestess of "living your best life," reminded him of the fictional Frank Underwood, the Netflix series' villainous main character. But the structure of the series' first three seasons, replete with cliffhangers and plot twists as Underwood rises from congressman to vice president to president, seemed a good template for a three-episode podcast chronicling Winfrey's journey to the pinnacle of success.
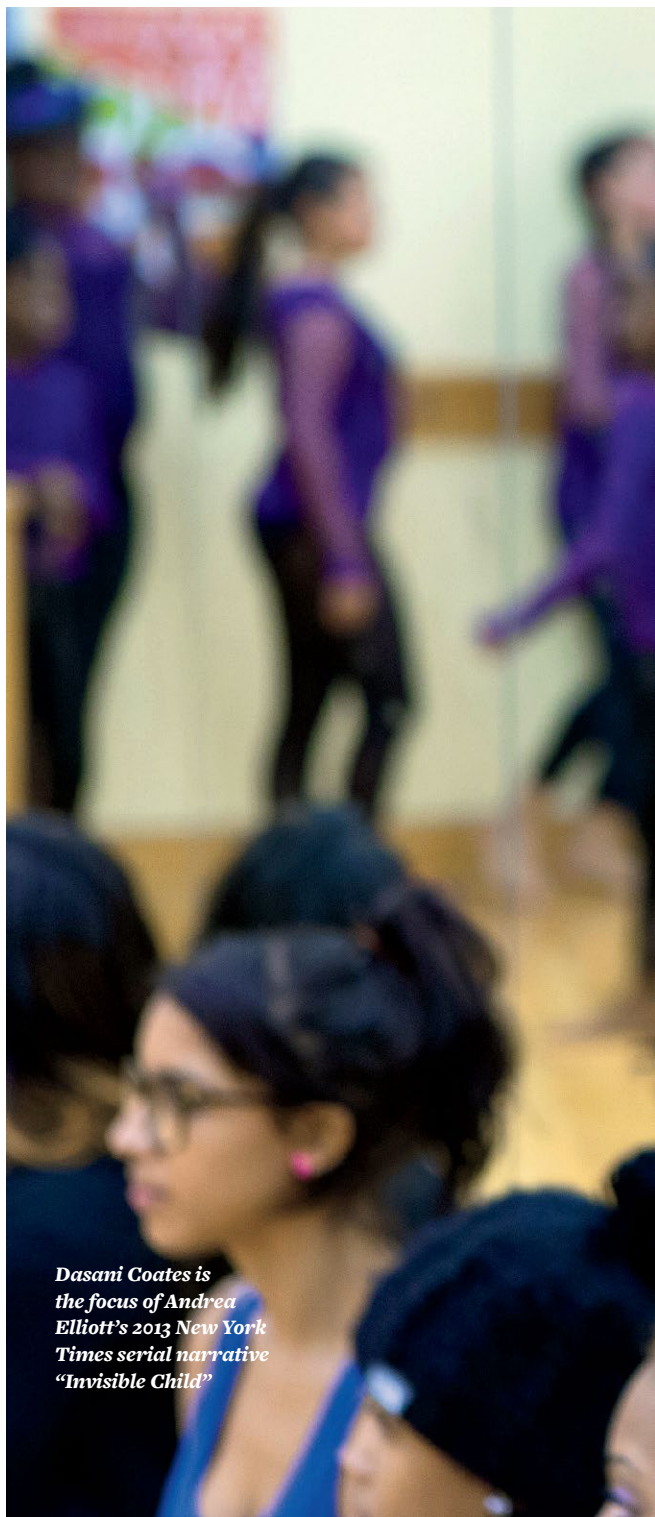
Dasani Coates is the focus of Andrea Elliott's 2013 New York Times serial narrative "Invisible Child"

ened Next...

"Making Oprah" begins with a dramatic moment as prologue: the demolition of her Chicago Harpo Studios in July 2016, five years after her show ended, to make way for a new McDonald's corporate headquarters. The first episode, "No Strategy, No Plan, No Formula," then circles back to tell the story of her beginnings as an African-American woman in television news and how she managed to wrangle her way into her first talk show. The episode ends on a dubious 1988 turning point: Winfrey drags on stage a wagon filled with 67 pounds of animal fat, which represents the weight she has lost. She shows off a svelte new body that didn't last—a move that ended up haunting her.

The second episode, "Skinheads and Scented Candles," chronicles her soul-searching after she realizes that a show featuring white supremacists gave a powerful platform to people whose ideas she abhorred. She decides she must take responsibility for the influence her show exerts and determines to find a new, more inspirational identity.

The final episode, "YOU GET A CAR!", explores the consequences of unbridled success as the whole enterprise becomes more outrageous—with stunts like giving out free cars to everyone in the audience. Winfrey and her staff decide they risk becoming a parody of themselves, so they make the difficult decision to end the program.

Joel Meyer, WBEZ executive producer for talk programming, says "Making Oprah" has been the station's most successful podcast launch. "The story of how she kept evolving her show and how she tried to turn it into more than a talk show was really appealing to a lot of people," Meyer says.

The surprising success of "Making Oprah," on the heels of "Serial," the 2014 "This American Life" podcast phenomenon, shows how America's love of television binge-watching has reinvigorated a literary form, the serial narrative, with a history that dates to Dickens and Homer. Nonfiction serials have animated screens, radios, and even daily newspapers.

Long-form serials run counter to the super-short tweeting and microblogging trend. But it's not the length that makes a serial enticing, it's what Indiana University journalism professor Thomas French calls "the enforced waiting." This "to be continued" approach draws in readers using the classic tools of storytelling craft that focus more on creating narrative tension than on conveying information.

Episodes of the first two seasons of "Serial" have been downloaded more than 250 million times, and it became the first podcast to win a Peabody Award. The "Serial" team's newest podcast debuted to generally glowing reviews on March 28. "S-Town" is a seven-episode series about a possible murder in rural Alabama hosted by "This American Life" producer Brian Reed. Unlike the original two seasons of "Serial," which were released weekly, "S-Town" listeners could download all seven episodes at once. "S-Town" is not a straightforward "true crime" story like "Serial," but its psychologically complex story struck a chord with listeners. In the first four days of its release, "S-Town" had been downloaded more than 10 million times—a record for a podcast, according to Serial Productions.

Although serial podcasts are popular to produce because they are a relatively inexpensive way to attract advertising dollars, the timeless draw of serial narrative permeates print and film as well. The documentary "OJ: Made in America," created as an approximately 7½-hour movie for theaters but presented on ESPN as a five-part television serial, was rebroadcast on ABC and ESPN2; 41 million viewers tuned in to one of the 40 telecasts of the documentary between the

"March," a three-volume graphic novel chronicling the life of civil rights icon John Lewis, is a bestseller, read by adults as well as students

June 11 premiere and July. Viewership grew even higher after it won an Academy Award in February.

Newspapers in search of readers also seem occasionally willing to invest the time needed—often a year or more—to produce deeply reported series that deliver subscriptions and pageviews. The New York Times's 2013 five-part serial "Invisible Child" took Andrea Elliott more than a year to report and write. The Los Angeles Times's 2016 mystery in six parts called "Framed," attracted 3 million unique pageviews and 50,000 subscribers to its newsletter.

Even book publishers, looking to reach a wider audience, have turned historical nonfiction into unconventional serial narratives: "March," Georgia congressman John Lewis's story of his journey through the civil rights movement, is a New York Times bestselling three-volume graphic novel that is now being read in schools.

"A serial is not a form of information delivery," says Roy Peter Clark, the Poynter Institute's senior scholar and one of the nation's most ardent nurturers of narrative journalism. "It's a form of experience delivery. Whether it's nonfiction or fiction, it's the creation of a world."

From Dickens to Netflix, a primary question drives good storytelling: What happens next? New York Times television critic James Poniewozik calls it "the suck, where you're sucked into it, and you just want one more bite." "Serial" captured this feeling in its first season when it sowed doubt about convicted murderer Adnan Syed with this question: Is he really guilty? The search for an answer, with reporter Sarah Koenig as a truth-seeking character in the narrative, unspooled over the course of 12 episodes and resulted in a new trial for Syed.

H OW DOES A JOURNALIST create a compelling world, and keep the reader asking for more? The tools are no different from nonfiction's and fiction's basics: inciting incident, narrative arc, and scenes including dialogue that move the narrative forward. When translating journalism into serials, some subject matters seem a natural: true crime, life-and-death struggle, a compelling character triumphing over obstacles.

French, a Pulitzer Prize-winning practitioner of narrative storytelling, advocates finding an "engine" for a nonfiction narrative,

America's love of binge-watching television has reinvigorated the serial narrative

"a question that drives the story that cannot be resolved in the cycle of one day and one night." This question forms the story's arc and can only be answered by continuing to read.

Of course, adding the constraints of journalism into the mix of creating a compelling story arc complicates the matter. For example, "Serial" may have been great storytelling, but it has been criticized for lax reporting and a tendency to sensationalize in service of the mystery narrative. Koenig fails to interview key players and inserts herself into scenes that seem to revolve around her own feelings and not reported facts.

French disagrees with such criticism but emphasizes that impeccable reporting is the cornerstone of a good nonfiction narrative. "To do a serial well requires a tremendous amount of reporting," says French, who is best known for the serial narratives he wrote for the St. Petersburg Times. "In a lot of journalism we are content to say, 'Such and such happened, police said.' When you do a serialized narrative, you have to actually find out what really happened."

Both reported reconstruction—using documents, videos, and other artifacts—and eyewitness observation can form the details of a narrative. But unlike fiction, where the writer is in complete control of the story, a journalist must come to terms with a story that may not be perfect. "Real life doesn't unfold as seamlessly as fiction," French says. "It's a lot more complicated, and very often has no real ending. You have to make your peace with the unruliness of real life."

The story behind a serial narrative doesn't have to be new, but it does need to be told in a fresh way. When Los Angeles Times reporter Christopher Goffard decided to follow the bizarre story of a Southern California PTA mom's harrowing experience with a false accusation, he knew he was taking on a sensational case that had already had its share of media attention. Still, "Framed," published in September 2016,

managed to keep readers on edge. The subhead teased at what was to come: "She Was the PTA Mom Everyone Knew. Who Would Want to Harm Her?" An astute use of online tools also added freshness and transparency. Web designer Lily Mihalik incorporated document excerpts, and short audio and video clips of the main characters.

Clark argues that sometimes hyperlinks and other temptations of online publishing can sabotage a narrative because they take people out of the story. "Digital and multimedia versions of journalism have de-emphasized the linear aspect of the reading experience," he says. "With the hyperlink alone, you're inviting people to stop moving forward and asking them to start moving sideways." But in "Framed" the immediacy of being able hear the main characters' voices and see the court documents seemed to add excitement and keep readers engaged. In a description of the series in a Facebook event with Goffard, readers called the serial "bonkers," "highly addictive" and "juicier than a Mexican novella."

Goffard first covered the story when it broke years earlier: A power couple, both attorneys, was charged with an unlikely revenge crime that sounded like tabloid fare. They were accused of planting 17 grams of marijuana, 11 Percocet and 29 Vicodin pills in the car of a volunteer director of an after-school program in Irvine, California. The wife pleaded guilty to a felony count of false imprisonment by fraud or deceit. A jury found the husband guilty of one count of false imprisonment by fraud or deceit. Goffard dug back into the story in early 2016 when he encountered the husband, sitting alone and looking defeated, at a courthouse where he was defending himself against the civil lawsuit the PTA mom had filed.

After discussing the encounter with his editors, Goffard decided it was a story worth telling again, this time in more depth: "Some people said, 'That's an old story. Hasn't it been told?' But it raised all kinds of interesting themes about the power dynamics of Southern California suburbia and the mysteries of self-destructive behavior and the nightmare of false accusation, and it really hadn't been told."

The story, 15,000 words long, was originally going to run into two parts, but Times editor in chief Davan Maharaj suggested breaking it up into smaller segments. Goffard found that it divided naturally into six chapters, with each one running from

Within four days of its release on March 28, the seven-episode "S-Town," hosted by Brian Reed, set a download record—10 million—for a podcast

about 1,800 to 3,100 words. "What's fun about six parts is the series builds momentum and word of mouth, especially on social media," Goffard says.

He tried to end on cliffhangers, and the end of the first installment was a classic, a recreated conversation between the investigating police officer and the PTA mom:

He had asked Kelli Peters:
If the drugs aren't yours, how did they get in your car?
"I have an enemy," she said.

Although it seems at first that the narrative tension will revolve around whether the PTA mom is guilty, it becomes clear very quickly that she's not. "The question of whether she's innocent is not the basis of the suspense here," Goffard explains. "She's obviously innocent. The question is, 'Who set her up?' When that gets answered, the question is, 'Why?' And then, 'Will the law be able to do anything about it?' And then, 'Will the full truth ever come out?'"

Because this is real life and not fiction, the biggest questions of the series never really get answered: Why did a seemingly happy and well-to-do couple of lawyers target a do-gooder PTA mom in such a vicious way? Goffard admits he's still baffled: "I don't have any real answers to that one beyond what's in the story."

SERIAL NARRATIVES BLOSSOMED with the New Journalism of the 1970s, when writers like Tom Wolfe and Gay Talese used literary techniques to tell nonfiction stories. In the 1990s, profitable newsrooms devoted money and time to reporters who produced what would come to be considered masterworks of the newspaper serial form. In 1991 at the St. Petersburg Times, French wrote a Livingston Award-winning serial, "South of Heaven," using the chronological frame of one year in a south Florida high school to create narrative tension with this question: Who will drop out and who will graduate? He was awarded the 1998 feature writing Pulitzer Prize for "Angels and Demons," a St. Petersburg Times serial that chronicled the murder of an Ohio woman and her two teenage daughters as they vacationed in Tampa.

Mark Bowden also found inspiration in the New Journalism techniques, even though his editors were pleading with him to write so short that his stories wouldn't jump to an inside page. Bowden, who began working at The Philadelphia Inquirer in 1979, discovered the power of "long" in the 1990s when he deconstructed a book he was working on and turned it into a 26-day newspaper serial about how a U.S. relief mission in Somalia ended in a firefight with high-tech helicopters.

Bowden had been working on the book on his own but couldn't find a publisher. He negotiated a deal with his editors that he would chop it up into a newspaper serial. It took him about a year to get it into shape. He focused on the dramatic action of the events, and cut out most of the analysis, until it was about a third of the size of the original manuscript. Each day's installment was about 25 newspaper inches, and he tried to write scenes because he knew scenes move a story forward. "If you can write a scene with character, that is the most fun to read," says Bowden, who is now an author and a writer in residence at the University of Delaware.

> **"A serial is not a form of information delivery. It's a form of experience delivery."**
>
> —Roy Peter Clark
> **Poynter Institute scholar**

This was the early days of the newspaper's online presence, and a visionary online editor, Jennifer Musser Metz, decided to present all of Bowden's source material. He remembers bringing in shopping bags full of documents that were then posted online in a multimedia presentation. In an exhibit at the Newseum in Washington D.C., the online display is credited with being one of the earliest examples of its kind.

It was a hit both in the paper and online. The series, called "Black Hawk Down," became an Internet phenomenon. Hollywood producer Jerry Bruckheimer turned it into a blockbuster film directed by Ridley Scott.

But most surprising, Bowden recalls, the head of circulation ventured into the foreign territory of the newsroom to shake his hand. "Do another one like this," he said.

A serial doesn't only answer the question: What happened next? Sometimes, it also explores a second, deeper question: How did it happen?

When producer Caroline Waterlow got a call from director Ezra Edelman asking if she wanted to work on a documentary about O.J. Simpson, she recalls saying, "Really? Do we need more about O.J.?" And she remembers his response: "It's not just about O.J.—it's about everything!"

Waterlow says she was convinced to sign on when Edelman described his vision for a documentary that used the prism of race to intertwine O.J.'s history and the city of Los Angeles' history and explore how they culminated in that moment when O.J. was acquitted. The finished product was what French would call a "multi-thread" narrative, with O.J. and L.A. as the two main characters. It spans half a century and is told most-

ly in straight chronological order that braids together O.J.'s rise from a San Francisco housing project to star athlete, pitchman, and actor with the history of the L.A. Police Department's fraught relationship with the city's African-American citizens.

The team worked on the film for two years, conducted 72 interviews, shot 300 hours of original material, and sifted through 500 hours of archival footage. The New York Times's Poniewozik says one of the most memorable scenes is 1970s footage of a Hertz commercial in which O.J., the Heisman Trophy winner, is sprinting through an airport to get his rental car. In the background, "white validators" in the form of an elderly white woman and a group of young white Girls Scouts cheer him on. Poniewozik calls the film a "documentary essay" more than a classic "true crime" narrative.

"It's telling this very familiar story and telling you, 'This is why it mattered,'" he says. "Why did it matter that O.J. was a black celebrity, and why in the context of civil rights in America and popular culture?"

Waterlow says the film was not conceived as a serial and Edelman would have preferred that viewers only watch in a theater with an intermission or two. Its serialization resulted from the realities of television, but the chronological structure lent itself to natural chapter breaks, and producers didn't have much trouble dividing it into five parts. Although each part didn't end on a traditional cliffhanger, the questions asked were interesting enough to hook the audience. "The

length was the whole point," says Waterlow. "Ezra's interest was in a large canvas. There was no point of doing another two-hour film because that had been done. We were told no one's got time, but the reaction was really strong. People were hungry for this."

The "Making Oprah" podcast capitalizes on Oprah's fame and the genuine excitement of its host, WBEZ anchor Jenn White, an African-American woman who at one point in the podcast calls her mother just to tell her she is going to speak to Winfrey. Making the reporter part of the story works, McNulty says, because "it breaks up the authority, makes it a little more approachable, and makes the audience feel like they're being let in on stuff."

Roy Peter Clark calls this technique "broken narrative." He likens it to one used by John McPhee's classic "Coming Into the Country," a nonfiction account of traveling through Alaska. In the book, the reader follows McPhee as he journeys down a river, until McPhee steps out of the flow to tell the reader how he got there. Podcasts like "Making Oprah" and "Serial" work despite the broken narrative, Clark says, because "the story is compelling enough that the audience wants to stick with it."

In the current media environment, serials offer a break from 24/7 information overload by inviting an audience to slow down and savor a story. "That's one thing that Netflix and podcasts have shown us," says Poniewozik. "If people are enthusiastic about something, they will spend a lot of time with it." ∎

The six-part "Framed," published in the Los Angeles Times, revisits a sensational case, expanding on news coverage about Kelli Peters, a PTA mom targeted in a revenge crime

How News Flows on Social Media

In "Twitter and Tear Gas," Zeynep Tufekci examines how invisible gatekeepers— algorithms—affect which stories and movements gain traction

BY ZEYNEP TUFEKCI

Zeynep Tufekci is a scholar of social movements and the technologies on which they rely. In "Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest," published May 16 by Yale University Press, she draws on her observations at marches in Istanbul, Cairo, and New York to examine how the distribution of news on social media can have a profound effect on social movements. An excerpt:

S OCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS INcreasingly use algorithms—complex software—to sift through content and decide what to surface, prioritize, and publicize and what to bury. These platforms create, upload, and share user-generated content from hundreds of millions, if not billions, of people, but most platforms do not and cannot show everything to everyone. Even Twitter, which used to show content chronologically—content posted last is seen first—is increasingly shifting to algorithmic control.

Perhaps the most important such algorithm for social movements is the one Facebook uses which sorts, prioritizes, and

filters everyone's "news feed" according to criteria the company decides. Google's success is dependent on its page-ranking algorithm that distills a page of links from the billions of possible responses to a search query.

Algorithmic control of content can mean the difference between widespread visibility and burial of content. For social movements, an algorithm can be a strong tailwind or a substantial obstacle. Algorithms can also shape social movement tactics as a movement's content producers adapt or transform their messages to be more algorithm friendly.

Consider how the Black Lives Matter movement, now nationwide in the United States, encountered significant algorithmic resistance on Facebook in its initial phase. After a police officer killed an African American teenager in Ferguson, Missouri, in August 2014, there were protests in the city that later sparked nationwide demonstrations against racial inequalities and the criminal justice system. However, along the way, this burgeoning movement was almost tripped up by Facebook's algorithm.

The protests had started out small and local. The body of Michael Brown, the black teenager shot and killed by Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson on August 9, had been left in the street for hours. The city was already rife with tensions over race and policing methods. Residents were upset and grieving.

There were rumors that Brown's hands had been up in the air when he was shot.

When the local police in Ferguson showed up at the first vigils with an aggressive stance, accompanied by dogs, the outrage felt by residents spread more broadly and brought in people who might not have been following the issue on the first day. The Ferguson situation began to attract some media attention. There had been tornadoes in Missouri around that time that had drawn some national journalists to the state. As reports of the use of tear gas during nightly protests started pouring in, journalists went to Ferguson. Ferguson residents started live-streaming video as well, although at this point, the protests were mostly still a local news story.

On the evening of August 13, the police appeared on the streets of Ferguson in armored vehicles and wearing military gear, with snipers poised in position and pointing guns at the protesters. That is when I first noticed the news of Ferguson on Twitter— and was startled at such a massive overuse of police force in a suburban area in the United States. The pictures, essentially showing a military-grade force deployed in a small American town, were striking. The scene looked more like Bahrain or Egypt, and as the Ferguson tweets spread, my friends from those countries started joking that their police force might have been exported to the American Midwest.

Later that evening, as the streets of Ferguson grew tenser, and the police presence escalated even further, two journalists from prominent national outlets, The Washington Post and the The Huffington Post, were arrested while they were sitting at a McDonald's and charging their phones. The situation was familiar to activists and journalists around the world because McDonald's and Starbucks are where people go to charge their batteries and access Wi-Fi. The arrest of the reporters roused more indignation and focused the attention of many other journalists on Ferguson.

On Twitter, among about a thousand people around the world that I follow, and which was still sorted chronologically at the time, the topic became dominant. Many people were wondering what was going on in Ferguson—even people from other countries were commenting. On Facebook's algorithmically controlled news feed, however, it was as if nothing had happened. I wondered whether it was me: were my Facebook friends just not talking about it? I tried to

In Istanbul in 2013, while TV stations declined to cover protests, the news spread on social media

override Facebook's default options to get a straight chronological feed. Some of my friends were indeed talking about Ferguson protests, but the algorithm was not showing the story to me. It was difficult to assess fully, as Facebook keeps switching people back to an algorithmic feed, even if they choose a chronological one.

As I inquired more broadly, it appeared that Facebook's algorithm—the opaque, proprietary formula that changes every week, and that can cause huge shifts in news traffic, making or breaking the success and promulgation of individual stories or even affecting whole media outlets—may have decided that the Ferguson stories were lower priority to show to many users than other, more algorithm-friendly ones. Instead of news of the Ferguson protests, my own Facebook's news feed was dominated by the "Ice Bucket Challenge," a worthy cause in which people poured buckets of cold water over their heads and, in some cases, donated to an amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) charity. Many other people were reporting a similar phenomenon.

There is no publicly available detailed and exact explanation about how the news feed determines which stories are shown

Though the Ferguson protests dominated Twitter, on Facebook's news feed it was as if nothing had happened

high up on a user's main Facebook page, and which ones are buried. If one searches for an explanation, the help pages do not provide any specifics beyond saying that the selection is "influenced" by a user's connections and activity on Facebook, as well as the "number of comments and likes a post receives and what kind of a story it is." What is left unsaid is that the decision maker is an algorithm, a computational model designed to optimize measurable results that Facebook chooses, like keeping people engaged with the site and, since Facebook is financed by ads, presumably keeping the site advertiser friendly.

Facebook's decisions in the design of its algorithm have great power, especially because there is a tendency for users to stay within Facebook when they are reading the news, and they are often unaware that an algorithm is determining what they see. In one study, 62.5 percent of users had no idea that the algorithm controlling their feed existed, let alone how it worked. This study used a small sample in the United States, and the subjects were likely more educated about the internet than many other populations globally, so this probably underestimates the degree to which people worldwide are unaware of the algorithm and its influence. I asked a class of 20 bright and inquisitive students at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, a flagship university where I teach, how they thought Facebook decided what to show them on top of their feed. Only two knew it was an algorithm. When their friends didn't react to a post they made, they assumed that their friends were ignoring them, since Facebook does not let

them know who did or didn't see the post. When I travel around the world or converse with journalists or ethnographers who work on social media, we swap stories of how rare it is to find someone who understands that the order of posts on her or his Facebook feed has been chosen by Facebook. The news feed is a world with its own laws, and the out-of-sight deities who rule it are Facebook programmers and the company's business model. Yet the effects are so complex and multilayered that it often cannot be said that the outcomes correspond exactly to what the software engineers intended.

Our knowledge of Facebook's power mostly depends on research that Facebook explicitly allows to take place and on willingly released findings from its own experiments. It is thus only a partial, skewed picture. However, even that partial view attests how much influence the platform wields.

In a Facebook experiment published in Nature that was conducted on a whopping 61 million people, some randomly selected portion of this group received a neutral message to "go vote," while others, also randomly selected, saw a slightly more social version of the encouragement: small thumbnail pictures of a few of their friends who reported having voted were shown within the "go vote" pop-up. The researchers measured that this slight tweak—completely within Facebook's control and conducted without the consent or notification of any of the millions of Facebook users—caused about 340,000 additional people to turn out to vote in the 2010 U.S. congressional elections. (The true number may even be higher since the method of matching voter files to Facebook names only works for exact matches.) That significant effect—from a one-time, single tweak— is more than four times the number of votes that determined that Donald Trump would be the winner of the 2016 election for presidency in the United States.

In another experiment, Facebook randomly selected whether users saw posts with slightly more upbeat words or more downbeat ones; the result was correspondingly slightly more upbeat or downbeat posts by those same users. Dubbed the "emotional contagion" study, this experiment sparked international interest in Facebook's power to shape a user's experience since it showed that even people's moods could be affected by choices that Facebook made about what to show them, from whom, and how. Also, for many, it was a revelation that Facebook made such choices at all, once again reveal-

ing how the algorithm operates as a hidden shaper of the networked public sphere.

Facebook's algorithm was not prioritizing posts about the Ice Bucket Challenge rather than Ferguson posts because of a nefarious plot by Facebook's programmers or marketing department to bury the nascent social movement. It did not matter whether its programmers or even its managers were sympathetic to the movement. The algorithm they designed and whose priorities they set, combined with the signals they allowed users on the platform to send, created that result.

Facebook's primary signal from its users is the infamous "Like" button. Users can click on "Like" on a story. "Like" clearly indicates a positive stance. The "Like" button is also embedded in millions of web pages globally, and the blue thumbs-up sign that goes with the "Like" button is Facebook's symbol, prominently displayed at the entrance to the company's headquarters at One Hacker Way, Menlo Park, California. But there is no "Dislike" button, and until 2016, there was no way to quickly indicate an emotion other than liking. The prominence of "Like" within Facebook obviously fits with the site's positive and advertiser-friendly disposition.

But "Like" is not a neutral signal. How can one "like" a story about a teenager's death and ongoing, grief-stricken protests? Understandably, many of my friends were not clicking on the "Like" button for stories about the Ferguson protests, which meant that the algorithm was not being told that this was an important story that my social network was quite interested in. But it is easy to give a thumbs-up to a charity drive that involved friends dumping ice water on their heads and screeching because of the shock in the hot August sun.

From press reporting on the topic and from Facebook's own statements, we know that Facebook's algorithm is also positively biased toward videos, mentions of people, and comments. The ALS Ice Bucket Challenge generated many self-made videos, comments, and urgings to others to take the challenge by tagging them with their Facebook handles. In contrast, Ferguson protest news was less easy to comment on. What is one supposed to say, especially given the initial lack of clarity about the facts of the case and the tense nature of the problem? No doubt many people chose to remain silent, sometimes despite intense interest in the topic.

The platforms' algorithms often contain feedback loops: once a story is buried, even a little, by the algorithm, it becomes increasingly hidden. The fewer people see it in the first place because the algorithm is not showing it to them, the fewer are able to choose to share it further, or even to signal to the algorithm that it is an important story. This can cause the algorithm to bury the story even deeper in an algorithmic spiral of silence.

The power to shape experience (or perhaps elections) is not limited to Facebook. For example, rankings by Google—a near monopoly in searches around the world—are hugely consequential. A politician can be greatly helped or greatly hurt if Google chooses to highlight, say, a link to a corruption scandal on the first page of its results or hide it in later pages where very few people bother to click. A 2015 study suggested that slight changes to search rankings could shift the voting preferences of undecided voters.

Ferguson news managed to break through to national consciousness only because there was an alternative platform without algorithmic filtering and with sufficient reach. On the chronologically organized Twitter, the topic grew to dominate discussion, trending locally, nationally, and globally and catching the attention of journalists and broader publics. After three million tweets, the national news media started covering the story too, although not until well after the tweets had surged. At one point, before mass-media coverage began, a Ferguson live-stream video had about forty thousand viewers, about 10 percent of the nightly average on CNN at that hour. Meanwhile, two seemingly different editorial regimes, one algorithmic (Facebook) and one edited by humans (mass media), had simultaneously been less focused on the Ferguson story. It's worth pondering if without Twitter's reverse chronological stream, which allowed its users to amplify content as they choose, unmediated by an algorithmic gatekeeper, the news of unrest and protests might never have made it onto the national agenda.

The proprietary, opaque, and personalized nature of algorithmic control on the web also makes it difficult even to understand what drives visibility on platforms, what is seen by how many people, and how and why they see

On Facebook in August 2014, the ice bucket challenge crowded out posts about Ferguson protests

it. Broadcast television can be monitored by anyone to see what is being covered and what is not, but the individualized algorithmic feed or search results are visible only to their individual users. This creates a double challenge: if the content a social movement is trying to disseminate is not being shared widely, the creators do not know whether the algorithm is burying it, or whether their message is simply not resonating.

If the nightly television news does not cover a protest, the lack of coverage is evident for all to see and even to contest. In Turkey, during the Gezi Park protests, lack of coverage on broadcast television networks led to protests: people marched to the doors of the television stations and demanded that the news show the then-widespread protests. However, there is no transparency in algorithmic filtering: how is one to know whether Facebook is showing Ferguson news to everyone else but him or her, whether there is just no interest in the topic, or whether it is the algorithmic feedback cycle that is depressing the updates in favor of a more algorithm-friendly topic, like the ALS charity campaign?

Algorithmic filtering can produce complex effects. It can result in more polarization and at the same time deepen the filter bubble. The bias toward "Like" on Facebook promotes the echo-chamber effect, making it more likely that one sees posts one already agrees with. Of course, this builds upon the pre-existing human tendency to gravitate toward topics and positions one already agrees with—confirmation bias—which is well demonstrated in social science research. Facebook's own studies show that the algorithm contributes to this bias by making the feed somewhat more tilted toward one's existing views, reinforcing the echo chamber.

Another type of bias is "comment" bias, which can promote visibility for the occasional quarrels that have garnered many comments. But how widespread are these problems, and what are their effects? It is hard to study any of this directly because the data are owned by Facebook—or, in the case of search, Google. These are giant corporations that control and make money from the user experience, and yet the impact of that experience is not accessible to study by independent researchers.

Social movement activists are greatly attuned to this issue. I often hear of potential tweaks to the algorithm of major platforms from activists who are constant-

ly trying to reverse-engineer them and understand how to get past them. They are among the first people to notice slight changes. Groups like Upworthy have emerged to produce political content designed to be Facebook algorithm friendly and to go viral. However, this is not a neutral game. Just as attracting mass-media attention through stunts came with political costs, playing to the algorithm comes with political costs as well. Upworthy, for example, has ended up producing many feel-good stories, since those are easy to "Like," and thus please Facebook's algorithm. Would the incentives to appease the algorithm make social movements gear towards feel-good content (that gets "Likes") along with quarrelsome, extreme claims (which tend to generate comments?)—and even if some groups held back, would the ones that played better to the algorithm dominate the conversation? Also, this makes movements vulnerable in new ways. When Facebook tweaked its algorithm to punish sites that strove for this particular kind of virality, Upworthy's traffic suddenly fell by half. The game never ends; new models of virality pop up quickly, sometimes rewarded and other times discouraged by the central platform according to its own priorities.

The two years after the Ferguson story saw many updates to Facebook's algorithm, and a few appeared to be direct attempts to counter the biases that had surfaced about Ferguson news. The algorithm started taking into account the amount of time a user spent hovering over a news story—not necessarily clicking on it, but looking at it and perhaps pondering it in an attempt to catch an important story one might not like or comment on— and, as previously noted, programmers implemented a set of somewhat harder-to-reach but potentially available Facebook reactions ranging from "sad" to "angry" to "wow." The "Like" button,
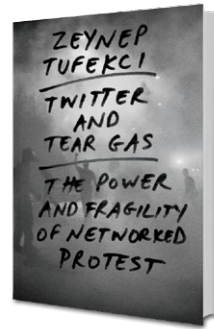
"Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest" by Zeynep Tufekci (Yale University Press)

however, remains preeminent, and so does its oversized role in determining what spreads or disappears on Facebook.

In May 2016, during a different controversy about potential bias on Facebook, a document first leaked to The Guardian and then released by Facebook showed a comparison of "trends" during August 2014. In an indirect confirmation of how the Ferguson story was shadowed by the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, the internal Facebook document showed that the ALS ice-bucket challenge had overwhelmed the news feed, and that posts about Ferguson had trailed.

Increasingly, pressured by Wall Street and advertisers, more and more platforms, including Twitter, are moving toward algorithmic filtering and gatekeeping. On Twitter, an algorithmically curated presentation of "the best tweets first" is now the default, and switching to a chronological presentation requires navigating to the settings menu. Algorithmic governance, it appears, is the future and the new overlords that social movements must grapple with.

The networked public sphere is not a flat, open space with no barriers and no structures. Sometimes, the gatekeepers of the networked public sphere are even more centralized and sometimes even more powerful than those of the mass media, although their gatekeeping does not function in the same way. Facebook and Google are perhaps historically unprecedented in their reach and their power, affecting what billions of people see on six continents (perhaps seven; I have had friends contact me on social media from Antarctica). As private companies headquartered in the United States, these platforms are within their legal rights to block content as they see fit. They can unilaterally choose their naming policies, allowing people to use pseudonyms or not. Their computational processes filter and prioritize content, with significant consequences.

This means a world in which social movements can potentially reach hundreds of millions of people after a few clicks without having to garner the resources to challenge or even own mass media, but it also means that their significant and important stories can be silenced by a terms-of-service complaint or by an algorithm. It is a new world for both media and social movements. ∎

Social movements have a huge potential reach on social media but they also can be silenced by algorithms

Introducing the 80th Class of Nieman Fellows

Twenty-four journalists will study at Harvard for the 2017–18 academic year

U.S. Fellows

Tristan Ahtone
Freelance reporter and member of the Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma, will study how to improve coverage of indigenous communities with a focus on creating codes of conduct.

Maryclaire Dale
Legal affairs reporter for the Associated Press, will study how journalists can improve coverage of sexual violence as victims confront leaders in law, religion, and higher education.

Emily Dreyfuss
Journalist at Wired, will study how the internet and social media change the way culture is formed and history is written, and the role journalism should play in verifying that record.

Dustin Dwyer
Reporter and producer for Michigan Radio, will look at the personal, psychological, and social upheavals that are occurring as the nature of work undergoes changes.

Matthew Karolian
Director of audience engagement at The Boston Globe, will study the impending impact of artificial intelligence on how news is reported and consumed.

Lisa Lerer
National political reporter for the Associated Press, will study how distrust of major societal institutions is posing new challenges and reshaping American politics.

Jamieson Lesko
International producer for NBC News, will study the intersection between truth, political persuasion, perception, and trust in mainstream media.

Diana Marcum
Senior writer at the Los Angeles Times, will study the effect of true stories on people and the divide between urban and rural sectors and whether shared stories can bridge that gap.

Nneka Nwosu Faison
Reporter and producer at WCVB-TV's "Chronicle" program, will study how broadcast news stations can use social media to engage diverse audiences.

Emily Rueb
New York Times writer and producer of the multimedia New York 101, will study the history of public works to understand how infrastructure investments impact cities.

Lauren N. Williams
Features editor for Essence, will study the historic contributions of black women to American society and culture and develop a new digital platform that prioritizes their experiences.

Edward Wong
International correspondent and former Beijing bureau chief for The New York Times, will study the rise and fall of modern empires and the consequences of their declines.

International Fellows

Sebastián Escalón
GUATEMALA
Reporter at Plaza Pública online news site, will study the Alliance for Prosperity Plan, a new policy trying to address the migration crisis in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras.

Glenda Gloria
PHILIPPINES
Managing editor and co-founder of Rappler, the Philippines' top social news network, will study the evolution of journalism and democracy at this time of rapid technological change.

Lenka Kabrhelova
CZECH REPUBLIC
U.S. correspondent for Czech Radio, the country's main public radio broadcasting network, will study the polarization of the media environment and ways to engage diverse audiences.

Sipho Kings
SOUTH AFRICA
Environment reporter at the Mail & Guardian in Johannesburg, will examine how Africa's carbon emitters plan to lower their emissions and help populations adapt.

Christine Mungai
KENYA
Editor of Africapedia, Ltd., plans to study the relationship between torture, silence, repression, and how that affects a country's political imagination and media reporting.

Frederik Obermaier
GERMANY
Investigative reporter at the Süddeutsche Zeitung, will study how to fight global tax havens with journalistic means, with a focus on the role of banks, lawyers, and wealth managers.

Michael Petrou
CANADA
Freelance foreign correspondent, will research how Russia and Western nations try to shape narratives and the democratizing opportunities presented by new media.

João Pina
PORTUGAL
Photographer with an international portfolio, will study the impact of archival photography and the way its juxtaposition with current images can increase impact.

María Ramírez
SPAIN
Reporter and entrepreneur who covers U.S. politics for Univision and co-founded a bot called Politbot, will study how to develop personalized tools to reach a skeptical audience.

Shalini Singh
INDIA
Delhi-based correspondent for the The Week, will focus on expanding a multimedia digital repository of information about the lives, languages, and cultures in rural India.

Mat Skene
UNITED KINGDOM
Executive producer of Al Jazeera's current affairs program Fault Lines, will explore alternatives to the dominant form of storytelling in Western television media.

Bonny Symons-Brown
AUSTRALIA
Supervising producer and reporter for Australian Broadcasting Corporation, will study the intersection of Islam, democracy, and human rights, with a focus on Indonesia.

In selecting the class of 2018, Nieman Foundation curator **Ann Marie Lipinski**, a 1990 Nieman Fellow, was joined by **Caroline Elkins**, professor of history and African and African American studies at Harvard; **Debra Adams Simmons**, most recently a vice president at Advance Local and a 2016 Nieman Fellow; **Brett Anderson**, restaurant critic and features writer at The Times-Picayune in New Orleans and a 2013 Nieman Fellow; and **James Geary**, Nieman's deputy curator and a 2012 Nieman Fellow.

Nieman Notes

1951

Simeon Booker has been nominated by Ohio representatives for the Congressional Gold Medal, Congress's highest honor, in recognition of his contributions to civil rights and the field of journalism. Working for Jet magazine, he became well-known for his coverage of the nation's racial divide, beginning most notably with his reporting on the lynching of Emmett Till in 1955.

1966

Ralph Hancox died March 22 in Victoria, British Columbia. He was 86. He was editor in chief at the Peterborough Examiner in Peterborough, Ontario, and he won a National Newspaper Award for excellence in editorial writing. He joined Reader's Digest where he worked for 32 years. For 16 years, he was chairman, president, and CEO of Reader's Digest Canada and chairman of Reader's Digest Italy. Following his retirement, he taught for 10 years at Simon Fraser University.

1982

Steve Oney is the author of a new book, "A Man's World," a collection of 20 profiles of such archetypal men as Harrison Ford, Robert Penn Warren, Herschel Walker, and Andrew Breitbart. Published in May by Mercer University Press, the volume contains pieces that first appeared in Esquire, Time, Playboy, GQ, The New York Times Magazine, and Los Angeles.

1986

Buzz Bissinger is the co-author of Caitlyn Jenner's memoir, "The Secrets of My Life," published by Grand Central Publishing in April. Bissinger wrote the July 2015 Vanity Fair cover story that profiled Jenner and her transition from Olympic icon Bruce Jenner to a transgender woman.

1998

Howard Berkes and his NPR colleagues, along with collaborators at Ohio Valley ReSource, have received an award from Investigative Reporters & Editors in the large market radio category. The team was recognized for "Advanced Black Lung Cases Surge in Appalachia," an investigation into cases of black lung, the deadly coal miners' disease, that were unreported by federal researchers.

Uri Berliner is among the team members from NPR's business desk and "Planet Money" podcast that have been honored with a 2016 Peabody Award in the radio/podcast category for "Wells Fargo Hurts Whistleblowers." The investigative series traced the systemic issues and toxic sales culture that led to the creation of two million fake consumer banking accounts.

1999

Bill Graves is the author of "Transformed: How Oregon's Public Health University Won Independence and Healed Itself," published by Pacific University Press in February. The book explores the forces that helped transform Oregon Health & Science University into one of the nation's top medical research universities.

2000

Thrity Umrigar is the author of "Everybody's Son," to be published by HarperCollins in June. The novel probes issues of race, class, privilege, and power through the stories of two families, one black, one white.

2001

Ken Armstrong is a member of the team that has been recognized with a 2016 Peabody Award in the radio/podcast category for the "This American Life" episode "Anatomy of Doubt." It is a radio adaptation of "An Unbelievable Story of Rape," the Pulitzer Prize-winning story by Armstrong of The Marshall Project and T. Christian Miller of ProPublica.

2004

Indira Lakshmanan has joined The Poynter Institute as the Craig Newmark Foundation Chair in Journalism Ethics. She is writing about media ethics and organizing conferences on a range of ethics issues. In addition, she continues to be a Washington columnist for The Boston Globe.
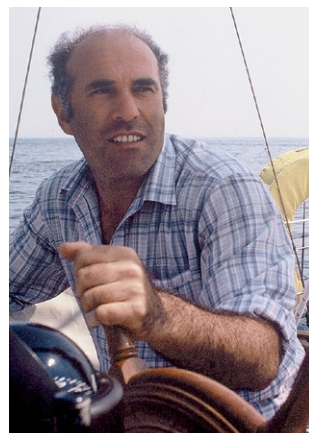

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Zvi Dor-Ner, NF '77, as recalled by his classmate and debating partner Jose A. Martinez Soler

Zvi Dor-Ner, *a 1977 Nieman Fellow and a longtime WGBH executive producer, died in Brookline, Massachusetts from pancreatic cancer on April 6. He was 75.*

Dor-Ner spent three decades at WGBH, Boston's PBS affiliate, where he produced several award-winning series and historical documentaries. He worked on more than a dozen films for "Nova," "Frontline," and "American Experience."

It was in 1976 that I met fellow Nieman Fellows Zvi Dor-Ner of Jerusalem Televisión and Jamil Mroue of an Arabic daily newspaper in Beruit. In discussions at Lippmann House, I supported Jamil's pro-Palestinian theses on conflict in the Middle East. Naturally, Zvi, pro-Israeli, dissented. Thus began a unique weekly debate trio—and a friendship that grew until the last breath of our dear friend Zvi.

It was impossible to know Zvi and not love him. His resounding belly laughs accompanied even his most profound arguments. I soon supported Zvi's thesis about the need for the new pre-democratic Spain to officially recognize the State of Israel if Spain were to play a role in favor of peace in the region. Ten years after meeting Zvi, in January 1986, Spain and Israel at last established diplomatic relations, which I had dreamed about with Zvi and Jamil in the bars of Cambridge. I got his help to broadcast the news on "Buenos Días," the Spanish TV news program that I founded, produced, and anchored.

With Zvi's help, the Jerusalem TV studio opened at 5 a.m. their time to connect via live satellite. I opened my program saying "Shalom Israel…" and, in response, a clear, strong voice was heard in Spanish homes watching the morning's first news show: "Buenos días, Sepharad."

After 500 years of intolerance, Spaniards at last invited the Sephardics—Spaniards long in exile— to come home. Thank you, my friend Zvi. Rest in peace.

2007

Ian Johnson is the recipient of the 2016 Shorenstein Journalism Award, given annually by Stanford University's Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center to a journalist who produces outstanding reporting on Asia and its complexities. Johnson has spent much of his career reporting from China for The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, and other outlets.

2008

Fernando Rodrigues is among the many journalists from the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), McClatchy, and the Miami Herald recognized with the 2017 Pulitzer in Explanatory Reporting for the Panama Papers investigation. Rodrigues, who founded news site Poder360 to cover Brazil's government, is a member of ICIJ.

2010

Anita Snow in July will join the Associated Press's Phoenix bureau to cover immigration, demographics, and urban affairs. Currently, Snow is an editor on AP's Latin America desk in Mexico City.

2013

David Abel is the filmmaker behind a new documentary, "Gladesmen: The Last of the Sawgrass Cowboys," about the federal government's ban on airboats in much of the Everglades. He worked on the project while serving as the Visiting Knight Chair in Journalism at the University of Miami.

Chris Arnold is among the team members from NPR's business desk and "Planet Money" podcast that have been honored with a 2016 Peabody Award in the radio/podcast category for "Wells Fargo Hurts Whistleblowers." The investigative series traced the systemic issues and toxic sales culture that led to the creation of two million fake consumer banking accounts.

Souad Mekhennet is the author of "I Was Told to Come Alone: My Journey Behind the Lines of Jihad," published in June by Holt. She is a Washington Post correspondent.

2014

Uri Blau is among the approximately 400 journalists recognized with the 2017 Pulitzer in Explanatory Reporting for the Panama Papers investigation. Blau is a member of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), which played a key role in the investigation.

Tammerlin Drummond is a member of the East Bay Times staff recognized with a 2017 Pulitzer in Breaking News Reporting for coverage of the "Ghost Ship" fire, which killed 36 people at a warehouse party in Oakland, California, and their reporting that exposed the city's failure to take action that may have prevented the tragedy.

Jeff Young, managing editor of Ohio Valley ReSource, was among those recognized with an Investigative Reporters & Editors award in the large market radio category for the NPR-Ohio Valley ReSource collaboration "Advanced Black Lung Cases Surge in Appalachia." The series exposed the high number of cases of black lung among current and former miners that went unreported by the federal government.

2015

Wahyu Dhyatmika is among the journalists from the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), McClatchy, and the Miami Herald recognized with the 2017 Pulitzer in Explanatory Reporting for the Panama Papers investigation. A member of ICIJ, Dhyatmika was promoted from managing editor to executive editor of Indonesia's Tempo magazine in January.

Johanna van Eeden has left the position of editor in chief of Media24 to become the publisher of the South African print media company. Media24 is the country's largest publisher of newspapers and magazines, and also oversees several media websites.

2016

Wendi C. Thomas has launched a nonprofit reporting project about economic justice, MLK50: Justice Through Journalism. 2017 is the 50th anniversary of the killing of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

"PURE CECILIA: SEE A NEED, ADDRESS IT. ENLIST OTHERS. EXPAND THE SPHERE."

Cecilia Alvear's 1989 Nieman classmate Michael Connor remembers her prodigious capacities

Cecilia Alvear, *NF '89, who worked for NBC for 25 years and was a former president of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, died April 21 in Santa Monica, California after battling cancer. Born in Ecuador, she worked at news stations in Los Angeles before NBC hired her in 1982 to run its Mexico City bureau. She served on the Nieman Foundation advisory board from 2004-2013.*

Cecilia embodied the best of the "Yes, and…" spirit of improvisational theater: the idea that one accepts what is on hand, what is offered—"Yes!"— and adds something to make it greater—"and…" Cecilia did not need theatrical training to come to that awareness; it was deeply bred, it is who she was.

Twenty years ago, we [my wife Barb and two sons] joined Cecilia and [her partner] George [Lewis] and other family and friends on an excursion to her home islands, Galapagos. It was an extraordinary, exotic, and peaceable experience, yes. And… she had more in mind than just a nifty vacation. We visited Alejandro Alvear school, the first school to open in the islands, named for her father. It was underfinanced and poorly equipped for the modern age, and she worried that its graduates would be ill-prepared for a digital world. So she began organizing to build its capacity to teach the necessary skills.

Cecilia Alvear with her partner George Lewis and Nieman advisory board member Carolyn Curiel

Illness eventually intervened. She had to give it up. But it was pure Cecilia. See a need, address it. Enlist others. Expand the sphere.

Curiosity breeds humility, and she had both in abundance. Which made her a great journalist. And a great friend.

The Power in Sports

Empathetically covering sports may be the best way to bring together divided people

THREE YEARS AGO THE Pittsburgh Post-Gazette gave me the reporting opportunity of a lifetime—go to the Dominican Republic and Cuba to write about the dynamics of the baseball culture. In Cuba, I would also report on the everyday life of the average Cuban family, taking readers behind the façade of the tourist-packed boulevards of Havana.

Our photographer and I did not get journalist visas to work in Cuba, so we boarded our flight in Santo Domingo with plans for what we would say when inevitably stopped at customs. We would stick to the story that we were graduate students doing research. But what if we were caught in that lie?

A young woman approached us immediately and, for some reason, her first question jarred me: *What is your profession?*

"I write about sports," I finally said, my nerves burning right through our plan.

I assumed our trip was now doomed. Here was our photographer with his equipment visible and me, the guy openly admitting to being an American journalist. I spent the next half hour looking over my shoulder, resigned to having to wrangle my way through extra questioning.

But, while the Cubans would hold up our photographer and question him for more than an hour, I picked up my luggage and walked right through the sliding doors into Cuba.

Halfway through my Nieman year, that moment came to hold more meaning than I had previously attached to it. Before, it was just a funny story to tell people who were curious about our journey into Castro's Cuba. But after the election of Donald Trump as our president and the ensuing tearing down of the media as the "enemy of the people," I found myself wondering: *Why would the Cubans not question a sportswriter?*

All of us at Lippmann House were trying to figure out what Trump's win meant for the country, for journalism, and for us individually. Before coming to Cambridge, I had been given a new role at the Post-Gazette that allowed me to do projects in news as well as sports, a big step for a guy who had come up through sportswriting but had fallen in love with immersive reporting and narrative writing. The last thing I wrote before the fellowship was on the human toll of Appalachia's opioid epidemic.

Early on, I made it clear to the fellows that I was not just a sportswriter because I did not know how I would be viewed. There have only been a few of us chosen as fellows, and, while I know that some of the best narrative writers were molded by the literary tradition of sportswriting, I wasn't sure anybody else in the program would.

Trump's victory taught us lessons, some of which will take years to fully grasp. One that I took personally was the idea that our coverage had not had enough empathy for the American people—that there were millions out there who felt they were not heard by mainstream media and therefore were

J. Brady McCollough

Trust equals access, and some people view me as more trustworthy because I write about sports

seeking their news from alternative sources who spoke their language.

By late January when Trump had taken over the White House and media access was under attack, I kept going back to Cuba. The young woman in the Havana airport did not see a sportswriter as a threat. I began to see the power in it.

Trust equals access, and I am more trustworthy because I write about sports. It had been that way a few years earlier, too, as I spent nearly a year reporting about three teenagers with mental-health issues who were forced to attend a special school. Looking back, I felt confident the only reason I was given access inside the school's high-security walls was because I had approached the topic through spending time around the school's basketball team.

All of a sudden, being "just a sportswriter" felt pretty good.

My passion has always been to use sports—and this nation's unhealthy obsession with them—as a vehicle to bring people into worlds they otherwise wouldn't go.

Think of all the people out there who only read the sports page. Think of all the stadiums and arenas across the country packed nightly with thousands of Americans who may bring conflicting beliefs to their seats but will high-five and hug each other without hesitation when their team makes a big play.

Our country is divided, and there aren't as many organic ways to bring people who think differently together as there used to be. Sports are, for better or worse, our best shot to encourage empathy.

Now, I am not saying that sportswriting needs to be politicized. But to ignore the powerful platform we have to listen to people and tell stories that will resonate with our diverse audience would be a missed opportunity for the industry.

I am thinking about the future and where I'm headed. There are big questions to answer—and none bigger than this one:

What is my profession?

I write about sports. ∎

J. Brady McCollough, a 2017 Nieman Fellow, is a projects reporter at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Nieman Online

I.F. Stone Medal recipient Victor S. Navasky with Celia Gilbert, Stone's daughter, and Florence Graves, chair of the I.F. Stone Medal selection committee. Navasky and Graves discussed Navasky's work at The Nation and his contributions to the tradition of independent journalism

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"You have to ask the questions you're not supposed to."

—VICTOR S. NAVASKY
2017 I.F. STONE MEDAL WINNER

NiemanReports

From the Archives
"Feminine Touch," from the Summer 1998 issue's cover package on the state of photojournalism, took a look at the growing number of female photographers and their positive impact on photojournalism. Washington Post picture editor Mary Lou Foy discussed the challenges and triumphs of being a female photographer in a field dominated by men. "Has it always been simple?" she wrote. "Not really. But worth it? Absolutely."

Opinion: Tech
With the rise of voice-activated assistants such as Google Home and Amazon Alexa, artificial intelligence is an inevitable part of journalism's future. In "AI is Journalism's Next Big Threat (or Opportunity)," futurist Amy Webb writes that newsrooms risk being left behind if they don't commit now to exploring the potential of AI.

NiemanLab

Real News About Fake News
It's hard to keep up with the seemingly infinite stream of reporting on and data about fake news, misinformation, and the like, so Nieman Lab does the work for you with a weekly roundup offering the highlights of what you might have missed.

How Bots are Being Used in Journalism
This just in from the International Symposium on Online Journalism: find out—from New York Times's R&D team editor Andrew Phelps and Joey Marburger, director of product at The Washington Post—how bots are being used in news operations.

NiemanStoryboard

5(ish) Questions
New Yorker writer David Grann discusses the value of real-world reporting and the process for writing his new book, "Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI."