

NIEMAN REPORTS

**Nieman**

**RACE  
AND  
REPORTING**

**ISSAC BAILEY**  
*The Sun News,  
Myrtle Beach, S.C.*

# NiemanReports

The Nieman Foundation  
for Journalism at Harvard University  
[www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org)

---

## PUBLISHER

Ann Marie Lipinski

## EDITOR

James Geary

## SENIOR EDITOR

Jan Gardner

## RESEARCHER/REPORTER

Jonathan Seitz

## EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS

Eryn M. Carlson

Tara W. Merrigan

Laura Mitchell

## DESIGN

Pentagram

---

## EDITORIAL OFFICES

One Francis Avenue, Cambridge,  
MA 02138-2098, 617-496-6308,  
[nreditor@harvard.edu](mailto:nreditor@harvard.edu)

Copyright 2015 by the President and  
Fellows of Harvard College.

Periodicals postage paid at  
Boston, Massachusetts and  
additional entries

## SUBSCRIPTIONS/BUSINESS

617-496-6299, [nreports@harvard.edu](mailto:nreports@harvard.edu)

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

*Please address all subscription  
correspondence to:*

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

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

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

## Contributors



**Issac Bailey** (page 18), a 2014 Nieman Fellow, is a metro columnist and senior writer for The Sun News in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. He was a 2011 recipient of a Casey Medal for Meritorious Journalism for stories about a child protection case. The state subsequently revamped the way it handles such cases.

**Susan Smith Richardson** (page 26), a 2003 Nieman Fellow, is the editor and publisher of The Chicago Reporter, a nonprofit investigative news organization that focuses on race, poverty, and income inequality in the city. She has worked at The Texas Observer, the Chicago Tribune, and The Sacramento Bee.



**Zun Lee** (page 26) is a self-taught photographer who picked up a camera in 2009. His Father Figure series of photographs is the basis for his book “Father Figure: Exploring Alternate Notions of Black Fatherhood,” published in 2014. Images in the series have been exhibited in Toronto and Paris.

**Alicia W. Stewart** (page 34), a 2015 Nieman Fellow, most recently was an editor at CNN.com. She joined CNN in 2007 to launch Engage, a unit that identified and incorporated under-covered stories into network coverage, and later was a senior producer for the “In America” documentary unit.



**Eric Deggans** (page 30) is NPR’s first full-time television critic and the author of “Race-Baiter: How the Media Wields Dangerous Words to Divide a Nation.” Before joining NPR in 2013, Deggans worked at the Tampa Bay Times.



**Adriana Gallardo and Betsy O'Donovan** (page 32), a 2013 Nieman Fellow, work at the Association of Independents in Radio, based in Boston.

**Rose Eveleth** (page 8) is a writer and producer based in Brooklyn. She’s written for Scientific American, The Atlantic, BBC Future, and others.

**John Dyer** (page 14) is the deputy editor for Associated Reporters Abroad. His work has appeared in The Boston Globe, The Economist, Vice News, and elsewhere.

**Helen Lewis** (page 46) is deputy editor of The New Statesman and is a contributor to The Guardian. She has written extensively on video games, feminism, and online abuse.





A demonstrator in Boston protests against police killings of black men on New Year's Eve 2014

## Contents Spring 2015 / Vol. 69 / No. 2

### Features

#### STORYBOARD

- Now You See It** 8  
Exploring the rise of live journalism  
By Rose Eveleth

- Solutions Journalism** 14  
Focusing on what's working  
By John Dyer

*The arrival of the Apple Watch underscores the importance of customized news*  
**PAGE 52**



#### COVER

- Not So Black and White** 18  
Facing racism in the age of Obama  
By Issac Bailey
- Making Black Lives Matter** 26  
Changing media portrayals  
By Susan Smith Richardson
- Stop Segregating Stories** 30  
Make race part of the news mix  
By Eric Deggans
- Sounds Right** 32  
Public radio and the voices of America  
By Adriana Gallardo & Betsy O'Donovan
- Why Diversity Works** 34  
Solutions for inclusive newsrooms  
By Alicia W. Stewart

#### WATCHDOG

- Use It or Lose It** 46  
Fresh questions about publishing hacked, stolen, or leaked documents  
By Helen Lewis

### Departments

- From the Curator** 2  
By Ann Marie Lipinski

- Live@Lippmann** 4  
ProPublica president Richard Toftel

- Niemans@Work** 6  
Showcasing photojournalism from around the world, chronicling the battle over same-sex marriage in Iowa, sharing stories of craft at NPR

#### NIEMAN JOURNALISM LAB

- Something Up Your Sleeve** 52  
What the future of news might look like on smartwatches and who stands to benefit  
By Joshua Benton

- Books** 54  
Excerpt from "Television Is the New Television"  
By Michael Wolff

- Nieman Notes** 56

- Sounding** 60  
Gabe Bullard, NF '15

**COVER PORTRAIT OF ISSAC BAILEY:**  
Gary Knight

## Risky, Important Conversations

On issues of race and reporting, soul-searching by journalists is imperative

“WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?”—LAST year’s cover story on the decline of women in senior journalism roles—did not lack for sources. Women were overwhelmingly willing to talk candidly about their careers and frustrations and eager to wrestle publicly with questions of gender bias in our newsrooms. Typical was this observation from longtime editor and journalism school dean Geneva Overholser: “Newsrooms are allergic to cultural conversations like this, but they really are essential. Folks have to quit thinking of diversity as a wearisome duty and start understanding it as a key to success.”

There was another cultural conversation we thought essential to journalism, but it has been more difficult. Talking about race and newsrooms proves complicated, even for people laboring on diversity issues. When senior editor Jan Gardner enlisted industry leaders on diversity for help identifying contributors for this issue, some said they were struggling to find journalists willing to talk openly. One cited a fear among minority journalists of damaging their relationships with their editors. Another was turned down by five journalists, some of

**Why do journalists who speak truth to power still struggle with a vocabulary for talking about race?**



*South Carolina columnist Issac Bailey, right, writes forcefully about domestic social issues. In 2009, he called for then-governor Mark Sanford to resign over his extramarital affair*

whom were worried about job security in the face of recession layoffs that thinned the ranks of minority journalists.

Given the perceived risks, we are especially grateful to those who wrote and spoke candidly for this issue, most importantly Issac Bailey, columnist and senior writer for The Sun News in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Issac was a 2014 Nieman Fellow and in our year together, other fellows and Nieman staff came to know him as a courageous voice on domestic social issues and a powerful narrator of his own story. Still, I was not expecting the e-mail that arrived early spring, accompanied by a brief note: “When you get time, take a look at this rough draft I’ve been working on.”

The essay I opened was a sharply observed account of a black man reporting in the age of Obama. “The shift in environment from pre- to post-Obama wasn’t subtle,” Issac wrote. “The messages I began receiving from readers went almost overnight from respectfully, if biting, confrontational ... to overtly racist and demeaning.”

Even before Issac followed up with a request to “let me know of places that might be interested in things like this,” the answer was clear: Nieman Reports, where his essay is our cover story.

I asked Issac why many journalists, whose job is speaking truth to power, still struggle with a vocabulary for talking about race. “I’ve been thinking about this for a while now, silently frustrated, but decided to finally do it after having an uncomfortable discussion with someone I respect a great deal and realized that even that person’s view of my work in the Obama era had changed,” Issac wrote me.

Issac recalled a Poynter workshop on race where Keith Woods, now NPR’s vice president for diversity, cautioned against the “failures and festivals” approach characterizing much race coverage. “On an issue as complicated and important as race, soul-searching by journalists is imperative, the kind of soul-searching an arm’s length approach simply doesn’t allow,” Issac observed. “I’m not talking about debates about affirmative action or who you eat dinner or lunch with; I’m talking about something much deeper, which is scary, and risky.”

White managers, he added, faced a different challenge. “They’ve seen what happens when a white person takes the risk to speak openly and honestly about this issue .... The response is often hostile, with little or no nuance and tends to shut conversations down. That’s one of the reasons I’ve publicly defended the likes of Bill O’Reilly, Don Imus, and Rush Limbaugh in print, not because I agree with them or think they are insightful on this issue—I don’t—but because I want there to be space for us to be able to publicly unpack this stuff together.”

Issac landed where many of the women from last year’s Nieman Reports did: eager to lead on the issue, but not alone. “For the record: I believe managers, particularly white managers, have a duty to deal with this publicly, in all its messy complexity, despite the risk. Those with the most power,” he wrote, “have the most responsibility.” ■



*Ann Marie Lipinski*  
Ann Marie Lipinski



## RECOGNIZING INVESTIGATIVE PROJECTS IN NEWSPAPERS & BOOKS

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

THE MIAMI HERALD WON THE 2014 Worth Bingham Prize for Investigative Journalism for its meticulously researched and reported “Innocents Lost” series, which examined the deaths of hundreds of children who were victims of abusive or neglectful caregivers and of a flawed Florida child welfare system.

Reporters Carol Marbin Miller and Audra D.S. Burch, lead reporters for the series, included a comprehensive database of the young victims as part of their coverage. “It wasn’t enough to report statistics, as horrifying as they were,” said Burch. “We decided that each one of these children, we would write a story about, all 477 of them. We wanted to mark not just their deaths, but their lives.”

The Bingham Prize, established in 1967, honors reporting of stories where the public interest is being ill-served.

The Chicago Tribune won the 2014 Taylor Family Award for Fairness in Journalism for “Red Light Cameras,” a comprehensive series that exposed the corruption and mismanagement of a traffic-monitoring program that has raked in hundreds of millions of dollars from unsuspecting Chicago motorists over the course of 10 years.

The purpose of the award, established by the family that published The Boston Globe from 1872 to 1999, is to encourage fairness in news coverage by American journalists.

Tribune reporters David Kidwell and Alex Richards

“brought a big dose of fairness to an incredibly unfair situation,” said judge Ellen Gabler, a reporter at the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel who shared the Taylor Award with a colleague in 2013. Kidwell and Richards’s reporting prompted federal authorities to issue bribery indictments against the program’s overseers.

Jenny Nordberg, Harold Holzer, and Dan Egan are the 2015 winners of the Lukas Prize Project awards. The awards, established in 1998 to recognize the best in American nonfiction writing, are bestowed in honor of journalist J. Anthony Lukas, a 1969 Nieman Fellow.

Nordberg won the Lukas Book Prize for “The Underground Girls of Kabul: In Search of a Hidden Resistance in Afghanistan,” her groundbreaking reporting on bacha posh, the practice of girls being raised as boys. Judges called her work “a book through which readers emerge both challenged and changed.”

Holzer is the winner of the Mark Lynton History Prize for “Lincoln and the Power of the Press: The War for Public Opinion.” In the book, judges noted, Holzer “demonstrates that there are still sides to the 16th president we haven’t appreciated.”

Egan, who covers the Great Lakes for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, received the Lukas Work-in-Progress Award for “Liquid Desert: Life and Death of the Great Lakes,” his upcoming book on how invasive species threaten the lakes. Judges cited Egan’s work as a “reaffirmation of the need for intensive beat reporting.”

NIEMAN REPORTS HAS BEEN awarded the 2014 Bart Richards Award for Media Criticism, which honors work evaluating

news media coverage of significant subjects or issues. The magazine was recognized for its four 2014 cover stories, which focused on censorship in China, the state of journalism education, the future of foreign news, and the lack of female newsroom leaders.

The award was presented by Marie Hardin, dean of Penn

State’s College of Communications, at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. in May.

“The work was clearly the best among the finalists, and the kind of work that provides perspective and can make an impact,” said Steve Geimann, an editor for Bloomberg News, who was one of three judges. ■



**Top:** Dan Egan (left), Jenny Nordberg, and Harold Holzer, recipients of J. Anthony Lukas book prizes. **Above:** from left: Chicago Tribune reporters David Kidwell and Alex Richards, who received the Taylor award; Bingham prize recipients and Miami Herald reporters Carol Marbin Miller and Audra D.S. Burch; and Jason Grotto, a 2015 Nieman Fellow who moderated a panel discussion among the winners

## Mission Driven

### ProPublica's Richard Tofel on sustainable journalism, news partnerships, and measuring impact

**R**ICHARD TOFEL, PRESIDENT of ProPublica since 2013, joined the nonprofit investigative news organization as general manager at its founding in 2007. Two years after it started publishing, ProPublica's Sheri Fink, in collaboration with *The New York Times Magazine*, received a 2010 Pulitzer Prize for coverage of the life-or-death decisions doctors in New Orleans made during Hurricane Katrina. The following year two ProPublica staffers won a Pulitzer for exposing Wall Street practices that contributed to the nation's financial crisis.

Previously Tofel was assistant publisher at *The Wall Street Journal* and held a number of corporate jobs at Dow Jones & Co., the *Journal's* parent company. He's written several books, including *"Restless Genius: Barney Kilgore, The Wall Street Journal, and the Invention of Modern Journalism,"* published in 2009.

Tofel spoke at the Nieman Foundation in April in conversation with Wahyu Dhyatmika, a 2015 Nieman Fellow. Edited excerpts:

#### On measuring ProPublica's impact

Our mission is to spur change through journalistic means. We try to quite rigorously track all the pick-up of our major work and what kind of change we are producing. There's a big temptation to say that a Congressional press release is change, a news conference is change, or a hearing is change. It isn't. It can lead to change, although frankly, most of the time it doesn't. Change is when something actually changes. Sometimes it takes a very, very long time.

We wrote a series published in the Sunday Los Angeles Times, our first or second year in business, about the lax oversight of nurs-

ing in California. Arnold Schwarzenegger was then the governor. The next morning he reportedly walks in brandishing the paper and says, "I want this fixed today." They come back to him an hour or two later and say, "Can't be done." He says, "Why?" They say, "Because it turns out you appointed the entire nursing board." Because he was Arnold Schwarzenegger he says, "I don't care, fire them," and that afternoon, boom, half the board is gone. Our lead funder Herb Sandler goes, "This is great. We published this thing, and the next day it's all fixed."

We go, "Herb, it doesn't work that way. When you don't have action heroes as political chief executives, it's less frequent."

The example on the other end of the spectrum is the story we did about three and a half years ago that ran on the front page of *The Washington Post*. It proved that the presidential pardon system in this country is deeply racially biased. It was a lot of hard work and took us a long time. We were really thrilled with it, and Steve Engelberg, who's now our editor in chief, and I were quite smug. We go, "This is a layup." The presidential pardon power may be the only, essentially royal prerogative in the Constitution. It is completely unreviewable, and the president has total power. But, three and a half years later, we are still waiting. I think this will eventually change, and we clearly lit the fuse that's going to change it.

#### On the importance of partnerships

Now, with that presidential pardon story, we did learn something about framing that speaks to reach. We wrote that story as a reform story. There aren't really two sides to whether there should be racial bias. The sec-

ond time we came back at the subject, it was a story about a guy named Clarence Aaron, and some misconduct in the pardons office, in which information was withheld from President Bush's staff, resulting in Aaron not getting pardoned. That time, we pitched this story quite directly to the black community—in terms of how we used social media, how we used our public relations efforts.

In the mainstream press it got less attention, but in the African-American community it got quite a lot more. I think the president began to sense in the spring of 2012 that this could turn into a problem with the base, and he eventually commuted Clarence Aaron's sentence in 2013.

If we'd been super smart, I guess we would have figured that out in the first place. Instead of going to *The Washington Post*, maybe if we'd given this whole thing to BET [Black Entertainment Television] the president would have had to fix it in the first place. I don't know but that is part of how we think about it, and you try to get smarter over time.

One thing we did learn early on is that sometimes reach really matters. The *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and NPR are great and frequent partners of ours. But sometimes a niche player can make a very big difference with the story.

We did some reporting a few years ago on brain injuries to the troops in wars and some unfairness in the way the Pentagon was dealing with brain injuries. We did that story with NPR. It got a lot of reach and got the Pentagon plenty annoyed, but they weren't doing anything about it. It's because they don't like to change. Then we had the opportunity to partner on those stories with *Stars and Stripes*. At that point, the joint chiefs completely turned around. It didn't

**One percent of the philanthropic dollars in the U.S. would fund public radio and TV, and 10 outlets the size of ProPublica**



make them angry, it made them concerned, because they were being challenged at the level of every PX around the world. The mass of enlisted personnel was reading the story. That's not a huge number of people—it's nothing like the audience of NPR—but it's all of their people. We've had similar experiences with The Chronicle of Higher Education, and other fairly small publications that reach perfect audiences.

### **On joint reporting projects**

What's it going to take to get editors at different reporting partners comfortable? It's something different for every editor. You have all seen this in your careers. You write exactly the same story. You submitted it to editor A, and you get one reaction, and with editor B, you get another. Top editor A wants to do some kinds of things to it, and top editor B wants to do different things.

### **On journalism versus advocacy**

Our journalism is different from advocacy because we start with questions and we end with answers, instead of starting with answers and ending with questions, and also because we just use journalistic means. We don't lobby. We report. The one place where I think some traditional journalists get very uncomfortable is when we get to the end of

it. We've reported it out, and we think we've proven it. We then don't hesitate to campaign about it.

### **On achieving sustainability**

At the outset, our initial funders, the Sandler Foundation, provided 85 to 95 percent of the money. We had them down last year to a third of the money. This year it'll be a quarter. In the long run, I'd like to get it to about 15 percent. I think we can get there. Last year we had about 40 funders of \$50,000 or more. We had 2,600 donors altogether, if you include small donors.

We have built up a reserve of \$5 million, but we think a healthy organization should have a reserve of funding for at least a year. We'll spend more than \$12 million this year, so we're not anywhere near where I would like us to be in the long run. We've run operating surpluses every year, so we are slowly getting there. Occasionally, we find somebody who's willing to contribute money to our reserve, but it's very rare.

When the next recession happens, there's going to be a shakeout in American newspapers. I think you will see scores, maybe hundreds of newspapers, that will either disappear or go to one day a week in print and dramatically reduce digital operations by the other side of the recession.

What does that mean for us? We've never had a down year. I expect that when we get to the recession, we probably will. We'll have to manage through that.

### **On sources of funding**

Small dollars—both in the mail and online—came to almost half a million dollars for us last year so that's not trivial. Probably the next best thing is rich people giving you large sums of money. Living donors operating through family foundations are far preferable, in the long run, to institutional foundations, which are staffed by people whose job it is to give away other people's money. The reason is that in an institutional foundation, if they don't change what they're doing every once in a while, they don't need their staff.

Individuals are exactly the opposite. By and large, it's my experience that when

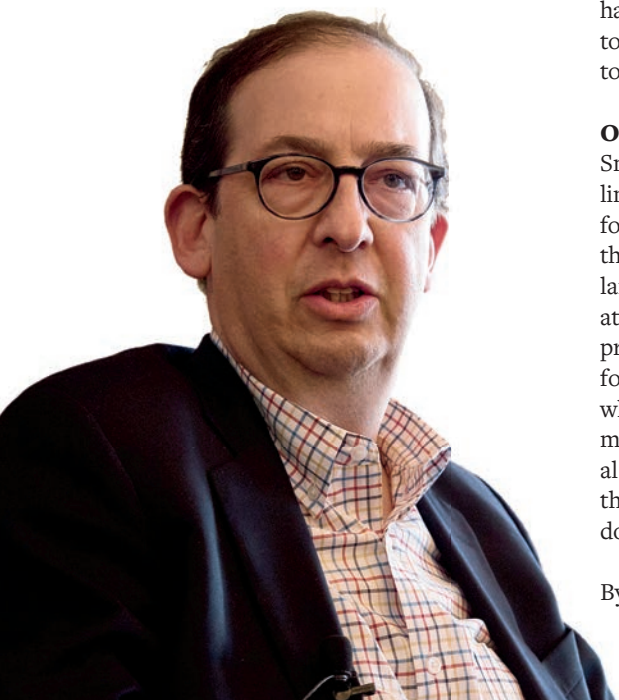
you think about giving money away you find things that motivate you, that touch you, that you're passionate about. If they remain at the same level of quality that moved you in the first place, you may write them a check for 20, 40 years in a row, until you die.

Then we come to the issue of earned income. We've taken advertising for four years. Our monthly pageviews were up almost 60 percent in the first quarter of this year. The advertising revenue was down. Why? Because of supply and demand. The demand for advertising is not rising at anywhere near the number of pages that are being created every day.

It would be great to get readers to pay. I think it's very, very difficult, unless you have an enormous amount of highly differentiated, high-quality content. I think the surest proof of this is that digital subscriber growth at The New York Times—which probably has the highest amount of high-quality, highly differentiated content—seems to have flattened out at levels above 800,000 people. This is happening in a country of 320 million people.

Where we draw the line is we let funders support beats—like education, or even some nontraditional beats such as inequality and race—but that's it. When the Carnegie Corporation supports our beat on education, they have no idea that we're going to use it to write about restraints in public schools for a year.

One of the points made in the Federal Communications Commission's report, "The Information Needs of Communities: The Changing Media Landscape in a Broadband Age," was that one percent of all the philanthropic dollars in America would throw off enough money to fund many initiatives, including nonprofit news organizations. When I took a sharp pencil and translated it, that number would have been enough to pay for all the public television stations, all of the public television programming, all the public radio stations, all the public radio station programming, and 10 organizations the size of ours. That's one percent. If we can eventually convince Americans to do that, we'll all be fine. ■



## So Many Images, So Little Space Greg Marinovich, NF '14, joins with fellow photographers to showcase more of the pictures they create

A COUPLE YEARS AGO, JUST AS I WAS starting my Nieman year, the “War/Photography: Images of Armed Conflict and Its Aftermath” exhibit curated by Anne Wilkes Tucker of the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston was traveling across the U.S.

Having just seen it in Los Angeles, my friend Jonathan Diamond called me. Why, he asked, when photojournalists shoot so many images on an assignment, are we limited to seeing just one or two in a newspaper or magazine? Why not showcase 10 or 20?

There was, I said, no reason, other than the limitations of print.

And so The Stand started as a digital photojournalism magazine, one that would draw photographers from around the world, transcend borders by relying on images rather than text, and treat photojournalists and their work with respect. In an effort to bring in new voices and expand our reach—as well as acknowledge the ubiquity of cell phone cameras—we decided that an active citizen photojournalism component was integral both to building an audience and to expanding our ability to cover news.

**The Stand, a digital magazine, transcends borders by relying on images rather than text**

Then the question: How to fund it while digital journalism is still finding its way as a business? We needed to think globally. Even before we launched the digital magazine in February, The Stand was commissioned by the World Wide Fund for Nature (formerly the World Wildlife Fund) to shoot the People’s Climate March. Using our network of contributors, we provided coverage for the fund in New York, Seoul, New Delhi, Santiago, Nairobi, and Rome. The Stand became a photo agency.

We are now in discussions with a news website to syndicate our images, and more of these types of deals are in the works. Taken together, anticipated revenue from

advertising, agency commissions, syndication, and licensing puts us in a position to build what we believe can be a self-sustaining photojournalism business.

We’re still in our infancy, raising money to hire tech, sales, and marketing staff, but we’re hopeful, especially because of the quality of our images and the response from the photography community.

I brought in about 40 contributors prior to the site launch in mid-February. The number of contributors has since doubled. To me, it shows that our basic premise is correct: there are photojournalists out there with stories to tell. All they needed was a platform. ■



*Haiti’s Le Saut waterfall is an important religious site on the island*



## Equal, At Last Tom Witosky, NF '92, collaborated with a fellow sportswriter to chronicle the battle over same-sex marriage



The book *"Equal Before the Law"* tells the story behind the 2009 Iowa Supreme Court ruling that same-sex marriage is legal, a decision that made possible this marriage ceremony in Des Moines

THE JOURNEY TO WRITE "EQUAL BEFORE the Law: How Iowa Led Americans to Marriage Equality" began April 3, 2009, when the Iowa Supreme Court granted gays and lesbians the right to marry in Iowa. It ended June 1, when University of Iowa Press published the book, which I co-authored with my friend and longtime Des Moines Register colleague Marc Hansen.

Some have asked why two veteran writers who spent most of their careers in the sports department would tackle this issue. It's simple. Sportswriters know a great story when they see one. I realized that this is a story of how people overcome adversity, just like Jackie Robinson, who made history when he joined Major League Baseball, did.

Sure, we faced hurdles on the way to publication. We even had an agent, who told us she didn't think two daily journalists could

do it, walk away from the project early on.

We conducted many of our interviews together, but we understood our separate strengths. As an investigative reporter with years of experience covering politics and law, I wrote about how the law restricting marriage to a man and a woman was approved and why a court order overturned it 11 years later. Hansen, a most artful writer, provided vivid portraits and insight into the major participants in the struggle.

Our daily routine was talk early and then write. On completion of a chapter, we would ship it to the other writer for editing and re-writing. Our goal was to blend all of the elements into a story of tenacity and courage.

On the day of the Iowa Supreme Court's ruling in *Varnum v. Brien*, I watched The Des Moines Register newsroom go into overdrive. The surprising decision made Iowa

only the third state in the nation to permit gay and lesbian couples to marry. For three years, I pestered Justice Mark Cady, who had written the *Varnum* decision, to tell the story behind the court's opinion. Finally, in 2012, he agreed.

Ironically, our biggest break to write the book came from our employer, Gannett. For a year's pay and benefits, they told us we could leave after more than 30 years each at The Des Moines Register.

"I hear you want to write a book about the *Varnum* decision," Hansen said to me while we considered taking retirement. "You want to work together on it?"

About then, a top newsroom manager walked up and said, "You guys look like you're talking about something important."

"We are," I replied. The journey to write our first book had begun. ■

### MAKING THE CRAFT VISIBLE ALISON MACADAM, NF '14, HELPS NPR COLLEAGUES DEVELOP AND SHARE STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES

FOR 11 YEARS, I WORKED somewhere famous.

Now, I work somewhere virtually unknown.

In January, I left "All Things Considered" ("ATC")—seven months after my Nieman fellowship ended—to create a position at NPR's newly rebooted

training unit, Editorial Coaching and Development. Still NPR, but no logo. No name recognition. Now, my job is to wave the flag for the best audio storytelling. To coach, create curriculum, and facilitate training.

My first challenge was more basic: To let the roughly 350 journalists at NPR News know we exist.

Sitting in my cubicle on week one, I could just barely glimpse the busy staff of "ATC" across the warehouse-sized newsroom. I could throw a ball and almost hit the "Hub"—the center of NPR's news operations. So close, yet still so distant.

Of course, most journalists have become self-

marketers in this new age of tweets. But how do you market something as un-sexy as the training team? One solution we came up with is the NPR Storytelling Tumblr. It's a blog where we share quick, digestible lessons that emerge from NPR content, along with audio, images, and video. Each post features one story and one storytelling technique. (A sample headline: "Make a promise in your intro, and deliver on it.") This is not revolutionary. But the Storytelling Tumblr gives us something we were lacking: A public platform where we can say, "We're listening! And we are thinking about our craft every day."

It's also a chance to give journalists something they don't hear enough: praise. Specific praise.

Recall that story you reported or wrote or produced, and think of all the little decisions you made along the way. So much of the best work journalists do is invisible.

Now I realize my quest for visibility is not only about my new training team, but about everyone at NPR and its member stations. In the course of raising the profile of the un-sexy training unit, we're making our craft visible. And that, of course, is the far more important mission. ■

## Exploring the rise of live journalism

BY ROSE EVELETH

# Now You See It

IN 2001, WHILE INTERNING AT THE Associated Press bureau in Rome, Samantha Gross started working as a guide, giving walking tours of the Vatican, meandering through St. Peter's Basilica with visitors, telling them stories about the artworks around them. Over the next 10 years, Gross bounced among AP postings from Tallahassee to New York City, covering courts, city hall, politics, crime, and more. But she never lost her taste for tours.

"Probably my favorite part of the [AP] job was getting to enter into the lives of so many people whom I wouldn't have met otherwise and hear them tell their stories," says Gross. That piece of her job, though, was the part that her readers never really got to experience. "I never felt that I was able to fully convey that to the people who would then read the stories. They were always missing out on some piece of that experience. Why couldn't we share the best of our jobs with them?"

So last year, Gross founded StoryTour, a live, experiential magazine comprised of guided stories that take place in New York City. In one recent story, "The Land of the Slow Food Startups," the tour guide took the audience to an old Pfizer building deep in South Williamsburg to meet the entrepreneurs behind the burgeoning slow food







businesses there. “Our nonfiction story tours are like an equivalent of walking into the pages of a narrative feature in a magazine,” Gross explains. Whereas in a feature, the journalist might describe the row of tall silver machines lining the walls of the Kelvin Natural Slush Co. or the building’s bricked-up windows, in a StoryTour the audience sees all that for themselves. Once inside, they watch as the journalist interviews the staff of Dinner Lab, a pop-up dinner club, and they eat pasta made by Sfoglini, an artisanal pasta company.

The piece is more than a walking tour, according to Gross; it’s journalism that uses many of the same narrative techniques any magazine feature might. “The StoryTour begins with a narrative focusing on the seismic shifts many work-obsessed New Yorkers have faced in the wake of the economic downturn, and the ways that many people began re-examining their priorities and finding the motivation to start something new,” Gross says. Zack Silverman, founder of Kelvin Natural Slush, left behind a promising legal career to start his business. The audience hears him speak about the ups and downs of leaving a stable job to start something new and risky. They can even ask questions. “It’s not just seeing a list of places or hearing interesting facts or tasting interesting food,” Gross says. “It’s really an experience that’s guided by narrative and story.”

Gross fondly recalls her experience as a tour guide in Rome. “It was thrilling to look directly into the eyes of my audience and see them react as I told them stories,” she says. “Having experienced that allowed me to envision how StoryTour could work, and how exciting it could be.”

Gross is just one of an increasing number of reporters looking to take their work beyond the paper or the screen or the speaker in the form of “live journalism.” The format is flexible, and the boundary between journalism and journalism-adjacent forms—first-person storytelling, theater, lecture—is blurry, but live storytelling events like The Moth and ideas festivals like TED could provide news organizations with viable models for moving stories from page to stage.

Outlets like The Texas Tribune and The Atlantic now put on events that bring together experts and journalists to talk about everything from higher education to national security. Pop-Up Magazine, a live show that started in San Francisco, sells out in minutes. “Radiolab” has done a number of popular events. “The Heart,” a podcast about love and sex, hosts live listening events nes-

## Instead of having people read about a business, StoryTour brings them inside it

tled in dark, pillow-padded rooms. “This American Life” also puts on live variety shows, with performances by comedians and musical acts.

Some events—cruises with contributors and the like—are not journalism per se but efforts to augment or replace failing revenue streams. The boundary between journalism and entertainment with a journalistic veneer needs to be clear and respected. But audiences do seem interested in real journalism presented live. Pop-Up Magazine’s early shows filled a 360-seat theater; today, it sells out a 2,600-person venue. “Radiolab” and “This American Life” fill theaters across the country. (“This American Life” has streamed its variety show into movie theaters.) And start-ups like StoryTour can exist on ticket sales alone. Journalism outlets are experimenting with all kinds of new formats and technologies to enhance storytelling and engage audiences. Now is a good time for the art of live storytelling.

**I**N THE EARLY 1990S, ANNA DEAVERE Smith, whose background is in theater, explored complex political topics on stage, interviewing people involved in a series of controversial events, like Brooklyn’s Crown Heights riot in 1991 and the Los Angeles riots in 1992. She interviewed people on all sides of each conflict then edited the transcripts into monologues, playing each character herself.

In “Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights, Brooklyn, and Other Identities,” the performance that recounted the Crown Heights riot, a three-day span in which the neighborhood’s black and Jewish communities clashed, Deaver Smith played 26 different people, from Rabbi Joseph Spielman, a spokesperson for the Lubavitch community, to an anonymous young black man who lived in the neighborhood. The televised version integrates black-and-white images

of the neighborhood and a soundtrack with a mix of hip-hop and traditional Jewish chants. “You could describe Anna Deaver Smith as a documentary filmmaker who has simply decided to dispense with the camera,” wrote David Richards in a 1992 review for The New York Times.

By that definition, Pop-Up is a magazine that has simply decided to dispense with the paper. Over the past six years, Pop-Up has built a loyal (not to say, fanatical) following and has sold out shows in minutes. Its founder, magazine writer Douglas McGray, realized that he had never met the photographers who shot images for his pieces. McGray launched Pop-Up Magazine to bring together all the creative people who make a magazine and have them show their work on stage, and then go out for drinks with the audience afterward. (McGray also recently launched a print/digital publication, The California Sunday Magazine, which is inserted once a month in the Los Angeles Times, San Francisco Chronicle, and The Sacramento Bee.)

Most Pop-Up events are not recorded in any way, and that’s a big part of the appeal. “The audience is very committed,” says Pat Walters, a Pop-Up senior editor. “They buy in: ‘I’m just going to be here.’” Stories happen in the moment. As soon as they’re done, they’re gone.

In 2011, Walters produced something that highlighted what a Pop-Up experience can be. During a show produced in partnership with ESPN the Magazine, Walters made a “weird little short story, half animation, half radio story, half playful moment” about a time when record-breaking free diver Tanya Streeter nearly died.

Before beginning, Walters asked the audience to take a deep breath and hold it. They then heard from Walters that Streeter packs enough air into her lungs to fill four basketballs, and then from a scientist who studies free divers about how one’s heart rate slows down to as few as 10 beats per minute during a dive. They heard from Streeter herself about how the pressure of a deep dive bends her eardrums in. The piece also discusses how on one dive, Tanya may have suffered from nitrogen narcosis, a condition that induces disorientation and potential loss of consciousness from the effects of breathing nitrogen under pressure. During the dive she became confused and nearly didn’t make it back up to the surface.

As the audience listened, they saw a projection screen filled with Caribbean blue slowly darken, paralleling Streeter’s descent,





*During “Truth and Dare,” for which Pop-Up Magazine teamed up with TED, Dawn Landes performed a song from her musical called “Row”*

until at the bottom, where Streeter almost died, the room went black. As Streeter recovered and rose, the blue returned. When the story ended, about four minutes later, roughly the duration of one of Streeter’s dives, Walters invited anyone still holding their breath to exhale.

In a more recent Pop-Up event, the audience enjoyed a dinner in which the elements of the meal connected to the stories they were being told. Water glasses were filled to a line that illustrated how low Lake Shasta had dipped during the drought. The napkins had word art describing “topics of conversation” for the diners. The plates were made of clay pulled up from an oil well. The dessert was made of fruits bred by a rare fruit collector. With live journalism, “the possibilities are virtually unlimited,” Walters says. “You can do everything you could do in radio, on TV, on the stage, and the people are there. You’re talking to them.”

The creative possibilities are what bring many journalists to live events. When “Radiolab” put on “Apocalyptical,” staff combined the music of Noveller with comedians like Reggie Watts and Ophira Eisenberg, and puppetry. As hosts Jad Abumrad and Robert Krulwich started a segment about the long history of scientific debate over what, exactly, took down the dinosaurs, a large dino puppet crept out onstage. “It would be so much easier, for the scientists, and for you and I right now,

frankly, if we could just ask somebody who was there, an eyewitness,” Abumrad said during the show, unaware that the dinosaur is on stage, cocking its head at the audience in a distinctly bird-like way. Abumrad and Krulwich, with the help of a “dinosaur translator,” then asked the beast what exactly happened to its friends.

“What we’re trying to do is something that’s creative-feeling,” says “Radiolab” executive producer Ellen Horne. “We try to create a system where there’s a lot of reporting and facts and storytelling but there’s also this opportunity to rehearse and play.” She also says live shows allow producers and performers to improvise, something that’s much harder to do in a studio: “With ‘Apocalyptical,’ we wrote maybe 20 endings for that show. Every night we’d go out and try something new.”

**Live shows give  
“Radiolab” more  
opportunity to  
improvise than  
when in the studio**

Kaitlin Prest, host and creative director of “The Heart,” came to live events looking for ways to have her work live on beyond the one-time broadcast. “How can you appreciate something culturally that is only listened to in transit?” she wonders. At one event for “The Heart,” in partnership with an experiential travel organization, seven couples travelled to an abandoned honeymooners resort in the Poconos full of heart-shaped bathtubs and round beds below mirrored ceilings. They were told to call the front desk when they arrived. When they picked up the receivers of the old phones on the bedside tables, they heard a special audio piece by “The Heart.” Other “Heart” events have included a kissing booth and the blind-folding of participants.

“My secret goal is that every radio piece I make will live in the real world,” says Prest. She and the other producers are considering how to take their work from earbuds and speakers, listened to while closed off from the rest of the world, and make people interact with those same stories in person, together with other listeners.

The desire to bridge the gap between isolated listeners and shared space is one of the driving forces behind a new series produced by WBUR, one of Boston’s public radio stations, called “Listen Up,” which pulls together radio pieces around a theme and plays them for an audience gathered at the Institute of Contemporary Art. With the

lights down, audience members hear radio stories without any visual component. They can close their eyes or look out onto the Boston Harbor through the theater's vast windows, but there is nothing specifically designed for them to see.

The audience at the first "Listen Up" event heard the story of a woman whose family communicated with her kidnapped father in Colombia through a radio program that was broadcast into the jungle. They listened to the viral "bad haircut" story, where a reporter interviews his daughters about the terrible makeover one gave to the other. They heard Abumrad and Krulwich of "Radiolab" discuss the story behind the Golden Record sent floating out into space on the Voyager spacecraft.

The stories are all powerful celebrations of the human voice, but Lisa Tobin, senior producer of innovation at WBUR, wasn't sure the format would work. "Asking people to focus on audio as a lone sensory experience was one of the most exciting things about it, and also the thing that terrified me," she says. "Are they going to be bored out of their minds?" They weren't. Tobin says audience reaction was positive enough

to do another listening event, this time pegged to Valentine's Day.

And advocacy groups are embracing the power of live events as well. In September, the California Institute for Rural Studies (CIRS), a social justice organization, will take about 100 people on a train along the Capitol Corridor Amtrak line, from Oakland to Sacramento. Along the way, riders will hear three live stories about the history of California agriculture. "We picked this neat and vibrant swath of the state," says Ildi Carlisle-Cummins, the project director at Cal Ag Roots, a new set of programs from CIRS. "About two million people ride that route a year, and its past is full of all kinds of stories."

One story riders will hear is of the invention of the mechanical tomato harvester, a long-running collaboration between scientists at University of California, Davis. "They were the laughing stock of UC Davis, because they had so many prototypes that failed," Carlisle-Cummins says. But when they finally designed a machine that could pick the tomatoes, and a strain of tomatoes that were hardy enough to survive picking, they completely changed the tomato farm-

## Listeners are invited to interact in real life with stories they hear on the radio

ing industry. Tens of thousands of farmers were out of work, and the university system was sued.

"I am wading into this world of putting on this storytelling project and then recording these stories because I have listened to so many episodes of *The Moth* and *'Radiolab'* and *'This American Life,'*" Carlisle-Cummins says. "I just find listening to things, first-person perspectives to be really powerful and just an interesting way to go through the world."

Live events have potential financial as well as storytelling benefits. In some

*"Radiolab" co-host Jad Abumrad explores the science of extinction during his show's "Apocalyptic" tour stop in Oakland*



JARED KELLY



## FAIL FAST, FAIL SMALL

*Famed Chicago comedy group Second City is teaching journalists how to engage audiences through improv*

BY LAURA MITCHELL

WHEN LEADERS AT THE Chicago Tribune wanted to find new ways to engage their audience, they turned to an unusual source: local comedy group The Second City, starting point for iconic comedians such as John Belushi, Bill Murray, and Amy Poehler. Together, the two organizations developed “Chicago Live!” a stage and radio variety show that retold the city’s stories in surprising ways. Programs brought newsmakers and entertainers, from Rahm Emanuel to Cookie Monster, to the stage. Each event included a Second City-produced satire on the evening’s topics and news of the week. At the end of the night, the audience was invited to mingle with the show’s performers over drinks.

The comedy organization also collaborates with Tribune journalists through Second City Works, which helps professionals apply improv methods to their own work. Kelly Leonard, executive vice president of Second City, and Tom Yorton, chief executive officer of Second City Works, shared some of those methods in a book they co-authored, “Yes, And: How Improvisation Reverses ‘No, But’ Thinking and Improves Creativity and Collaboration.” Tips for journalists and media organizations were culled from that book and from an interview with Leonard.



### LEARN TO LISTEN

There’s a reason people from Tribune staffers to Twitter’s CEO have taken classes at Second City. In improv, you’re constantly listening and reacting. You’re engaged with someone. Everyone understands the need to go to a gym to work out muscles. You need the same time to work out social skills and listening skills. Improvisation does that.

### DON’T FEAR FAILURE

Companies need to fail, but they don’t need to fail in a big way. It’s important to create models that will allow you to fail fast and to fail small.

If you are encouraged to take risks and have the opportunity to fail small, you’re learning stuff along the way that will prevent the big failures. At Second City, performers flounder onstage, new shows flop—

and we learn from it all. Live events can create safe spaces for failure. Some companies hold award ceremonies, highlighting the year’s worst decisions.

### BRING A BRICK, NOT A CATHEDRAL

We use an exercise called One-Word Story. People gather to tell an original story. Each person contributes only one word at a time. Sometimes, you have to supply “and” or “the,” and other times you get to supply a big, juicy adjective. You don’t know where the story’s going, and you have to contribute your part. There’s this great improv saying: “Bring a brick, not a cathedral.” If you’re building something, and you walk in with the entire design in your head, no one else is going to be brought into that process. If you’re working with a group, you just need to bring a brick, and someone else is going to bring a brick, too. ■

cases, the events themselves make money. Pop-Up tickets generally go for \$25 to \$55 a pop. StoryTour’s ticket sales pay Gross’s salary, and her storytellers get paid based on a profit-sharing model. “Radiolab” breaks even on its live events. Other publications have managed to turn their events into moneymakers. According to a recent study, The Wall Street Journal’s series of live events—in which journalists interview invited guests on stage—earns over \$10 million a year.

Even if the events themselves don’t make money, they can still be a net gain for the outlet. According to “Radiolab”’s Horne, live shows are a way to grow audience and foster community, which can then be monetized, if necessary. “A lot of people are brought to a ‘Radiolab’ show by a ‘Radiolab’ fan,” Horne says. “It seems to be a way that fans are able to introduce ‘Radiolab’ to people who aren’t listening to podcasts.”

The community aspect is also one of the reasons live events are so popular. “There’s been this incredible rise in all of our lives of virtual experience and virtual community,” Horne says. “One of the things that interests us in doing these live events is that it satisfies a need for the ‘Radiolab’ creative staff and the audience to have a real physical experience together. It’s almost palpable this hunger for these real experiences.”

StoryTour’s Gross agrees. When she was doing market research for her venture, she went to Moth events and asked audience members why they were there. “What almost every single one said to me was some variant on, ‘I care about these stories because I recognize a piece of myself in them.’ Which is, as writers, the reason we all think stories are important.”

Ultimately, doing a good live show is hard. Journalists often excel in their chosen medium, whether that’s print or online

or radio or television, but live theater is a whole new set of skills. Reporters aren’t necessarily used to blocking things out onstage, thinking about lighting and live pacing and the set, figuring out the motions of their storytellers, the facial expressions, or working with audio and visuals and music. The arc of a print story might hinge on a quote or a phrase or a description, where the narrative of a stage show might pivot on a turned back or some other movement. Turning a story from a print or radio piece into a stage performance means learning all those skills. If done well, though, live events can bring a whole new level of interest and impact to narrative nonfiction.

“Journalism can be really effective when it actually entertains people,” says Pop-Up’s Walters, “and they don’t feel like it’s something they should be paying attention to but it’s something they want to pay attention to.” ■

# SO $\frac{L}{U}$ (T) | {ONS}

## **Solutions journalism focuses on what's going right in the world rather than what's going wrong**

BY JOHN DYER

**J**OURNALISTS MAKE CAREERS out of covering the symptoms and causes of bad urban public schools, writing tragedies about students falling through the cracks, scoring scoops from school board investigations, and chasing scandals alongside concerned parents, angry teachers unions, and others. The Seattle Times and the Solutions Journalism Network took a different approach.

Reporters and editors at the Times' Education Lab team felt their audience was desensitized to the laundry list of challenges facing schools in Washington State. Unruly teenagers, poor performance among low-income students, and high dropout rates weren't news to anybody anymore.

So the team flipped the script on education reporting. Instead of identifying the worst schools in the region and explaining why they were failing, they set out to find the schools that were improving and ask how their educators and students excelled despite poverty, crime, and other challenges. Instead of reporting on the problems in the schools, they would cover the solutions. "[W]e've committed to ... telling you about some of the places that appear to be

doing things right," wrote Seattle Times editor Kathy Best when she launched the Lab with the Solutions Journalism Network in October 2013. "Our hope is that rigorously examining the elements of success might help spread them."

Answering that mandate, Education Lab reporter Claudia Rowe dove into classroom discipline—a large part of most teachers' jobs—and discovered how a few local schools had cut suspensions by engaging closely with students who behave badly rather than ostracizing them.

The Kent School District in suburban Seattle adopted a softer touch in disciplining students, for example, opting for in-school suspensions where students study instead of kicking them off school property, and training security guards to act as mediators as well as rule enforcers to cut down on the extreme behavior that leads to harsh discipline. One Kent middle school brought in two new assistant principals to deal with student behavior, and now calls its detention hall the "Focus Room," to reflect an emphasis on students keeping up with classwork. Critics said the new policies amounted to warehousing students, but advocates of the new approach cited national research that found that draconian out-of-school suspensions resulted in the worst students often

giving up on school entirely. Kent schools went from battling an NAACP lawsuit for handcuffing and pepper-spraying students to cutting suspensions by more than 30 percent, The Seattle Times reported.

In another story, Big Picture High School instituted a policy called "restorative justice" that showed great potential to reduce discipline problems. Under restorative justice, suspended kids remain in school but don't just go to study hall. They answer for their infractions in person before a special forum of teachers and students, a meeting that's a combination of a group intervention and peer counseling session, and complete reading and writing assignments that force them to reflect on their behavior. Teenagers opening up emotionally to adults and peers improves their behavior dramatically, according to educators. The Seattle Times reported that Big Picture High had only assigned eight days of suspension as of January, compared to 700 a year before they implemented restorative justice.

The numbers were only part of the story, however. Rowe portrayed a school where teachers and administrators genuinely touch students' hearts. One Big Picture student wept in front of her teachers and classmates as she discussed her marijuana use. "It's a lot harder than a regular suspension,"



# J(O+U)RNAL

---

# ISM

the 18-year-old girl, who had been kicked off campus for discipline at other schools, told Rowe. “You can’t run from anything, and to have people talking good about you, telling you they’re truly disappointed—it hurts. It was kind of overwhelming, actually.”

Big Picture High School reducing its suspension rate through the restorative justice program is what the nonprofit Solutions Journalism Network calls a “positive deviant”—an example of people or policies that defy trends with beneficial results. The term plays a key role in so-called solutions journalism, a concept that’s gaining currency, as evinced by work being done at the Network in partnerships with the Education Lab and others. Advocates define it as the opposite of negative news, but hesitate to label it exclusively as positive. Rather than pointing out solely what’s wrong with the world—think political gridlock, war, terrorism, and catastrophic climate change—solutions journalism aims to show how people are making things better.

David Bornstein, a co-founder of the Network and coauthor of the *Fixes* blog in the Opinionator section of *The New York Times*, cites three trends that illustrate why solutions journalism has come of age: the proliferation of businesses, nonprofits, and other institutions alleviating social ills; the

explosion of online information that allows people tired of negative news to avoid the mainstream media; and journalists’ desire to cover positive social change and reach more readers. “For journalism to help society self-correct, it’s not enough to be a watchdog to increase awareness or produce outrage about problems,” says Bornstein. “We need new and better recipes. For society and also for journalism to thrive, it needs to be regularly highlighting with rigor new ideas and models that are showing results against our most pressing problems.”

Founded in New York in 2013, the Network’s function is largely educational. Its staff of 12 held training seminars for 370 journalists in 20 newsrooms last year, according to its annual report. But the group also has secured grant funding for projects like Education Lab, surveys on readers’ receptiveness to solutions journalism, and new initiatives to compile reporting and data on successes in reducing violence and improving healthcare. Early this year, the group received funding for a schools coverage project with *The Boston Globe* that’s in its early stages.

The approach is not a call for feel-good stories. The motivation for *The Seattle Times*’s Education Lab, for example, stemmed from serious concerns about the

future of news, Best says. She and other editors were growing tired of duds—the epic journalism projects that take long periods to complete but more often than not deliver little social impact when they hit the newsstands. “There’s been for years this definition of investigative reporting: ‘We will spend a year so that we can tell you in full and florid and depressing detail about all of the aspects of this major societal problem and maybe on the very last day we’ll do a 30-inch story on how we’re going to fix it,’” says Best. “That hasn’t worked necessarily. For many people, they start reading it and they become too depressed and they stop.”

Best acknowledges that hardcore investigative reporting is still central to journalism’s role as a watchdog. She never intended Education Lab to ignore the problems facing Seattle-area schools. She wanted to showcase the successes in tackling those problems to jumpstart conversations among parents, teachers, and policymakers. “We did not get into this because we thought there were too many negative stories,” says Best. “We did get into it because we thought there were too many negative conversations. People had become too polarized over education issues.”

Bornstein doesn’t want good news for good news’ sake, either. Stories have to pass

a threshold to qualify as solutions journalism. At a minimum, they need to identify social ills and potential remedies to them. They need to include the voices of people who have seen those remedies at the ground level. They must include evidence about whether the remedies work, and report any caveats or limitations associated with them. The Network even put together a list of “imposter” solution stories, like “hero worship” pieces that glorify individuals but pay too little attention to causes or animal rescue stories that are entertainment.

Bornstein stresses that journalists must obtain data that shows how a solution is working. Data inoculates reporters against charges they’re giving favorable coverage to a group because of its political affiliation, for instance. The only bias in solutions journalism should be toward evidence, says Bornstein, and the facts should speak for themselves like in any other news story. “We feel very strongly that you can report on responses to social problems in a very rigorous manner without telling readers, ‘This is the best response’ or ‘You should go out and do something about this,’” he says. “I don’t feel comfortable with journalists necessarily urging readers to act.”

That line can be hard to distinguish. Media coverage grants legitimacy and authority to solutions, potentially to the exclusion of other fixes that reporters or their sources never encountered—an easy oversight on big, complicated topics like health-care, clean water and other global issues, says Arizona State University journalism professor Dan Gillmor. Gillmor wonders if journalists might compromise their objectivity when they approach a story with the goal of proving that a specific solution is valid. “The journalist goes into the topic with some sort of outcome in mind,” says Gillmor. “That’s fine if you are looking for examples of agreement.”

The MIT Center for Civic Media’s Ethan Zuckerman believes the proponents of solutions journalism are trying too hard to distance themselves from advocacy. He co-founded a citizen journalism website, Global Voices, in part to advocate for freedom of expression. To Zuckerman, purposefully motivating readers to act on the issues raised in stories is perfectly respectable—indeed, necessary. As confidence in the mainstream media ebbs, why shouldn’t top-notch journalists tell audiences how they might become involved in an issue that energizes them. “What Bornstein is actually doing is essentially saying, ‘Let’s find the problem

solvers and let’s do traditional journalism stories about them. Let’s look at them with caution and scrutiny. Let’s evaluate their claims,’” says Zuckerman. “Is it enough that we find a solution if it is a solution that our viewers or our readers can’t be a part of? For me, that’s the most challenging feature of this. Can we give our readers something positive and constructive they can do?”

**A** HOST OF NEW MEDIA VENTURES HAS sprung up in recent years that blend Bornstein and Zuckerman’s visions. The Christian Science Monitor launched its Take Action section last year. Upworthy, founded three years ago, claims to reach 50 million people per month through stories shared on social media that inspire readers. The Huffington Post now has an Impact section that sports the theme “What’s Working.” Editors hope to appeal to readers who want the news to be empowering—not necessarily to tell people which causes or programs they might support, but to provide models for discussions about fixing community ills. In many cases, readers were already filling comment sections with requests for more information about becoming involved and helping with issues covered in stories.

At the Monitor, editors say the Take Action section’s intended audience is readers who have expressed an interest in volunteering with, contributing to or sharing their professional experiences around the globe, either through letters to the editor or reader surveys. That audience wants to read about including the poor in the solar energy boom and education for girls in Afghanistan, for example, because they are passionate about income inequality and human rights, according to Susan Paardecamp Hackney, chief strategy and marketing officer at The Christian Science Monitor. They want to see how their progressive interests might advance in the world rather than read a litany of the obstacles they are up against. “They care more than the average news reader about the human condition,” says Paardecamp Hackney. “They care more than the average news reader about wanting to see something happen and maybe actually doing something themselves.”

The newspaper’s weekly edition editor, Clayton Collins, thinks of the Take Action section as living up to the goals of Christian Science founder Mary Baker Eddy, who called on the newspaper “to injure no man, but to bless all mankind.”

To Collins, the section is less about solutions and more about progress. “Looking at it through a progressive lens is more than putting a happy face on the news,” he says. “We are changing from becoming a straight information broker to providing tools and relevance to this global community that is interested in the advancement of human progress as we are.”

Collins might be right in thinking stories about positive social change engage readers. The Solutions Journalism Network collaborated with the Engaging News Project at the University of Texas-Austin to conduct a survey on how readers responded to solutions stories compared to ones that focused only on problems. The survey found that readers of solutions stories were more likely than readers of problem-oriented stories to say they felt inspired, and more likely to say they wanted to learn more. Those readers also said they were more likely to share solutions stories on social media, an important metric today for measuring performance.

At The Huffington Post, editors are keen for stories that readers share on Facebook and elsewhere. They view sharing as the best measure of impact. “Sharing is you thinking about what other people should know about it, so much so you want to brand yourself with it on social media,” says Jessica Prois, executive editor of HuffPost Impact and HuffPost Good News. “Sharing is more powerful than liking.”

Upworthy’s focus is getting readers to share the content it creates and curates. Backed by venture capitalists that include Facebook co-founder Chris Hughes and working with partners like Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative outlet ProPublica, the website considers itself the antidote to regular news outlets that bombard audiences with depressing stories about faraway places they are powerless to change. “We have so much news that we have this sense of learned helplessness,” says Amy O’Leary, Upworthy’s editorial director and a former

**THE ONLY BIAS IN  
SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM  
SHOULD BE TOWARD  
DATA-DRIVEN EVIDENCE**





*Solutions-oriented news outlets have covered the Afghan Institute of Learning's success in educating females across Afghanistan*

reporter for The New York Times and public radio's "This American Life."

Upworthy's critics consider it a news aggregator that purveys clickbait and lulls readers into thinking they're changing the world by posting an article on Reddit. But O'Leary thinks that complaint ignores the website's success in drawing large audiences. People absorb negativity by themselves, O'Leary argues, while uplifting news excites people and draws them together into a community, especially on social media platforms. "The real difference at Upworthy is that we are interested in stories that move people, stir their hearts, stir a strong emotional drive," she says. "Those are stories that traditional news organizations shy away from often. At Upworthy we say it's ok to have feelings about this."

Positive emotional responses that build inclusive communities, including news audiences, is at the heart of the work of Cathrine Gyldensted, a former Danish Broadcasting Corporation correspondent who founded a media consultancy after receiving a graduate degree in positive psychology from the University of Pennsylvania. Gyldensted conducts seminars for journalists in the U.S. and Europe seeking to break out of the doom-and-gloom reporting that turns off audiences. Gyldensted and colleagues

coined the term "constructive journalism" to describe their version of reporting along the lines of O'Leary, Bornstein, and others.

Recently Gyldensted worked with De Correspondent, a Dutch online news startup that launched in 2013. The website has a "progress" reporter, Rutger Bregman, who writes constructive journalism on issues in the Netherlands and around the world. One of his stories, "Why we should give free money to everyone," cites experiments in giving large sums of money to the homeless in London, the poor in Uganda and elsewhere with no strings attached. Rather than squandering the money, as many might expect, the majority of recipients used the funds to improve their lives and lessen their dependence on public assistance.

De Correspondent received \$1.7 million in launch funding from nearly 19,000 people via crowdsourcing. Its website now claims it has 34,000 subscribers who pay about \$65 a year. To Gyldensted, stories like Bregman's leave readers with a sense of hope about tackling problems that many readers refuse to accept as insoluble: "Journalism is detective work. We need to understand who did what, where, how to identify who is responsible. I get that. I think we should still do that. But I think we should ask what are the consequences if we are not facilitating a debate that is future ori-

ented. There is a huge lust for positive, uplifting, inspirational content."

Balancing inspiration and gumshoe reporting was a challenge the journalists at The Seattle Times' Education Lab worked hard to achieve. Rowe knew she needed emotional moments like the 18-year-old's suspension meeting to demonstrate the stakes of school discipline policies. She also ended the piece with a moving quote from one teacher, the son of two New York State correctional workers, who appears converted to restorative justice: "It's a way," he said, "to turn the most negative thing into possibly the most positive thing you've ever done in school."

She and the Education Lab labored, however, to report straightforwardly on restorative justice and other policies. They included the voices of critics who didn't believe the softer disciplinary procedures really improved student behavior. They spent time reporting on how restorative justice fared in other cities. They pulled no punches in their reporting but still managed to pull the heartstrings of readers. "Readers are fairly sophisticated, and they know when they are being force-fed something," says Rowe. "They believe from nuance. The idea is not to change minds; it's to show possibilities." ■

# NOT SO BLACK AND WHITE

Confronting  
racism as  
an African-  
American  
reporter in  
the age of  
Obama

BY ISSAC BAILEY

PORTRAIT BY GARY KNIGHT





WON'T BE SAD WHEN ANOTHER WHITE family moves into the White House.

If Hillary Clinton becomes the next president, after a few years, there might be plenty of women looking forward to the day a man retakes the reins of the world's most powerful nation.

I didn't know I'd feel this way more than six years ago when I drove to a former plantation in Georgetown, South Carolina—the town where first lady Michelle Obama's family tree has roots—on the night Barack Obama had done what had been considered improbable, if not impossible. I wanted to share the historic news with the ghosts of slaves who had toiled and endured long enough to make that night possible.

This isn't about Obama's performance as president. He took over a country involved in two ground wars and beleaguered by the worst downturn since the Great Depression. A country that couldn't find, let

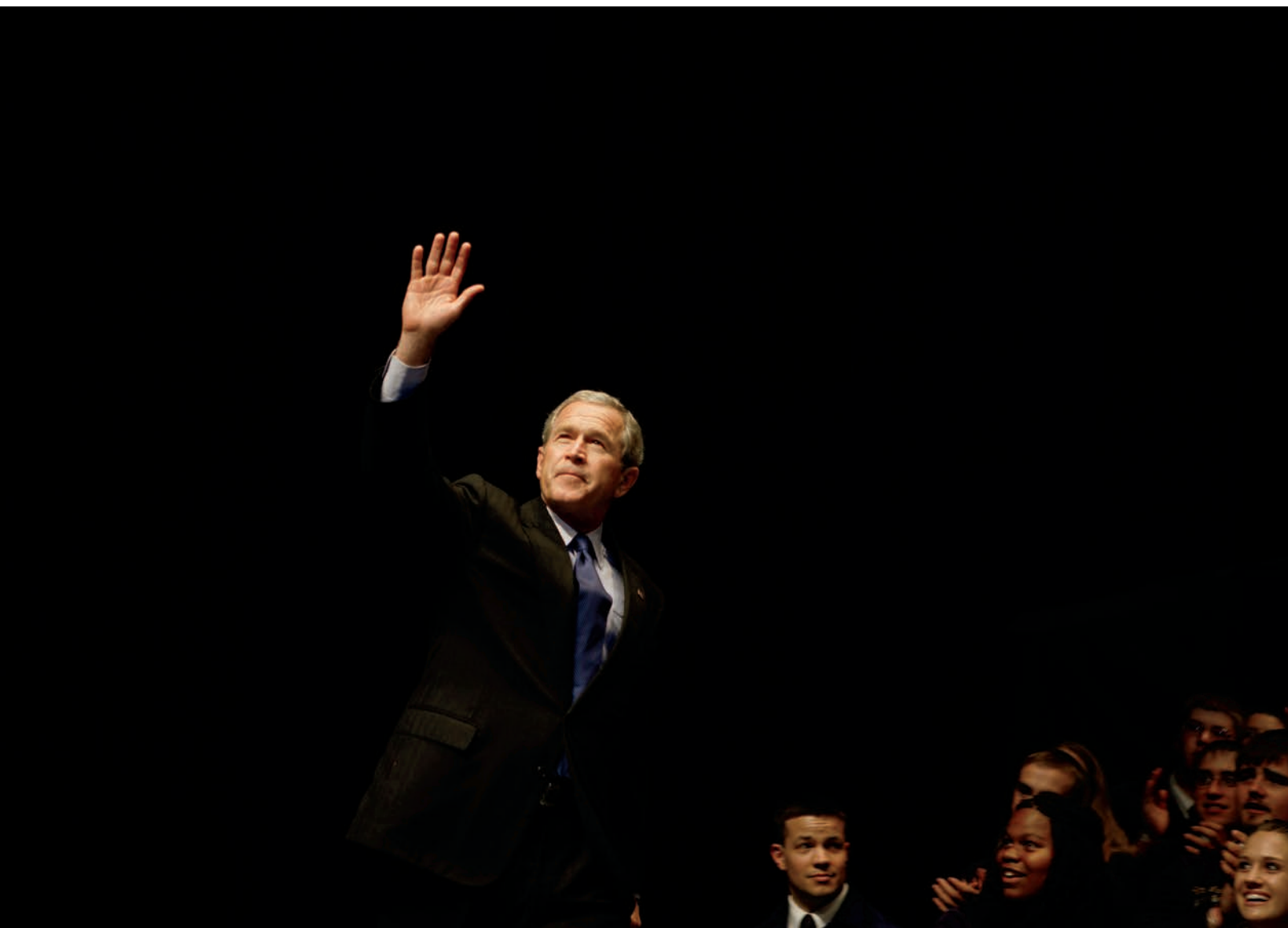
alone kill or imprison, Osama bin Laden, and that had about 50 million people without health insurance. A country where inequality had been on the rise for decades. On most of those measures, not all, he's helped steer us to a better place. History will likely look fondly upon him.

The image of Obama as an involved, doting father and faithful spouse during an age in which black men are often stereotyped as deadbeat, undisciplined sexual beings; his overcoming the struggles associated with the instability of a single-parent home, and forgoing a lucrative career in corporate law to serve poor people on the streets of Chicago only enhance what he represents. By objective standards, the country did well when it made him the first president since Eisenhower to twice receive at least 51 percent of the popular vote.

Despite that, I'm longing for a change because I'm just ... tired.

I'm tired of having to explain again and again—and again—that I'm capable of complex, rational thought





***Bailey voted for Bush over Gore in 2000 but, after the WMD debacle, chose a third-party candidate in 2004***

concerning policy and politics in the age of Obama. I'm tired in a way I wasn't before November 2008.

The shift in environment from pre- to post-Obama wasn't subtle. The messages I began receiving from readers went almost overnight from respectfully, if biting, confrontational, the kind any journalist, particularly a columnist, should expect, to overtly racist and demeaning. The shift was taking place as many members of the media were talking about a nebulous post-racial world no one could clearly define because Barack Obama was about to become the nation's first black president. The post-racial talk didn't make room for another reality or the reason why Obama called a press conference to prove he was fully American.

I had received messages from the dark side of race relations before 2008, including threats for which the police had to get involved, as the first black dude to hold my position in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, at the only daily newspaper in an area that is primarily white and conservative. But those came from a clear fringe: some

handwritten letters marked KKK, most unnamed, many with crude threats about knowing where I live and shotguns with my name on them.

In the days before Obama's anticipated 2008 win, white friends and fellow church members accidentally copied me on a number of forwarded chain e-mails they would have immediately deleted in prior years because they were so tasteless and racially tinged. Obama's emergence seemingly gave them freedom to dip into a well of racial ugliness they'd refused to partake of before him. One of the messages depicted an imaginary Obama victory party, complete with a passed out homeless black man lying next to a dumpster, an overturned bucket of fried chicken, and scattered pieces of watermelon.

Those who once supported Obama but have been disappointed began to question my integrity and professionalism in ways subtle and not, sometimes openly wondering if a form of race loyalty had blinded me. Critics who once challenged me to better explain my positions, and respect theirs, in healthy, if passionate,

back-and-forths, stopped dissecting my arguments and largely refused to take them seriously, capable of viewing me only through an Obama-tinged lens.

They would take me seriously if I joined others in slamming or disagreeing with Obama, the fouler the language I could muster to criticize him the better. Being the black dude who took the black dude in the White House to task, no matter the substance or merits of a position, was the quickest way to confirm I wasn't race blind. It is as though many believed that sometime in November 2008 I had undergone a lobotomy. They were either incapable or unwilling to consider that the difference between pre- and post-Obama could lie within their own brains, and hearts, that a new racial reality had flushed to the surface unintentional racial stereotypes they had allowed to flow through their minds undisturbed for years.

Unknowingly, they had reduced me to just another black guy agreeing with the black guy in a White House that up to that point had been reserved for white men in ways they had never reduced white writers to being race-inspired cheerleaders of what had been the country's uninterrupted parade of white presidents, no mat-

ter how many times those white writers agreed with the white guy in the White House, no matter how many times they patiently tried to explain the fellow white dude's position, or impatiently tried to dispel myths about the man with whom they shared a skin tone, in an effort to create space for honest debate that could get us beyond talking points and exaggerated fears. They weren't driven by a purposeful racism, but rather a passive ignorance, a refusal to grapple with any uncomfatableness that challenged their deeply held views.

Political scholars have noted that there's been a marked shift in ideology toward hyper-partisanship that has intensified in recent years. They've also conducted research showing that in this new reality, political bias sometimes outpaces the ethnic and racial kind, though this may be in part due to the greater social acceptability of political bias.

There's little doubt that's true. But it doesn't explain it all. Race is still an under-explored factor in the shift. My politics and perspective didn't change because Obama was elected. Even if they had, that would still have not explained why the number of times I've been called nigger—directly and indirectly—had increased exponentially.

***Before Obama, Bailey had only voted for white candidates, most of them conservative men, for high office***





**After Obama was elected president in 2008, the messages I received from readers almost overnight became overtly racist and demeaning**

Obama was the first black person for high office for whom I had ever voted. I don't know if I would have voted for Jesse Jackson in the '80s, the first black man to make real noise in a presidential campaign by winning multiple primaries, had I been old enough. But I did not even consider voting for Democrat Al Sharpton when he was challenging the likes of John Kerry and John Edwards, or Republican Alan Keyes or a handful of other black candidates whose names I've forgotten.

Since Obama, I had a chance to vote for Tim Scott, who became the first black man elected to the Senate from a Deep South state since Reconstruction, but chose not to. His ideology too closely resembled that of ultra-conservative Jim DeMint, a white man who gave up his Senate seat and supported South Carolina Governor Nikki R. Haley's appointment of Scott. I considered Herman Cain's "9-9-9" campaign, a flash-in-the-pan 2012 presidential run that briefly saw the former pizza chain executive atop of early polls before a predictable flameout, more of a stunt than worthy of serious consideration.



BEFORE OBAMA I HAD ONLY VOTED for white candidates—for governor, the U.S. Senate, and the presidency—almost all of whom were men. Not only that, most of those for whom I pulled the lever were conservative.

Republican George W. Bush, not Al Gore, got my vote in 2000. In 2004, a third-party candidate (I forget which one, maybe Ralph Nader) received my protest vote against a second Bush term after the Iraq-WMD debacle. I didn't give Kerry a second thought.

What do most of the people for whom I voted before Obama for the most powerful seats have in common? Not gender, not political ideology, but race.

Each of them is white.

Despite that, in 2008 I, and millions of black voters, were accused of being incapable of seeing beyond race. Never mind that black voters had spent their entire adult lives crossing racial lines to vote, while the white people accusing black voters of a perverse racial loyalty to Obama had never found reason to vote for anyone who wasn't white like them.

It reminded me of my days at Davidson College, an elite, mostly white liberal arts school in North Carolina. Many white students were quick to note the all-black tables in Vail Commons but never noticed the overabundance of all-white ones, never realizing those black students chose to challenge themselves by deciding to attend Davidson, knowing they'd be in the minority for four years, while it likely crossed the minds of not one white Davidson student to consider challenging themselves in a similar fashion at a predominantly black institution.

As a journalist, pre-Obama, I spent years recounting my voting history and explaining to Bush critics that they could disagree without hating him, could dissect his policies without subterfuge, needed to remember

that he was a fellow child of God, that pushing conspiracy theories about his role in the 9/11 attacks and the lead-up to the Iraq war would only push us further away from the kinds of discussions and debates that were a must if we were going to be able to honestly determine which policies made sense, which ones didn't, which ones had to be improved upon.

I wrote about race in the same terms, highlighting how Bush programs were doing wonders for those suffering from an AIDS and HIV epidemic in parts of Africa, how his cabinet was one of the most diverse in history and included the nation's first black secretary of state, and how he appointed the first black woman to be national security adviser. During those years, I defended Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice against charges of Uncle Tomism, which were coming from civil rights icons such as Harry Belafonte. I took Kanye West to task when he said Bush "doesn't care about black people."

I defended the likes of Rush Limbaugh and Don Imus and Bill O'Reilly against claims of racism and refused to jump on the bandwagon that became the Duke lacrosse rape case, in which three white players were accused of raping a black woman. The incident was held up by Duke professors and others as an instance that highlighted racism and sexism on campus, before the state attorney general declared the young men innocent and said they had been falsely accused by an overzealous prosecutor. I would repeatedly do the same for Tea Party members during the Obama era, reminding people not to label an entire movement by its worst, fringe elements, which were made up of people at Tea Party rallies with homemade signs depicting Obama as a bone-through-the-nose African witch doctor. And I began writing about how the health care system had been leaving too many people behind—black, white, Latino.

As a lifelong battle with a severe stutter had taught me to do, I looked for silver linings in dark political, racial, and economic clouds. That's the way I thought, and wrote, long before Obama took his first oath, but after he took office, it became evidence of my supposed race loyalty.

Before Obama, those things generated "thank yous" and "you're a credit to your race" and "more black people should listen to you" from countless white readers. I was a man of reason, deep thought, and fairness, in their minds, as I used my little perch to make the way for reasonable debate about the white dude in the White House and his policies. Since Obama, adhering to that philosophy brought me cries of "you've changed" and "race card" and "blacks need to get off the plantation" and "you aren't doing your people any good."

Some of it, no doubt, had to do with naked politics. Rank hypocrisy in politics is a feature, not a bug. But that's not the full story. None of that explains why conservatives felt comfortable passing around a depiction of the White House lawn as a watermelon patch, a joke that compared Obama's father to a dog, and a food stamp with pictures of ribs and fried chicken. It doesn't explain why so many people who knew me long before Obama popped onto the scene unconsciously—and

sometimes purposefully—reduced me to the amount of melanin in my skin.

It doesn't explain why so many are committed to the belief that the only reason a black person would have chosen Obama was because of race. His work in Illinois to battle racial inequities within the criminal justice system, which appealed to me most because of my family's experiences with prison, didn't matter. His work with poor people in the streets of Chicago; his having been editor of *Harvard Law Review*; his ability in the U.S. Senate to help usher through ethics reform; his ideas about an ailing economy or being right about the Iraq invasion; his plans for health reform; his performance in the foreign policy debate against a grizzled war hero; the fact that a once-in-a-generation recession hit during a Republican presidency; his ability to make cynical crowds stand at attention—supposedly none of that mattered to black voters, only race.

That's why I'm tired. I've spent the past six and a half years studying and researching and interviewing and listening more than I did the previous decade. For so many people, none of that matters if it leads me to the conclusion that the black dude in the White House has done something well. And it hasn't just been coming from white conservatives.

Black liberals such as intellectual Cornel West seem to have concluded that black journalists are cowed or simply want to cozy up to the White House if we don't adhere to their hard-left views. I never expected Obama to be as leftist as West did and didn't want him to be. I didn't spend years voting for conservatives and liberals because I believe one ideology trumps the other.

For a long time, I kept a running list of all the ways I disagreed with Obama, ready to pull it out and re-post on Facebook or elsewhere to show I was more than just about race. I found myself repeatedly boasting about how Obama failed in his efforts to rescue the everyday homeowner. His administration quickly bailed out the banks, a necessary evil, I said, but missed a chance to help the middle class with a mass refinancing and mortgage modification plan.

I began writing about the ethical problems with Obama's overuse of drones, though I think they are effective anti-terror tools and likely caused less collateral damage than a ground war would. As I supported the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), I reminded readers about its flaws.

I documented the ways the economy was emerging from the worst downturn since the Great Depression but didn't shy away from pointing out the lack of significant wage growth. I passed along scathing critiques from a variety of writers about Obama's handling of privacy and press freedoms.

I expressed disgust that Obama would take occasions such as Father's Day to excoriate absent black fathers. (While I was doing that, I was receiving messages from white conservative readers lamenting that Obama never talked about black personal responsibility.)

Obama was wrong on gay marriage, and his stiff-arming of the Muslim community during the 2008 campaign

was weak, I was quick to say. His views on gay marriage are still wrong because he claims it is a state issue, I've told everyone who would listen.

I kept the Obama-failure list for a long time, until I realized I never pieced together such a list when Bush was in office. I didn't count the ways local white politicians, who dominate Myrtle Beach area politics the way they have on the national level, had disappointed me. Only for Obama did I feel the need to be able to document, at a moment's notice, how I disagreed with him to prove I was above race. I know now my doing that did the opposite. I treated Obama differently because I was trying to prove I wasn't treating him differently. It affected me in ways I'm only now willing to admit.



THAT'S WHY I'M TIRED, BECAUSE even as I battled that demon, I refused to play along with the over-hyping of false conspiracies such as those that surrounded the Ebola outbreak, the Benghazi tragedy, and the IRS review of conservative groups. I kept pointing out the duplicity of the Republican Party leadership, which tried to thwart Obama at every turn while claiming it was the president's fault bipartisanship hadn't taken hold as he promised. I loathe the Republicans' state-level attempts to roll back voting rights and have repeatedly said so.

And I have not been shy about my support for health reform, which, while flawed, is a major improvement. It has contributed to the slowest rate of health care inflation in half a century; brought health insurance to 16 million Americans so far; cost overall less than what had been forecast; has helped millions of seniors afford prescription drugs; and extended the life of Medicare by at least a dozen years.

I don't support the ACA because of Obama. I support the ACA because it is helping people in need and will put a dent in inequality by taxing those most able to benefit the most needy. I support the ACA more than I support Obama.

I refused to vote for Bush for a second term because of the debacle that was the Iraq war and the false WMD claims. In 2010, I declared Obama would not get my vote in 2012 if he didn't find a way to push through health reform. That support stems in part from my knowledge that the GOP has refused to do anything to truly address the country's out-of-control health care problems and has opposed major reform efforts by Bill Clinton and Obama.

Only one party was willing to do something significant about one of the most vexing problems facing this country—rising health care costs are among the nation's top fiscal threats—and it was being led by the nation's first black president, not the party I voted for several times before 2008.

For a lot of people, little of that matters, no matter how many times I spell it out. I'm black and Obama is black and that's all they need to know.

**For a long time, I kept a running list of all the ways I disagreed with Obama, ready to pull it out to show I was more than just about race**





***Bailey supports the Affordable Care Act more than he supports Obama, shown here with his family at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial***

That's why I'm tired. I've spent the Obama era trying to do my job the way I know I should, the way I had before him, fearlessly assessing the news and policy, while also trying to beat back the burden that is race.

It hasn't been easy. Several times, I wanted to throw up my hands. I wanted to be like others who had distilled Obama down into his simplest parts. I wanted to experience the freedom a large number of columnists and pundits had, not caring about nuance or fairness or quoting in context politicians with whom they disagree instead of as though they were caricatures, not complex human beings.

Part of it stems from the parallels I noticed between Obama's life and mine, which made the struggle to support Obama policies personal in a way they never were during the Bush years.

Obama was once considered too black, then not black enough, as have I. A man snubbed him during the 2008 campaign, refusing to shake his hand, the way a white man I was interviewing for a story about the economy wouldn't shake mine. Obama grew up disadvantaged but eventually made his way into elite institutions of higher education, like I did. Some of his accomplishments were demeaned by those saying they only occurred because of race in the same way some of mine have been discounted, no matter how hard I worked to achieve them, no matter how many obstacles I had to overcome. He's been called "uppity" and "nigger" and other disparaging terms, like I have.

The irony is that during 2008, I understood the political game well enough to know that Obama's approval rating would begin to fall once the hard task of governing began. That didn't surprise me. Being reduced to the color of my skin by even people who knew me well, no matter how hard I tried to be fair and comprehensive in my thinking and writing, did.

Though I was stubborn enough to (mostly) do my job the way I believed I ought to, that hurt. It wore me down.

I'm overjoyed that I lived through the time during which the country—founded upon the contrasting beliefs that all men are created equal and that black people are inferior—elected its first black president. If another black candidate emerges in 2016 or beyond as the one I should choose among mostly white candidates, I'll cast my ballot for him or her and professionally will endeavor to treat that presidency the way I know I should. I'm stubborn that way.

I'm tired, though. In 2008, I didn't know a long hoped-for historic breakthrough could make me feel this way.

I'm tired, but not nearly as tired as those who were beaten on a bridge in Selma 50 years ago, or those killed a century before in the nation's bloodiest war, or my parents and aunts and uncles, who toiled and overcame obstacles and slights that make the ones I've experienced these past six and a half years seem like child's play.

So, yes, I'm tired. But because of what happened in November 2008, my kids won't be nearly as tired as I am. ■



*Community members protected Cathy and Jerome Jenkins's restaurant in Ferguson, Missouri from looters in 2014*





## **Can a black beat help change the portrayal of African-Americans?**

BY SUSAN SMITH RICHARDSON

# **MAKING BLACK LIVES MATTER**

AFTER UNARMED BLACK TEENAGER MICHAEL BROWN WAS SHOT and killed by a white police officer last summer in Ferguson, Missouri, a photo of Brown appearing to throw gang signs began circulating online. In response, hundreds of black people began tweeting using the hashtag #IfTheyGunnedMeDown—some posting dual images of themselves, one playing on stereotypes, the other capturing more positive depictions—underscoring the message: Which photo would the media use if I were gunned down? The social media campaign turned a critique of the mainstream media's portrayal of African-Americans into a viral lesson about racial stereotypes. As the editor and publisher of a news organization that focuses on race, I'm painfully aware that black life is too often cast in one dimension, as the photos tweeted under the #IfTheyGunnedMeDown hashtag illustrated. Black people are soldiers and fathers, doctors and lawyers, police officers and teachers, and even a president and first lady. I'm stating the obvious, but the truth isn't obvious in the news. Whether by omission or commission, news coverage frequently reinforces stereotypes. A beat that covers African-Americans could help capture the breadth of black life while also shining a steady light on the persistent challenges facing black people at a time when race in America is more complex than ever before.

In Pittsburgh between March 1 and April 30, 2011, 73 percent of broadcast stories featuring black men were about sports or crime, according to the Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, which reviewed nearly 5,000 print and broadcast stories. Other studies about news coverage of black men echo the findings. Research shows that stories in which African-Americans are consistently associated with poverty and crime increase racial animosity toward them, reinforcing the color lines in our society.

Every journalist should share responsibility for coverage of race. That's part of journalistic excellence, the goal of all news outlets. But we also need reporters focused exclusively on the issue. If we are honest with ourselves, we know that race won't get covered regularly if newsroom leaders don't demand it, don't support it, and don't reward it. And truth is, most of them don't.

Changing the portrayal of African-Americans in the media can't be accomplished through occasional big projects about race; it requires a sophisticated and sustained effort over time. That's what a beat can do.

More than 50 years after some mainstream news organizations began hiring black reporters, a beat that focuses on black people may appear to be the equivalent of a "Colored Only" sign. It's a return to the "Negro pages," the section set aside in newspapers for coverage of black people into the 20th century, says Leon Dash, a founding member of the National Association of Black Journalists who is now a professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. "We should fight to be included in the news pages and on the websites of any credible journalism enterprise," he argues.

Charles Whitaker, a professor at Northwestern University's journalism school and a generation younger

than Dash, is more ambivalent. A beat "could be an antidote" to the limited coverage of race, he says. "What it does is pour time, resources, energy, and voices into the reporting. If somebody is really dedicating resources, we can change the conversation. Now, we get the pathology stories, and we don't get as many success stories and research stories."

But, Whitaker, who worked for major metropolitan dailies and *Ebony* magazine before joining academia, cautions, it could also become an excuse for news organizations to "ghettoize" coverage.

A beat seems like a "great idea in theory," says Shani O. Hilton, executive editor for news at BuzzFeed. Race isn't making its way into mainstream coverage and into wider stories about issues such as poverty, she argues, but the solution is many beats, not one. "What's the black story?," she asks. "There are several. There's an economic story, an education story. There's a youth and young women and young men story."

For Austin Long-Scott, a former national reporter for *The Washington Post*, racial politics have evolved considerably since the 1960s, making it now more important to cover power, how it works, who has it, and who doesn't. Rather than a beat, he thinks journalists should cover "levers of power," which include race and class. "Because of changes begun by the civil rights movement and continued by the changing attitudes of younger people, race [isn't] as simple as it used to be," he says. "What's the commonality between upper class blacks and black folks being corralled by the prison system?"

To me, the complexity of black identity today—the diversity within the community, as Long-Scott and Hilton describe—is the selling point for a beat. Whitaker argues that mainstream news organizations can learn a lot

**37%**  
Percentage of  
minorities in U.S.  
population in 2013

*Jerrell Willis and  
his son Fidel cross the  
Brooklyn Bridge*



22%

Percentage of minorities in local TV news in 2013

13%

Percentage of minorities in local radio news in 2013

13%

Percentage of minority journalists in newspapers in 2013

from the black press, which covers African-Americans in a “holistic” way. The complexities of our communities play out in those publications. For example, a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published in 2013 indicated that black fathers were as involved with their children as other fathers. Yet I saw little coverage of this story, which counters prevailing myths about absent black fathers.

A diverse staff means newsrooms have people with very different lived experience, people who can bring perspectives that are missing to stories. Those world-views play out along racial and other lines, including class, religion, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

I believe that’s invaluable. Direct experience with housing discrimination or police harassment can help deepen reporting, revealing new angles, and not just for stories about race. For example, the drop in public sector jobs over the past several years has disproportionately affected African-Americans, who historically have relied on government jobs to enter the middle class.

Diversity in newsrooms is about the quality of journalism. It’s from that point of view that we should be concerned about the most recent data from the American Society of News Editors (ASNE). The percentage of minorities in newspaper newsrooms is virtually unchanged over the past decade. People of color are 13 percent of the 36,700 newspaper journalists, based on 2013 figures, the most recent available from ASNE and released in 2014. In 2013, the percentage of minorities in local TV news remains steady at 22 percent, where it was in 2003 according to a survey by the Radio Television Digital News Association. Minorities were about 13 percent of the local radio workforce in 2013, a slight increase from 2003. In 2013, minorities comprised about 37 percent of the United States population, according to U.S. Census Bureau data.

**I**’M NOT ARGUING THAT ONLY BLACK people can and should write stories about black people, or that they are uniquely qualified by virtue of life experience to write about race. Like any specialty beat, a reporter has to cultivate sources, identify experts, and learn the seminal literature.

Coverage involving race may have opened the door for a generation of African-American journalists, but many black journalists then—and now—had ambitions beyond reporting about race. And many young journalists of color today want to cover many topics, of which race may or may not be one. To consign them to a race beat would just be another form of stereotyping.

White reporters can and should cover race. As the editor for a minority affairs beat at The Sacramento Bee in the early 1990s, I worked with a white male reporter who had had little experience writing about race. But

*From the photographer*

## QUIET ACTS OF RESISTANCE

**MY OBJECTIVE AS A VISUAL STORYTELLER is to connect with individuals and families on an intimate level, especially if this leads to long-term trusted relationships. When collaborators find a level of vulnerability that allows them to reveal unseen aspects about themselves, a certain power and authenticity manifests in the small, ephemeral moments.**

**I capture these moments to challenge pervasive tropes regarding the depiction of African-Americans, whether it is the characterization of black males as violent criminals or as deadbeat dads, or the description of black families and communities solely as dysfunctional and despondent.**

**Workaday moments of ordinary black life are often not considered newsworthy. But it is these moments that represent quiet acts of resistance, reclaiming narrative without the need for big gestures or artificial iconography. My aim is to show African-Americans as empowered agents in their own lives, whose humanity doesn’t need explanation or defense.**

— ZUN LEE

he was a star in the newsroom, and selecting him to cover the beat immediately elevated its profile. White reporters understood that the beat was important, and because senior editors valued the reporter, coverage of race received more attention.

My job, as I saw it, was to work with him to elevate the quality of coverage, to make sure we got the history and context right. I often felt conflicted that it took a white reporter who had little experience covering race to give the beat the attention it deserved.

I learned two important lessons from that experience. As with any beat, you have to give the reporter support and time to learn his coverage area, and race can be a coveted beat when newsroom leaders value it and treat it as they would other specialty beats.

For Whitaker, the benefits of creating a beat may outweigh the drawbacks “if we’re going to do it right and give it time and attention and the spatial real estate as well.” So what does a black beat look like?

Looking at data is one place to start. At The Chicago Reporter, where I am editor and publisher, we use data to drive our investigations. There’s a treasure trove of information available through public agencies. The African American Policy Forum is one organization doing innovative work at the intersection of race and gender. The Forum recently released “Black Girls Matter,” in conjunction with Columbia Law School. The report drew on interviews and government data to show how school disciplinary policies affect black girls.

SOURCES: UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU; RADIO TELEVISION DIGITAL NEWS ASSOCIATION/HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY; AMERICAN SOCIETY OF NEWS EDITORS 2014 NEWSROOM CENSUS FIGURES FROM 2013



## STOP SEGREGATING STORIES

*Why race, culture, and poverty need to be covered like the weather, sports, and the stock market*

BY ERIC DEGGANS

IT'S TOUGH TO TURN ON a TV news report, pick up a newspaper or surf across a news website these days without seeing a story at least partially affected by race.

A report from the U.S. Department of Justice suggesting police in Ferguson, Missouri filled government coffers by targeting black people for tickets and fines. Four police officers leaving the force in Fort Lauderdale, Florida—a city with a black police chief—after they created a racially charged video and traded racist texts. A TV personality with Spanish-language Univision fired after saying first lady Michelle Obama resembled a cast member from the film “Planet of the Apes.” And the aftermath of questionable police conduct in the deaths of black people like Eric Garner of New York and Tamir Rice of Cleveland.

These are a smattering of news stories from the past year, featuring a roster of hot-button topics worthy of a call-in radio show. And this, in a way, is exactly the problem.

In my view, too often, coverage of racial issues at mainstream news organizations is treated episodically, focused largely on exploding controversies and breaking news stories. Someone is dead or is getting sued or has been arrested or has done something controversial, and media outlets are ready to track the fallout in stories almost guaranteed to rank at the top of their websites' most-read list.

But in my experience this approach also segregates the topic of race to news—focused on conflict and controversy—that polarizes audiences. Audiences are conditioned to see race as a hot-button topic only worthy of the most blockbuster stories, making it tougher for journalists to tell subtler, more complex tales. The expectation: Stories on race will always center on major conflict, which can affect how audiences react to work where race isn't even the primary focus, but a secondary or tertiary topic.

This is something I experienced firsthand when I wrote for NPR.org about Jimmy Fallon taking over NBC's storied late-night program “The Tonight Show” in 2014. Deep in the piece I noted how he was living the fantasy life of a millennial white guy, his coolness validated in part by hip people of color like Will Smith and backing band The Roots. Right away, a reader e-mailed to take exception, wondering why I'm always writing about race, even though 80 percent of the story had nothing to do with the topic.



*Eric Deggans is NPR's television critic and author of “Race Baiter: How the Media Wields Dangerous Words to Divide a Nation”*

Earlier this year, a different reader looked at an online roster of stories I had covered over two weeks, noting that most of the pieces had involved race. When I e-mailed that reader, I wondered why he objected to substantial coverage of race in the first place. I also wondered why he didn't look back four more weeks and see that I hadn't mentioned the topic much at all in that time.

It seems news consumers have been so conditioned to see race as a combustible flashpoint in coverage, it is tough for some to come across even a brief mention without assuming the entire story is focused on the subject. And for others, race is a specialty topic that only deserves focus occasionally in the efforts of a reporter covering a general interest beat like television, as I do.

In an increasingly multicultural society, race and culture deserve a different level of coverage than most mainstream journalists now provide. When you watch a typical TV news broadcast, there are regular segments on the weather, sports, or the stock market, regardless of the news at hand. Audiences have accepted such coverage as a steady feature of any news product. Race, culture, and poverty deserve the same kind of regular coverage as the barometric pressure and the Dow Jones. If the weather and stock market tell us about the health of our environment and economy, then race, culture, and poverty tell us about the health of our society.

That's why it's difficult to understand The New York Times's decision in early 2015 to move its reporter on the national race beat, Tanzina Vega, to a job covering courts in the Bronx with no announced plans to name a successor.

In today's times of doing more in the media with much less, it's tough for beat reporters to fully cover their subjects, let alone for a newspaper to ensure full and fair coverage of a subject when no one is directly responsible for it. Certainly, a news outlet can cover race fully and broadly across the newsroom while also assigning a person to ensure regular, quality reporting. (Is it a cheap shot to note that the paper has a wine critic, but no national reporter on race?)

My own employer, NPR, drew headlines when it canceled a radio show that regularly discussed race and cultural diversity, “Tell Me More,” also eliminating 28 positions across the company. But host Michel Martin and a few of the show's staffers were moved to the identity and culture department, the home of Code Switch, which covers race, culture, and diversity subjects.

This should be an easy call for journalism organizations. If you want to see more nuanced discussion of race in America, you have to provide more nuanced and consistent coverage first.

Which only leaves one question: Why isn't more of this happening now? ■



***Billy Garcia enjoys an evening walk in the Bronx with his children Esmeralda and Jeremy***

Combining data analysis with spending time in neighborhoods enriches reporting about race. Twitter, the vibrant space that brought us viral hashtags like #BlackLivesMatter, is a source of story ideas. So are local newspapers and the African-American press.

And Whitaker believes solutions-based journalism matters. “It’s important to look at how you can advance who is working at solutions and what is being done,” he says. “That’s the way I would like to see the beat done, in addition to uncovering injustices.”

Many major universities have African-American studies professors who research local and national issues, and there are programs that are pioneering solutions to issues. A study by the University of Chicago’s Crime Lab found that a year in the Becoming a Man program improved attendance and grades and reduced violent-crime arrests by 44 percent. The program inspired President Obama’s My Brother’s Keeper initiative, which tries to steer young men of color toward success.

**W**

ALDO E. JOHNSON, JR., A PROFESSOR at the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago, says the beat should place the issues black people face in the context of institutional practices and structural inequality.

“In the media, there is a huge focus on individual behavior,” says Johnson, who has conducted extensive research on black boys and men. “I see more of a nuanced discussion about structure than we’ve had before, but it’s not defined as institutional racism. Instead, we talk about disinvestment in communities. But we don’t say when the disinvestment occurred and who divested. We don’t name institutions.”

Whitaker says the beat has to capture the voices of the community: “I had an instructor who said journalists have

an ‘edifice worship.’ You only get narrative and story by being among the people you are writing about, finding the time and space to hear the stories. My theater friends call it ‘original voice,’ letting people tell their own stories.”

There are already some commendable reporting efforts around race. We need more of them. The Race Card Project on NPR engages everyday Americans in conversations about race and racism through mining and sharing their personal experiences. At The New York Times, Tanzina Vega produced an impressive list of stories that tapped into the zeitgeist around race—from the significance of Black Twitter to the differences between today’s activists and their counterparts in the civil rights era. When she was reassigned in January, Times editors said race was too big for one beat, but have yet to publicly announce a plan.

Investigations like Nikole Hannah-Jones’s ProPublica story about school resegregation in the South and The Atlantic’s Ta-Nehisi Coates’s essay about reparations feed the public appetite for stories about race while simultaneously crafting smart, thoughtful, and challenging analyses about the legacy of structural racism today. Hannah-Jones explored how schools in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, once under federal desegregation orders, have re-segregated with the blessing of the school district. Coates tracks the long arm of racism that extended from the Jim Crow South to the perceived haven of Chicago. These stories prompted conversations and are changing the narrative around black people and an understanding of their history in this country.

Making coverage of African-Americans a high-profile position sends a message from managers to their newsrooms about what is valued and what will be rewarded. And outside of our newsrooms, the decision sends a message that is equally as powerful as #IfTheyGunnedMeDown. That is this: Black lives matter in news coverage. ■

# SOUNDS RIGHT

## How public radio is putting more of America into its stories

BY ADRIANA GALLARDO  
AND BETSY O'DONOVAN

**W**HEN “TELL ME MORE,” NPR’S TALK show about diversity, was canceled in 2014, NPR’s then-ombudsman Edward Schumacher-Matos observed that Latinos (16 percent of the U.S. population) hold only 5 percent of newsroom jobs at NPR and African-Americans (13 percent of the U.S. population) are at 10 percent, down from 12 percent in 2012. About 7 percent of NPR’s newsroom is Asian-American, compared to 5 percent of Americans.

Even if a significant number of minorities work in public radio, you wouldn’t know it—at least, not from their voices. “Public radio voice” is what some people consider accent-less and others know to be a distinct, specific accent: a white one.

If a whitewashed paradigm is getting in the way of efforts to become more diverse—in terms of workforce and sound—what’s to be done? Quite a lot, in fact.

### Start small

“NPR had felt for a long time that our sourcing was leaving people out,” says Keith Woods, NPR’s vice president for diversity in news and operations. So the largest network in public radio launched a three-year content analysis project in 2013 to examine its diversity. In the first year of sampling its flagship programs, “Morning Edition” and “All Things Considered,” Woods’s team found that an overwhelming majority of sources were white males. So NPR began running short experiments within newsroom teams.

On the education team, a project manager reconfirms the group’s goals and tactics for diversifying coverage, doing a weekly check-in about what people are learning as they address those goals, rather than explicitly focus-

ing on the quantity of diverse sources. The newsroom developed a Source of the Week Tumblr as an evolving database of racially and ethnically diverse experts. Woods also advised reporters and editors to contact familiar expert sources and explicitly ask them to recommend colleagues and contacts who could bring more people of color to NPR’s reporting. “It isn’t just about going out and trying to find brown people or women or people from the Midwest,” Woods says. “It’s about changing the way you do things so that those folks naturally make their way into your content as they should.”

### Put more of America into your stories

Identify areas in which there already is a diverse pool of sources. And, in areas where diverse “expert sources” are scarce, consider whether a person who is managing the consequences of, say, economic policies—a county health worker rather than someone at Harvard’s School of Public Health—might have valuable expertise. “Education, writing, religion all track closer to the demographics of the country in our race and gender sourcing than do science, economics, politics,” according to Woods. “It doesn’t mean you stop covering the economy; it just means you put more of America into the content, more of the concerns of the average person into the content.” The result: a more accurate representation of race and knowledge in America.

### Redefine “expertise”

Consider whether race informs your biases about “expertise,” and share the mic with people who don’t have traditional credentials. At NPR, Woods’s team found that 58 percent of NPR’s go-to sources were either politicians, government officials, journalists, or professors—pools of people whose racial demographics don’t reflect the rest of the country. “If a significant number of your sources are going to be journalists, you have already made a racial decision without making one,” Woods says. “If a significant number of your sources are going to be professors, PhDs in America, you’ve made a gendered and racial decision by that choice, before you ever choose the actual source. If you’re in Washington and you’re talking to a politician, you have made a racial and gendered choice and maybe even a geographic choice, by choosing the category of source.”

In 2012, Localore, a project of the Association of Independents in Radio [where the co-authors work], launched Curious City, an ongoing experiment incubated at Chicago public radio station WBEZ. Curious City has a simple premise: How early and often can you get people into the creation of news stories? Founder and producer Jennifer Brandel broke the creation of news into four steps—pitching, assigning, reporting, and distribution—and turned each one over to what was formerly “the audience.” All of Curious City’s stories answer questions submitted by the public, and it confirms audience appetite by putting questions up for a vote.

**Incorporating diverse sources into reporting requires journalists to think differently**





**St. Louis area barber Christopher Williams with a customer whose hair he has been cutting for 14 years**

The people who pose the questions are invited to help report. The Curious newsroom posts about work in progress to make sure it has the story right, to invite fresh information, and to help people understand the reporting process. Its distribution strategy ranges from broadcast to comic books to community actions, and is always a mix of many media—including, once, infographics on rolls of toilet paper. Curious City subjects range across neighborhoods and economic boundaries. Here are the questions up for a vote last spring: In the Chicago area, do Arab Muslims attend the same mosques as African-American Muslims? How Desi [South Asian] is Devon Avenue these days? Black and Latino poverty seems to be concentrated in certain areas of Chicago. What about poor white neighborhoods?

#### **Ask daring questions**

“Why are we allowed to be curious about everything except race?” NPR reporter Shereen Marisol Meraji asked when she launched into “Audio Code Switching: Tackling Race on the Radio” at Third Coast, the largest international conference for audio producers, last November. Meraji is a member of NPR’s Code Switch team, which covers race, ethnicity, and culture; if Code Switch has a secret formula, it’s hiring talented journalists whose approach to very complicated questions is often, “Why is this like that?” The team is full of diverse journalists, but their advantage isn’t that they have a monolithic knowledge of minority culture; it’s that they have excellent reporting skills and their job is to fact-check the prevailing racial narrative. They “run toward stereotypes, with respect,” Meraji says, to stories that explore questions like how the melody from “Kung Fu Fighting” came to signal Asian-ness, or the Old English origins of the “ax” vs. “ask” debate. Code Switch stories ask about cultural signals that no one else has bothered (or, sometimes, dared) to interrogate.

#### **Turn classrooms into newsrooms**

In Washington, D.C., the public libraries run a four-part digital audio storytelling workshop. The participants are overwhelmingly African-American, according to library associate and workshop leader Peter Timko, and they work on community and family stories that sometimes feel like an alternate history of the United States. Timko’s approach is purposefully basic: a curriculum that produces an audio story with nothing but a smartphone, free audio editing software, and public domain sound archives.

The Vocolo Storytelling Workshop, based out of Chicago’s WBEZ, teaches citizen journalists (usually people with full-time, non-journalism jobs) to make radio about things that matter to them. The free workshop is small, and applicants are asked how they will give voice to underrepresented communities in the city. The listeners-turned-producers regularly pull stories and sound from perspectives reporters don’t know or can’t access, like Maria Gaspar’s “Cook County Jail: The Visible and Invisible,” in which Gaspar reports on what it means to live in the shadow of one of the country’s busiest jails.

Taken together, initiatives like these result in radio with high-end production values and street-by-street insight, something closer to what President Lyndon B. Johnson described when he signed the Public Broadcasting Act in 1967: Airwaves “which belong to all the people” are “for the enlightenment of all the people.” Organizations that want to grab opportunities in public media have to experiment along the lines set out in LBJ’s mission, with a particular emphasis on the “all”—voices that sound like, and tell the stories of, every American. And we’ll know we’re done when inclusiveness neither requires, nor feels like, innovation. ■

**2044**  
Year by which minorities are projected to become a majority in the U.S.



**WHY  
DIVERSITY  
WORKS**

*Carlos Richardson  
and his daughter  
Selah enjoy a quiet  
moment after dinner  
in Atlanta, Georgia*



**BY ALICIA W. STEWART**

*With reporting by Eryn M. Carlson, Jan Gardner,  
Tara W. Merrigan, and Jonathan Seitz*

THE NEWS INDUSTRY HAS BEEN TALKING ABOUT DIVERSITY FOR decades, but the talk, many say, often has not been followed by action. “The needles never really seem to move,” says Nikole Hannah-Jones, a reporter covering racial injustice for The New York Times Magazine. In 1968, when President Lyndon B. Johnson’s National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders published what’s known as the Kerner Report, it concluded that America was “moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.”

**PHOTOGRAPHY BY ZUN LEE**



The commission, tasked with determining the causes of and finding solutions for the riots that had been scarring the country for much of the decade, singled out the media for their inadequate coverage of African-Americans. “It would be a contribution of inestimable importance to race relations in the United States simply to treat ordinary news about Negroes as news of other groups is now treated,” the report stated.

The Kerner Report also criticized newsrooms for the disproportionately low percentage of minorities employed in the industry. Today, with attention turned to race relations in cities like Ferguson, Baltimore, and Cleveland, the needle on inclusion in mainstream newsrooms seems stubbornly stuck in place. The number of journalists of color has slowly climbed since the Kerner Report’s release, peaking around 2008, but that hasn’t necessarily translated into more equitable coverage. In a 2014 study by the American Press Institute and the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, only 25 percent of African-Americans and 33 percent of Hispanics said the news media accurately portrayed their communities.

**T**HAT COULD HAVE SOMETHING TO DO with who’s making the coverage decisions. The 2014 Newsroom Census conducted by the American Society of News Editors (ASNE) found that only 15 percent of daily newspapers surveyed in 2013 had a person of color in one of their top three newsroom leadership positions. “Unfortunately, the ASNE census shows the industry isn’t making much progress,” says Karen Magnuson, who chairs ASNE’s diversity committee. “In fact, we’re losing significant ground as minority populations continue to grow.”

“I have been hearing ever since I got into this business, ‘We’ve got to adapt. Our country is changing. If we don’t start telling those stories and reaching those communities, we’re going to oversee our own demise,’” says Hannah-Jones, hired by The New York Times Magazine this spring after covering racial injustice for ProPublica. “I’m going to call bullshit on that, because we’ve been hearing the same thing for decades. Newsrooms have not really changed. Until the mastheads at the top of organizations understand how critical this reporting is for our democracy, it’s not going to change. Why do we not cover [race] with the same intensity and skepticism and, really, doggedness that we cover everything else?”

The New York Times came under fire early this year when its sole reporter on the national race and ethnicity beat, Tanzina Vega, was reassigned to cover courts in the Bronx. At the time, executive editor Dean Baquet told public editor Margaret Sullivan, “I haven’t decided what to do about the beat, but I know that it has to be covered paper-wide.” The Times declined to make an editor available to comment for this story, but executive director of corporate communications Danielle Rhoades

Ha said in an e-mail, “We continue to cover issues related to race and ethnicity aggressively” and cited examples of recent stories, including a series that uncovered rampant racism and abuse of staff in nail salons. Vega has since left the Times for CNN Politics.

Census projections indicate that minorities will become a majority in the U.S. by 2044. While some progress has been made in covering communities of color—NPR’s Code Switch project on race, ethnicity, and culture; the Associated Press’s race and ethnicity beat; the Chicago Tribune’s “Exploring Race,” an online forum that ran from 2008 to 2010; The Root, recently acquired by Univision; the now-defunct NBCLatino, and Fox News Latino are just a few examples—much still needs to be done. And journalists often find it difficult to have open, honest conversations about race and ethnicity—even compared to other contentious newsroom issues, like gender imbalances—for fear of damaging relationships with editors or colleagues.

“I think that the problem is that racial issues still make more people uncomfortable than women’s issues,” says Anna Holmes, founder of feminist blog Jezebel and an editor at Fusion. “Also, the fact that there are fewer people of color in the media, for a variety of reasons, than women might have something to do with that, which is why I think pushing for newsroom diversity is important. ... I do see a lot more discussion of race, but I don’t think it’s at the point where it’s accepted that looking at race in America is part of the standard operating procedure of most media outlets.”

Some outlets are trying to change that. Last October, BuzzFeed editor in chief Ben Smith published some of the diversity numbers for his newsroom. Of its 185 editorial employees, 72.7 percent were white, with 9.8 percent Hispanic, 7.1 percent Asian, and 6 percent black. He called on newsroom managers to work harder to improve diversity by writing job descriptions that don’t presume the gender or race of candidates and by sending postings to journalists “connected to underrepresented communities.” “We are modestly more diverse than we were last September and are moving in the right direction,” Smith says now, “because people doing the hiring see it as a priority.” He cites BuzzFeed Life—which focuses on food, health, beauty, and style—as a team that has been especially focused on reflecting the diversity of its audience in its staff. New hires include Nora Whelan, who covers plus-size style and beauty, and Essence Gant, whose writing has focused on black beauty.

Apart from the ethical imperative, one of the reasons Smith gave for why diversity matters is “reaching more readers.” “The Internet is, in some ways, organized around identity,” he wrote in that September 2014 BuzzFeed post. “We are a new kind of media company with the opportunity to reach a huge global audience, and we need to build an organization that’s capable of connecting with a vast range of readers.” Case in point: When BuzzFeed noticed that Latinos were underrep-

**A diverse newsroom staff can lead to a richer variety of stories about people of color**

**33%**  
Percentage of Hispanics who said the media accurately portrayed their communities

**25%**  
Percentage of African-Americans who said the media accurately portrayed their communities



**Artist Cbabi Bayoc with his daughter Jurni at his SweetArt Bake Shop in St. Louis, Missouri**

resented among its readership, editors launched new content initiatives—including everything from in-depth immigration coverage to quizzes and listicles that speak to a Latino audience—across the News, Buzz, and Life divisions that significantly increased its Latino audience from January 2014 to January of this year.

Another of Smith's arguments for diversity is that it "helps editorial organizations avoid the bland and often false conventional wisdom held in a room full of people who come from similar places." That's a guiding principle as well at The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, where editor Kevin Riley admits, "As a white man, I can avoid race if I want. I live with that white male privilege. Unless you are exposed to the idea that people of color do not have that option, and race is in front of them all of the time, you don't have that awareness, and therefore it makes it much harder to compel yourself to act, to hear the kind of things you need to hear to take action in the newsroom."

And the Journal-Constitution has taken action. Among the paper's top staff—three managing editors, three deputy managing editors, and an editorial page editor—there are two white males, two African-American females, one white female, and two African-American males. The paper is helped, according to Riley, by the fact that it's part of a corporation, Cox Media Group, which he says takes diversity seriously. Cox recently began a year-long fellowship for recent college graduates of color who want to pursue a digital project at one of the company's properties, which include TV and radio

stations as well as newspapers. To date, all eight fellowship recipients have gone on to full-time jobs with the company. Cox also runs mandatory diversity awareness workshops aimed at creating an environment in which staff feel comfortable talking about race and ethnicity.

"When you have a diverse staff, and people are comfortable around these topics, you get a better outcome," Riley says. "That's sort of the business payoff. This is beyond just a nice idea, beyond the right thing to do, and beyond recognizing our troubled history around race. It's a business imperative." For Riley, that imperative pays off in better stories that better serve readers.

"Black & Blue," a collection of 14 first-person stories by African-Americans about interactions with police, is the kind of coverage Riley has in mind. The series included a business owner whose car was searched by police after he called to report a shooting and Journal-Constitution editor Todd C. Duncan's story about being pulled over by police when he was 17, slammed to the hood of his car, then left alone without an explanation or apology. Riley also mentions a column by Gracie Bonds Staples about pointed remarks regarding race that Michelle Obama made in her Tuskegee University commencement speech and at the dedication of an art museum in New York. "I'm not prepared to say a white reporter couldn't do that [story]," Riley says, "but I just think that when you can comfortably get into a topic like that with some perspective and voice, you're better off."

For Riley, "There's no way around a personal commitment to diversity. You can mandate it at a certain





level. You can require it in hiring. Those things help. ... But in the end, we all have to look at ourselves in the mirror and say, 'Do I care about this? And if I care, what am I doing about it?'"

While many news outlets face layoffs or hiring freezes, The Washington Post, bought by Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos in 2013, hired 114 journalists last year; 40 of them, or about 35 percent, were journalists of color. "You have to think about the makeup and the mix," says Kevin Merida, a Post managing editor. "Do you have enough people who come from different religions? People who grew up poor? People who grew up rich? People who are of every ethnicity and every race and are young and veterans? That's really why you want to have a diverse newsroom: Because we're in the business of explaining people to each other. How can we do that if we don't have enough variety in our newsroom?"

Merida points to "The N-Word," a project that explored the history of the term and its place in American culture, as journalism that might not have been tackled in a less diverse newsroom. A brainstorming session in the newsroom brought together journalists of different races, genders, and ages and broke down barriers between departments. The sports editor led a discussion

that involved videographers, designers, and reporters. The result: a series of videotaped conversations in which people offer powerful perspectives on the word.

Vox, too, has learned a lot about hiring, after getting slammed in 2014 because so many of its first employees were white and so few were women. The company put forward Ezra Klein as the leader, though he was one of three co-founders, including Melissa Bell, his colleague from The Washington Post, and Matthew Yglesias, from Slate. Bell says the intense scrutiny taught them to widen outreach, create a welcoming culture, and create clear career paths at Vox. "We learned a couple things," Bell says. "One of the biggest things was making sure you're doing a lot of outreach and that you're trying to find different networks. You have to actively seek out people."

Vox does that in part via an internal Google document that tracks writers of interest. When staff come across journalists whose work could add value to what Vox is doing or who cover topic areas Vox might want to get into, their names go on the list. "When we have positions open, those are people that we start contacting in the beginning," says Bell. She and her colleagues also look for job candidates through organizations fo-

*Terence Mason of St. Louis, Missouri supervises bath time for his son Kai*

**15%**  
Percentage of 965 daily newspapers that had a person of color in one of the top three leadership positions in 2013

cused on bringing more women and minorities into technology. Blacks in Technology, the Levo League, an online career-development network geared toward young women, and Tech LadyMafia all focus on that goal.

What Bell is trying to do for Vox, Emma Carew Grovum is trying to do for the industry as a whole. Back in late 2010, Retha Hill, director of the Digital Innovation and Entrepreneurship Lab at Arizona State University's journalism school, wrote a blog post for PBS MediaShift about how to increase the number of people of color speaking at prominent new media conferences. The piece generated a lot of conversation on Twitter, and Carew Grovum, a member of the Asian American Journalists Association, says she "was very, very surprised to see people saying, over and over again, 'We can't find qualified minorities.' I realized I kept waiting for somebody to say, 'This is absurd. I can name a dozen people off the top of my head who would be great for these kinds of conversations.'"

Tired of waiting, Carew Grovum, who recently joined the staff of The New York Times Opinion section after working at Foreign Policy magazine, got together with mentors, friends, and colleagues to launch the Journalism Diversity Project (JDP), a curated list of journalists of color. Starting out as a simple Google Spreadsheet, the JDP quickly became a combination database and website listing people, as Carew Grovum puts it, "you would want to see speak at a panel, would hire into your newsroom because they're doing amazing work, and happen to be of color." Conference planners, such as the Association of Alternative Newsmedia and Associated Press Media Editors, have used the list to find speakers, while SRCCON, a national conference for media-minded technologists, used the list to make its first conference last year a diverse gathering.



ASBURY PARK PRESS HAS PROGRAMS IN PLACE to help enhance diversity, including its Minority Leadership Institute, which provides professional development for mid-level editors and business executives. Other initiatives include the Online News Association and Poynter's Leadership Academy for Women in Digital Media, a free week-long seminar; the Asian American Journalists Association's newly launched I-Con, an invitation-only leadership event that will be held in Miami this fall; the Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education, which trains journalists in leadership and multimedia skills; and many others.

In 2012, when 17-year-old Trayvon Martin was killed by neighborhood watch member George Zimmerman, three African-American journalists and a white lawyer championed the undercovered story about the shooting death of the black teen and helped elevate it to international prominence. Trymaine Lee, then a reporter for The Huffington Post's Black Voices, persistently covered the story. Columnists Charles M. Blow of The New York

Times and Ta-Nehisi Coates of The Atlantic brought a national audience. About 10 days after the shooting, attorney Kevin Cunningham, a Howard University alum, created a Change.org petition asking the state of Florida to prosecute Zimmerman for the murder of Martin. The coverage and the petition were amplified on social media, which led to further reporting from other outlets. Entrepreneur and rapper MC Hammer and singer Janelle Monae tweeted about the petition and, as Twitter traffic around #WeAreAllTrayvonMartin increased, so did news attention, until Trayvon Martin's killing became a focal point for America's ongoing conversation about race.

Newsroom diversity has also spurred impactful coverage at the Asbury Park Press in New Jersey, where executive editor Hollis R. Towns has overseen a number of initiatives to improve the paper's coverage of minority neighborhoods. In the past, prosecutor's offices in Monmouth and Ocean counties were inconsistent in how they released mug shots of crime suspects, resulting in more photos of black and Latino suspects being released than of white suspects. Reporters began asking agencies for mug shots on all crime stories. When the prosecutor's offices refused, the paper began calling them out—noting that state law allows local discretion in the release of photos—until officials in both counties began releasing more photos of suspects. "Gradually and quietly they started making the photos available to us for all types of crimes," says Towns. "Now it's much more equitable and there's much more balance in the public's view of crimes."

Graduation rates at Asbury Park High School, which mainly serves minorities, had hovered around 50 percent for years. The paper did a series of stories and editorials chronicling issues facing the district—low test scores and high dropout rates even as the state spent about \$30,000 per student per year—that helped break a deadlock on the hiring of a new superintendent last year. The paper also worked with community partners to give students books and encourage volunteerism in the schools.

Following the deaths of Eric Garner and Michael Brown, Towns initiated a series of articles and videos about race, including personal stories—written by Asbury Park Press staffers and people from the community—sharing their thoughts on race and experiences about relationships with minorities. "We were thinking one day, How can we crystallize the recent events and discuss race in a way that's conversational?" says Towns of the series. "The response was overwhelmingly positive, and it was good dialogue. We gave [the community] a forum to talk about issues without being preachy."

While Towns is proud of his accomplishments, he says there is still plenty of work to be done, in his newsroom and in others around the country. "Diversity isn't a one-time thing where someone hires a person or two and checks a box and says, 'Okay, we've done our part.' It takes time and resources to bring about diversity in coverage, diversity in thinking, and diversity in approach." ■



# BUILDING A BETTER NEWSROOM

**How to make journalism  
more inclusive—and  
how that can contribute  
to better coverage**

---

## Real Change, Not Empty Claims

BY WESLEY LOWERY

WE'RE CURRENTLY CAUGHT IN A PERIOD OF TIME IN this country where we seem to be in an almost perpetual state of conversation about issues of race, ethnicity, and diversity. And we're having that ongoing conversation while living in a country where our media are disproportionately white and male, where our political chattering and punditry class is also disproportionately white and male.

And yet reporters of color, specifically black reporters, often find themselves questioned when they are charged with covering this ongoing moment in American history. The double standard is obvious.

No one ever has any conversation about, "Can any white male reporter cover police fairly?" No one ever asks that question. Yet, any time a black reporter has the

audacity to write about issues of race, all of a sudden it is followed by a deeply, intensely personal conversation publicly about who they are: Are they black enough? Are they not really black at all? Can they separate their own personal background from the topics they cover?

The thing is, those questions are not only unfair, they are red herrings.

From Ferguson to North Charleston, South Carolina, to Baltimore, it's important that we have a diversity of voices on the ground, covering these stories of race and justice and equity.

As journalists, it's our job to be skeptical. It's our job to ask hard questions. The problem is, if all of the journalists on a particular story have the same backgrounds, the same upbringings, or the same amount of pigment in their skin, what we know for a fact is that they're not going to be best equipped to ask the depth and the detail of questions that are needed. As the demographics of the country continue to change rapidly, we're only going to continue to see stories that involve race, and ethnicity, and culture popping up and gaining prominence in the news cycle. Which is why newsrooms have to prepare themselves to tell these stories adequately and fairly.

A newsroom cannot tell stories like Ferguson or Baltimore—at least they cannot tell them thoroughly and with nuance—if you don't have people who look like the people who are being written about in these stories



*Wesley Lowery is a reporter at The Washington Post, where he covers law enforcement, justice, race, and politics*

## Newsroom diversity is a journalistic imperative

doing some of the reporting and making some of the coverage decisions from the newsroom.

Media diversity is not some type of progressive ideal. It's a journalistic imperative for any outlet devoted to fairness and accuracy in its coverage. As journalists, we want to ask hard questions of everyone else, but don't you dare ask a media organization for diversity statistics. That's something we have to be willing to engage—the reality of the lack of diversity in many of our own newsrooms—if we want to see real change and not empty claims.

It's about big organizations investing in training and retention programs in communities of color. You have to actually build a pipeline. You do see some programs placing students of color in newsrooms, providing them with training, guidance, and mentorship—the student project program at the National Association of Black Journalists, the j-camp for high schoolers conducted

by the Asian American Journalists Association, and then things like the Metpro program at the Los Angeles Times and Chicago Tribune.

What we also know is that creating diversity in a newsroom isn't looking up one day and saying, "We have an open desk; let's go find a person of color to sit in it." If you haven't been building those relationships for years, you're not going to be able to find the right people to fit in your newsrooms.

As reporters, we all walk into the same press conference, walk down the same streets—and the people who I hit it off with might be different people than the people you hit it off with. If you're a news organization that wants comprehensive coverage, you need a newsroom full of different types of people who are going to hit it off with different types of people, build different types of sources and find and tell different stories. That's the way it works. ■

## Enhancing Diversity Means Expanding Audiences

BY ASHLEY ALVARADO

GROWING UP ASIAN AND LATINA IN A TOWN that was nearly 90 percent white, it was only natural that I'd develop an appreciation for diversity. I didn't see me anywhere, and it was my longing for stories that reflected the experiences and diversity of my communities that steered me toward journalism.

From its inception, Southern California Public Radio (SCPR) has set the goal to serve all of greater Los Angeles. Its leadership understands that in order to stay relevant and viable, newsrooms must embrace diverse hiring and reflect the communities they serve.

SCPR has proved that trying to reach people of color does not mean the existing white audience will tune out. Between 2009 and 2014, SCPR nearly doubled its Latino listenership without losing core listeners. Total audience is up 22 percent. And in our newsroom, just less than 40 percent of the content team is non-white. But in a county

that is 48 percent Latino, 15 percent Asian, and 9 percent black, that's not enough. While SCPR has become a model for other public media newsrooms, we've learned there's a long way to go.

So, what's worked?

SCPR's push for diversity starts with its board, a diverse group of L.A. business and civic leaders who believe in the need for a major news service for all of Los Angeles. SCPR prioritizes research and engagement at multiple levels, seeking input from stakeholders, community leaders, and community members through digital and in-person efforts. This is not outreach; it's a "two-way street." SCPR regularly publishes Public Insight Network queries, engaging with a more diverse pool of sources. In 2011, SCPR launched the One Nation Media Project, as part of a three-year, \$6-million investment from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, with the goal to provide high-quality, multimedia English-language news coverage to multiethnic communities in Southern California. SCPR leaders stress that a pool of applicants is not considered a pool unless it's diverse.

By doing all this, we've changed the way we cover Los Angeles, shifting the editorial strategy to more meaningfully engage and widen our audience while also telling important, impactful stories. Recent examples include Deepa Fernandes's piece on janitors spreading the value of early education among immigrants and an Adrian Florido report on a produce stand in South

L.A. In recent months, the "Take Two" morning show has looked at how to talk to children about race, L.A.'s race relations, and other subjects that highlight diversity in all its forms.

We couldn't do this without significant diversity within our reporter and producer corps. Every hire brings a new-to-us network of sources and resources. Every additional language spoken equals a new channel for hearing about issues affecting people in our coverage region. We are doing stories we were not equipped to cover five years ago.

We've also created a safe space to talk about things like multicultural competence, how to pronounce particular words, and potential obstacles to engagement. These conversations are not limited to people of color but rather involve the entire newsroom.

There's more to be done. Our demographics don't reflect the region. Though nearly 40 percent of our content team is not white, all but two of our senior managers are. We have to actively look for opportunities for growth within SCPR and hold on

to talented reporters of diverse backgrounds. It's a natural consequence of SCPR's success that other news organizations would want to hire them away. Most of all, the organization has to keep pushing forward: through criticism, awkward moments, and the occasional hiccup. There have been tremendous challenges—internal and external—but the wealth of ideas and better sense of place are daily reminders that we're on the right path. ■



Ashley Alvarado is the public engagement editor at Southern California Public Radio. She also is the managing editor of Los Cabos Magazine



# Continue To Care, All The Time

BY KAREN MAGNUSON

AT THE ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT & Chronicle, we launched a series of investigative reports about two and a half years ago looking at disparities in areas such as housing, education, criminal justice, and jobs. At first, we received both positive and negative reactions. The negative reactions were from people who believed we were making a big deal over nothing, that race was no longer a problem in America. Through our reporting, we showed that it is a problem and that we, as a community, needed to get our arms around it. We used those reports to start a conversation about how we can build a more in-

clusive community. We then partnered with a variety of organizations, including the YWCA, the Rochester Museum and Science Center, the Rochester Area Community Foundation, and Facing Race, Embracing Equity.

Before the editorial board launched its “listening tour,” we put out calls in print and on digital platforms for people to come meet with us to talk about race. Many of our meetings were out in the suburbs because we wanted to engage more suburban people. Our suburbs are predominantly white, and our city is predominantly black. We wanted to provide opportunities for people who normally wouldn’t be able to talk to one another to sit down and engage in a discussion about racial issues.

Only eight people showed up for our first one, but the crowd grew with each tour, up to about 50 community members and political leaders at our final meeting. We received pushback from some who maintained that the Democrat & Chronicle was, in the words of one woman, “stirring the pot,” creating trouble. But the people



Karen Magnuson  
is vice president  
and editor of the  
Rochester (N.Y.)  
Democrat &  
Chronicle

interested in advancing our community shared their views through social media, blog postings, letters to the editor, and in meetings. We believe “Unite Rochester,” as we call the initiative, has helped build greater awareness.

We’re now working on how to turn some of our findings into action. Last year, we created the Unite Rochester Court Academy to help citizens better understand our criminal justice

system. One initiative for 2015 is to create a Community Crisis Response Team that would help our leaders and community respond well if Rochester experienced the kinds of problems we’ve seen in Ferguson and Baltimore.

We know that what’s true in the community is true inside our own newsroom. The culture can’t be changed overnight. Diversity is not a problem you can fix and then it stays fixed. It’s something you have to continue to care about all the time. As minority populations grow and change the demographics of our communities, it becomes even more important for it to be part of your thinking day to day. ■

# Tribalism As a Spur to Newsroom Diversity

BY JOSHUNDA SANDERS

JOURNALISTS MIGHT RESIST THE DESIGNATION, BUT we are tribal. As wedded as we are to our tribalism, our long days and bellyaching and gallows humor, this very tribalism is what limits the racial and gender diversity of our nation’s newsrooms.

As with any tribe, you can’t just say you’re part of the group. You have to be chosen. This is not immediately evident to anyone outside the tribe who wants in; at least, it wasn’t for me.

My writing journey has been leaning in the direction of journalism since my first summer job as a 14-year-

old novice reporter at Hostos Community College in the Bronx. Growing up poor in one of the richest cities in the country gave me the tools for resourcefulness, sharp instincts and observation that an outsider needs in journalism to succeed. It helped me learn, too, that joining the journalism tribe required connections—the kind of network I didn’t have until I went to boarding school and college as a scholarship student. In these rarified, elite environments, I learned that more than skill, hard work or talent, above all, you needed the right network at the right time to get the “right kind of experience.” In other words, a member of the tribe had to vouch for you.

I was lucky enough to meet a few who saw my potential. They encouraged me to apply for a Hearst Newspapers Fellowship, a two-year program that involved four six-month stints at newspapers in large and mid-size newspaper metro markets. The value of the fellowship was that it extended my network, offered me invaluable reporting experience, and offered me a wide range of mentors.

Latoya Peterson, deputy editor for Fusion Voices, and I had a shared mentor, like so many others, in the late Dori J. Maynard, president of the Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education in Oakland, California. Dori not only championed diversity in order for journalism to truly reflect the fast-changing world in which we all now live, but she also gave back to the



Joshunda Sanders  
is the author of “How  
Racism and Sexism  
Killed Traditional  
Media: Why the  
Future of Journalism  
Depends on Women  
and People of Color,”  
to be published in  
August

industry what the best mentors do: She instilled in us hope and confidence. Without Dori, Peterson says, “I would never have applied for a Knight Fellowship. I wouldn’t have even known they were available, much less that I could get someone to pay me \$65,000 to think about the big thoughts on media.” Peterson’s time at Stanford University was also affirmation that the lack of a traditional background in journalism was irrelevant to her future.

The same was true for Nicole Collins Bronzan, director of communications at ProPublica. An internship provided the all-important connections that created a pathway for her to The New York Times. The opportu-

nity and the pathway it afforded her into the business “is a classic example of outreach that matters not because it ‘lowers the bar’ in an effort to recruit minorities, but because it opens the eyes of smart, talented people to the fact that, yes, they can work their way to the best paper in the land—sometimes, even at age 23. A lot of us would never dare to set our sights so high,” she says.

The ultimate value of a group is that they remind each individual member of the group of their worth. The potential of journalists to continue that tradition by way of mentorship, internships, and fellowship programs may be the only opportunity we have to truly change the racial and gender diversity in our news organizations. ■

## Making Coverage Mainstream

BY ADRIAN CARRASQUILLO

ONE THING WE DO THAT works is hiring Hispanic writers. They don’t have to have a sort of Hispanic beat. David Noriega is a national reporter for us who broadly covers immigrants, but not immigration. One story he did always sticks out for me: Construction deaths are dropping for every group in the U.S. except Latinos. They’re going up for Latinos. There’s stuff with immigration status, with language. They can’t advocate for themselves. David has done an amazing job elevating stories like that, but the hard part is finding those stories. Having a diverse newsroom helps.

Last year, Gabriel García Márquez dies, and we look around the newsroom. Nicolás Medina Mora is a writer from Mexico on the criminal justice beat. But at the time, he was like, “Márquez was my mentor. I knew him in Mexico. I met with him often. I need to go for a walk because this is very emotional for me, but I want to come back and write a eulogy.” He wrote this beautiful story, “The Death of the Patriarch.”

What happens when you have diverse journalists in the newsroom is, they might say, “Oh, I’m from that town” or “Oh, I know that because this area in

Connecticut has a large Mexican population.” Those things end up being useful for your coverage.

It’s not easy because you have to go out of some of your comfort zones. You have to keep searching for people. It’s always a work in progress. We’re not patting ourselves on the back. We think we can do better. Reporters don’t have to be the “black writer” or the “woman writer” or the “Hispanic writer” or the “LGBT writer,” but ultimately that diversity helps.

This is going to be the most Latino election ever. You see that with the candidates. You have Marco Rubio. You have Ted Cruz. You have Jeb Bush, who has a Hispanic family. And then Hillary, who went so far to the left on immigration. The other thread is the high-profile Hispanic hires. You saw that with Hillary. Her political director is Amanda Renteria, who doesn’t just have a Hispanic role; she’s a political director. Martin O’Malley has Obama’s former director of Hispanic media from 2012, when Obama got the highest percentage of the Hispanic vote in history. It shows a thread that’s going on in politics right now, that these issues are

mainstream, important issues to win the election, not just a Hispanic issue.

Just opening up your network I have found to be the biggest thing. Sometimes I ask on Facebook or on Twitter, Who are the Latino writers you’re reading? Who are the journalists you’re interested in? I’m wondering, Who are some of those up-and-comers? I always want to stay on top of it. Sometimes I’ll see one and say, “Wow, this writer is incredible. I really would love her to join BuzzFeed.” We just think about that for the future. It ends up being so important with a lot of the issues going around the country right now, some of the criminal justice and immigration stuff, so many areas where diversity really is going to make the news coverage better.

What is working for us is making this kind of coverage part of the mainstream site. If you’re saying that Latinos are American, and that’s part of the mainstream, then there’s no need to separate it. We get really good responses from people who just feel like they’re being treated like everybody else. We don’t have to have BuzzFeed Latino. We have just BuzzFeed.com. ■



Adrian Carrasquillo is editor of Latino coverage and a political reporter at BuzzFeed News



# If Truth and Credibility Matter, So Must Diversity

BY SANDRA CLARK

YEARS AGO, I WAS RECRUITED FROM THE UNIVERSITY of Kansas for the copy desk by legendary Philadelphia Inquirer columnist and life-long diversity champion Acel Moore. In me, he landed the ultimate diversity hire—African-American, Japanese, and female. And he let me know I wasn't there just to be a number.

As one of a handful of people of color on staff at the Inquirer back then, I felt an in-the-bone responsibility to make my voice heard, even as I wasn't always accepted by blacks or whites. I learned quickly that there's a difference between being let in and feeling like you belong.

Today, our newsroom, like so many across America, has seen minority staffing levels dwindle, leaving even white staffers to ask, "What are we going to do about diversity?" While the media can expose the lack of diversity in schools, companies, government, boards, and law enforcement, to name a few, we have shown little understanding of its true value in our own precious arena. If truth and credibility matter, then diversity must matter. It doesn't seem that hard to grasp. What I do know is my child could never take a look across the company and assume there's an opportunity for her.

The diversity malaise is showing in a new era of digital and print coverage, even as we write about how much more diverse the world is. The millennial boom is much ballyhooed, but mostly represented in media by hotshot techy white kids who have the freedom to experiment. Young people of color who are driving the population surge and young whites not immersed in the foodie scene and still trying to find their way don't see their faces much. It's social media from ordinary people that really fills out real-time coverage of communities we don't cover enough. Which begs

a question, given our ubiquitous current industry buzzword—audience engagement. Who's doing the engaging and with which audience?

But while the diversity conversation may have stayed in the same tired spot over the last decade, worsened by cycles of more layoffs and buyouts than hires, I'm still here taking my place at the table while many of my worn-out colleagues abandon ship. That in-the-bone responsibility is still there. From copy editor with a mission to managing editor helping guide the future of the company is not a bad place to be.

I've also come to realize that my place is not typical. The full breadth of my diverse experiences—child of an immigrant, military family, father formerly in law enforcement, two years living in a village, daughter born in South Africa, small business owner, mother of a college student—means I can relate to virtually anyone. And that trait brings diversity to my office often.

The young white dotcom editor wants to know how to approach a contentious issue with the newsroom. An African-American reporter wants to discuss her provocative story about why she likes a song about a drug-dealing rapper and his empowered girlfriend. The fashion writer wants to share an e-mail from an irate reader who didn't like it that she used a black model. The veteran staffer wants everyone to know she shouldn't be written off. A Vietnamese student asks me to lunch. The Latino job candidate sends me more samples of his captivating multimedia work. The LGBT writer has a story to pitch of someone we should have written about but never noticed. The promising high school student wants advice.

Other diversity efforts are more purposeful. Over the last few years, with hires limited, I have built a diverse freelance pool, often editing the stories myself to ensure teaching as portfolios are refined. Managers who report to me also are asked to bring in a diverse group of candidates to be interviewed. That has yielded exceptional candidates and two offers. And I've initiated an informal pay-it-forward chain to coach and steer up-and-coming journalists and PR specialists.

Perhaps Ann Brill, dean of the William Allen White journalism school at the University of Kansas, said it best at a recent board meeting. Answering a question about why the school was working hard to diversify, she didn't belabor a business argument or make a moral one. "We just want our school to have a student body that looks like the world we live in."

Diversity can happen—if we want it to. ■

**Who's doing the engaging and with which audience?**



*Sandra Clark is managing editor for digital/arts & features/news operations at The Philadelphia Inquirer. She recently earned her MBA in global business from Arcadia University*

## Invest in Developing Talent

BY MARY HUDETZ

**WE DON'T HAVE A LOT OF Native American journalists at mainstream newspapers, and that's a problem, especially because we may not be that large in number but the jurisdictional and economic power of tribes is so significant. In states that are the heart of Indian**

**country, such as Montana, New Mexico, and Arizona, I can't believe that the local newspapers don't have any Native journalists on staff, not only as a measure of community building but also as a way to build relationships with these really important**

**communities in their coverage areas.**

**There's this desire in the industry to hire now, without any real investment at the ground level in developing talent. The Native American Journalists Association has great partners in media, but we**



Mary Hudetz is president of the Native American Journalists Association and editor in chief of *Native Peoples Magazine*

need help to develop talents in college so they're ready for jobs when it's time. There are a lot of students who are interested, but the programs and the capacity to track and recruit them are not there.

We piloted the Native American Journalism Fellowship this year. We brought in 10 Native American college students for a week of training in the summer and mentored them throughout the school

year. Six of the 10 have since gotten an internship for this summer or advanced in some other significant way. For example, one is studying journalism at the City University of New York, one is going to CBS News, and another is going to work at The Cherokee Phoenix in Oklahoma.

Native students don't always get what they need in a college journalism program. Or, they might need mentors who can

support their education from afar, people who understand and appreciate their cultural heritage. Without that, they don't feel supported and don't pursue journalism. It's complicated being a Native American in this country. Some might describe it as dual citizenship. Sometimes just by being Native and having that life experience, you bring an expertise to the newsroom that others don't have. ■

## Train Our Brains to See Beyond Stereotypes

BY DAWN TURNER TRICE

THE HIGH-PROFILE DEATHS OF MICHAEL Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, and Freddie Gray have allowed us to train the spotlight on law enforcement and examine how police officers can be more effective in beleaguered black communities.

But, in order to have a substantive discussion about newsrooms, race, and how we cover these stories, we in the media must turn the lens on ourselves and acknowledge our complicity in these tragedies.

It's not an easy task. But it is a necessary one if we intend to be part of the solution, rather than the problem.

We have to ask ourselves: What role do we play in all of this when we constantly barrage our viewers and readers with images of black men as criminals? The repetition of these images has conditioned all of us (including police officers who carry weapons) in ways that make it difficult not to view black men and boys as dangerous.

In my hometown of Chicago, the number of homicides is about half of what it was in the early 1990s. But you wouldn't know this by looking at the 10 o'clock news,

which consistently leads with stories about violence and shootings, mostly in predominantly African-American and Hispanic neighborhoods.

I'm not saying these stories shouldn't be covered. Only that they often lack context and depth and feed a perception that skews and even skews reality. Complicating this further is that these stories often are at the top of the news not because "what bleeds leads," but because a 24/7 news cycle requires editors to deliver something new.

I don't believe the intent is always malicious. It's just that the consequences are never benign.

But this isn't only about black men being depicted as violent. We media types tend to cast blacks as the poster children for far too many of society's ills. Not because it's the truth, but because it fits the familiar trope and it's convenient to think inside the box.

A 2012 study by the College of Wooster analyzed the images that ran with 474 poverty-related stories in *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News & World Report* from 1992 to 2010. The study found that "while Hispanics are underrepresented in media portrayals of the poor, African-Americans are overrepresented." Blacks appeared in 52 percent of the images, despite being a quarter of Americans living in poverty during that period. Although Hispanics made up 23 percent of the poor, we saw their faces in just under 14 percent of the photos.

If this were just about the media misrepresenting the poor that would be one problem. But it's compounded by the harsh stereotypes that are attached to

poor blacks, making it difficult for them to define themselves not only with journalists, but with educators, employers, and, yes, the police.

In 2008, one of the reasons I was excited about the prospect of a black family occupying the White House was that I hoped (however naively) that the image of the Obama family would serve as a counterweight to the many negative depictions of blacks. I also hoped that the media would no longer portray as anomalies successful black men who weren't athletes or entertainers.

That really hasn't happened.

The story of race in this country is one deeply rooted in fear—fear of the unknown, fear of the little known. We media types play into all of that, sometimes wittingly or unwittingly depending on the news outlet.

These stories and images are so powerful. They are also so unforgiving. They become hardwired into our brains. I would argue that the race problem in America is as neurological as it is sociological. Race makes us reactionary. We, pardon the cliché, shoot first and ask questions later.

For me, the reason it's important to have a diverse newsroom and more in-depth news stories about race is because we need to train our brains to see people of color as individuals rather than types. It's a huge undertaking, one we've struggled to achieve through the ages.

Still, if we journalists don't move beyond the standard, knee-jerk narratives, we will do more harm than good. Although that is not the mission of any news organization, it certainly will be the result. ■



Dawn Turner Trice is a 2015 Nieman Fellow and a columnist at the *Chicago Tribune*. She also is the author of two novels

# USE IT OR LOSE IT

**Fresh questions  
about when—or if—  
it's ethical to publish  
leaked, stolen, or  
hacked information**

BY HELEN LEWIS





# W

HEN GERMAN-  
wings Flight 9525  
crashed in the  
French Alps on  
March 24, the  
deaths of the 150

people on board were initially assumed to be a tragic accident. But within 48 hours, a transcript of the plane's voice recorder was leaked to the media. It revealed that co-pilot Andreas Lubitz had set the aircraft on a collision course. Just before the plane crashed the pilot, who was locked out of the cockpit, could be heard screaming, "Open the damn door!"

The recording was evidence that the crash was not an accident, but a deliberate act of mass murder. It duly led news bulletins around the world. But should the media have published the transcripts, particularly when the investigation was still in progress? The International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations condemned the leak, calling it a "breach of trust" with investigators and victims' families that harmed flight safety by stoking "uninformed" speculation.

The media were unmoved. There was no navel-gazing about the ethics of publishing the transcript, and no groundswell of public opinion against it. That makes it relatively unusual among cases involving leaked, stolen, or hacked information, which often provoke controversy. Such sources are familiar ways to obtain stories—consider the impact of the Pentagon Papers being leaked in 1971—but the emergence of WikiLeaks in 2006 made it clear they will become ever more important in the digital era. Since then, there have been questions over the publication of Sony executives' corporate e-mails in late 2014, the publication of leaked celebrity nude photos last August, and Edward

Snowden's revelations in 2013 about the extent of U.S. intelligence operations.

Journalists have been accused of invading privacy, threatening national security, and breaching copyright by publishing such stories, and their sources might lose their jobs, their freedom, or even their lives. So how should reporters and editors decide whether to publish and how much to redact? And what technical know-how do they need to protect whistleblowers?

The Sony hack provided something of a test case, as did the iCloud leak, which included naked photographs of actresses such as Jennifer Lawrence. The New York Times was reluctant to report on the huge dump of e-mails and other confidential material taken from Sony's servers, with executive editor Dean Baquet asserting that the paper would only cover newsworthy information surfaced by other outlets, and would not dig through the files itself. The Times gave op-ed space to screenwriter Aaron Sorkin to call publishing the leaked information "morally treasonous and spectacularly dishonorable," although its public editor Margaret Sullivan later defended reporting on the e-mails when the contents were newsworthy. "No, this isn't a Snowden Redux, but when top Hollywood figures make racially tinged jokes about the president, that's legitimate news," she wrote in a blog post on December 12, 2014.

Other sites had already made the same decision. Gawker dived into the Sony data with something approaching glee, creating a microsite to host the revelations. Notable headlines included "The Natalie Portman-Ryan Seacrest Gaza Strip Reply-All Chain from Hell," "Hollywood Executives Think Jaden and Willow Smith Are Crazy, Too,"



After hackers leaked embarrassing Sony Pictures e-mails and threatened movie-goers in 2014, the company pulled “The Interview” from theaters

and “Sony’s Embarrassing Powerpoints Are Even Worse Than Their Shitty Movies.” Sam Biddle, who led Gawker’s reporting, defends its coverage by arguing that the hack was the biggest technology story of the year. “It exposed the way an enormous, publicly traded multinational company functions and revealed a lot about the people making decisions at an institution of huge cultural power,” he says. “If that’s not newsworthy, I don’t know what is.”

Biddle is also keen to stress that there were plenty of juicy nuggets of information Gawker did not publicize, even though they were already public because the data was dumped online. “I think that’s something that hasn’t been said enough,” he points out. “We would have never published something like Social Security numbers or addresses or credit card information, things that were all there.” (That said, in April, Gawker’s sister site Jezebel did publish part of a Sony executive’s Amazon order history, which included pubic hair dye.)

What not to publish is a key concern for anyone dealing with leaked or stolen data. In July 2010, WikiLeaks was criticized by the Pentagon for its handling of the U.S.

embassy cables, as details of informers, activists, and opposition politicians in autocratic regimes were not redacted before the documents were made available on file sharing sites. The Guardian and The New York Times had largely removed such sensitive information before publication.

Reporters working with sensitive information should take particular care with files stored as PDFs. In 2005, a blogger discovered that the Pentagon had inadequately redacted PDFs of an official U.S. military inquiry into the accidental killing of an Italian agent in Baghdad. The “redaction” consisted only of highlighting the text in black shading, and so copying and pasting it into another document restored its readability.

The same simple mistake was made by The New York Times in January 2014 when it published a PDF from documents handed over by Edward Snowden. Pasting the text into a new document revealed the name of a National Security Agency agent as well as the target of an operation in Mosul, Iraq. When asked about this mistake by John Oliver, host of HBO’s “Last Week Tonight,” in an April episode, Snowden replied, “It is a f\*\*kup and these things do happen in

reporting. In journalism we have to accept that some mistakes will be made. This is a fundamental concept of liberty.”

In order to reduce the chances of such a mistake happening, reporters working with sensitive information should ask themselves first if any redactions are needed; if they are, they must be carried out by someone with the relevant expertise. It is also best practice to open sensitive documents only on a computer that is “air-gapped”—not connected to the Internet—in case viruses or malware have been hidden within the files, which could alert their owners. While working on the Snowden leaks, The Guardian went further and established a secure room, into which reporters were not allowed to bring phones or other electronic equipment in case they were bugged.

Understanding the content of leaked documents as fully as possible also makes it easier to protect sources. In 1983, Peter Preston, who edited The Guardian from 1975 to 1995, published a story based on a leaked document containing plans for cruise missile deployment in Britain. The government forced the newspaper to turn over the documents, and some seemingly unintelligible

squiggles in the top corner allowed it to be traced to a Foreign and Commonwealth Office photocopying machine and, ultimately, to the source, Sarah Tisdall, who was jailed for six months for violating the Official Secrets Act. “I feel that, once The Guardian used the document in that story, we owed its provider protection,” Preston says now. “But providing it sight unseen—and looking in the wrong direction anyway—was a nightmare.”

Because digital documents often carry all kinds of metadata hidden underneath their visible contents, making originals available should be handled with care. This applies to pictures as well as text. The hiding place of fugitive tech entrepreneur John McAfee, who was named as a “person of interest” in a death in Belize, was unwittingly revealed by Vice in 2012 when the magazine posted a photo of editor in chief Rocco Castoro posing with him. The picture, part of a post entitled “We Are with John McAfee Right Now, Suckers,” still contained its Exif data, revealing not only that it was captured on an iPhone 4S, but the exact location in Guatemala where it was taken. (McAfee, who is still wanted for questioning, fled the country and now lives in Tennessee.)

It is possible to strip metadata from photos, something Vice belatedly did in the McAfee case. And according to Guardian tech reporter Alex Hern, the saga carries two basic lessons for journalists working with digital information: Know your tools, and think twice before publishing original documents exactly as you received them. “The former is harder, but the latter obviously goes against what you want to do as a journalist,” he says. “If you create a new image/document, and paste in what you want to share, it’s a fairly safe way to ensure that the metadata isn’t carried over.” There is a tradeoff, however: “You also ensure that independent researchers can no longer verify that your document is genuine.”

## SHIELDING A SOURCE'S IDENTITY CAN BE TRICKY WHEN DOCUMENTS OR PHOTOS HAVE METADATA

Quinn Norton, a tech reporter who has written for Wired, also tells a story about a source losing access to information because of metadata. She had set up a relationship with an anonymous contact who had access to mail servers at four Syrian embassies. She worked with ProPublica, following security protocols—for example, only opening the encrypted documents on a computer that was air-gapped. Unfortunately, Norton says, ProPublica may not have scrubbed the documents clean of all the metadata before sending them to the Syrians for comment. Within two hours, Norton’s source lost access but was not identified.

Although metadata is unlikely to endanger journalists’ lives, it might affect their livelihood. Norton argues that the law has not yet caught up with the realities of handling digital information. For example, she says, possessing child pornography is a strict liability offense in some jurisdictions. It does not matter if you have not looked at the material; you only have to be in possession of it to be committing a crime. So any journalist opening up a parcel of encrypted data runs the risk that hackers have embedded something nasty in there for which he or she is now legally responsible.

If that sounds far-fetched, consider that, according to Norton, hackers inserted encrypted links to child porn websites into the blockchain, or shared database, used to trade the cryptocurrency Bitcoin, intending to make it so everyone who owns Bitcoins would be committing a criminal offense. It was their idea of a prank. Similarly, she warns that being part of a large media organization does not necessarily provide protection against prosecutions for computer fraud or misuse. Wronged companies or the Department of Justice can choose to target individuals, rather than institutions.

When dealing with documents obtained under murky circumstances, news organizations should follow standard procedure and question the motives of their sources. Jane E. Kirtley, the Silha Professor of Media Ethics and Law at the University of Minnesota, recalls a 1982 story in which a Republican campaigner named Dan Cohen approached two major papers in Minnesota with information on the Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor, who had been charged with a shoplifting offense in 1970. (The conviction was later vacated.) Both papers’ reporters agreed to Cohen’s terms: They would publish the story without naming him as their source. But, independently, both sets of editors overruled them. “Their

editors overrode their promises on the ground that the real story was not the minor shoplifting charge, but the fact that a political operative was trying to smear an opposing candidate shortly before the election,” says Kirtley. For her, the case illustrates the fact that “this was a situation where the reporters should have questioned the source’s motives before agreeing to his terms.”

Cohen later sued both papers. The case went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled that the First Amendment did not protect the newspapers from being sued for breach of contract.

**A**FTER THE SONY HACK, ANDREW Wallenstein, co-editor of *Variety*, went public with his doubts over whether to publish information that might have been obtained by foreign spies. Writing on the *Variety* site last December, he asked: “What if suspected hacker North Korea bombed Culver City [site of Sony Pictures headquarters]? Can I sift through the rubble for Sony executives’ hard drives? ... Outlandish as that sounds, it’s also strange that because the nature of the Sony attack was virtual instead of physical, it’s fair game to scavenge for data.” Despite his ambivalence, he concluded that there was sufficient public interest in reporting on a major company. Besides, he added, “journalism is, in some sense, permissible thievery.”

This is a characterization Kirtley disputes. “Under U.S. law, a critical factor is whether the news organization itself broke the law to get the documents,” she says. “Simply being the recipient, especially if the documents come from an unknown source through a brown paper envelope or digital dropbox, is not considered ‘theft,’ even if the source broke the law in obtaining or passing on the documents.” This is the key issue in the “Lux Leaks” case, where French TV journalist Edouard Perrin was charged on April 23 as an accomplice to theft, alongside two employees of Big Four accounting firm PwC, for his part in publishing details of corporate tax avoidance in Luxembourg. The authorities there allege that Perrin did not simply receive leaked documents, but directed his source to look out for particular files, thus playing a “more active role in the committing of these offenses.”

Kirtley adds that there is an ethical distinction, as well as a legal one: “For me, it always comes down to a balance between the value of the information to the public



interest as compared to the harm that would be caused to the individual by publication.” Gawker’s Biddle believes the idea of harm to individuals can be overstated, not least by those whose embarrassing secrets are revealed by stolen or leaked documents. “I think the ‘Well, the Pentagon Papers, sure, but Sony...’ argument is silly,” he says. “Leaked data doesn’t have to be world historical to be worthwhile. How high we want to apply the public interest test is probably more a matter of squeamishness.”

For reporters dealing with the Sony hack, the leak gave an insight into how those controlling a multibillion-dollar business that shapes our cultural landscape functioned behind closed doors. WikiLeaks, which produced a searchable index of the Sony files in April, argued on its website that “behind the scenes this is an influential corporation, with ties to the White House (there are almost 100 U.S. government e-mail addresses in the archive), with an ability to impact laws and policies, and with connections to the U.S. military-industrial complex.” Sony disagrees. “The cyber attack on Sony Pictures was a malicious criminal act, and we strongly condemn the indexing of stolen employee and other private and privileged information on WikiLeaks,” the company said in a statement.

**T**HE INVOLVEMENT OF WIKILEAKS points to another consideration news organizations must bear in mind: If they don’t publish, someone else will. In the case of the Sony hack, Wallenstein at Variety argues, “Our very real qualms about motive were superseded not just by the contents of the leak but by the incontrovertible fact that [they] were thrust into the public domain by the hackers and other media. Tiptoeing around the elephant in the room seemed pointless.”

For journalists in the digital marketplace, how to treat stolen data that is available elsewhere is an increasingly pressing question. The commercial pressure is always to follow up a story that other outlets have run, particularly when it involves gossip about Angelina Jolie and what powerful people say when they think no one can overhear them. It is more important than ever to have “red lines”—clear guidance on what an organization will and will not publish under any circumstances—and an internal procedure for applying a public interest test to the gray areas. “Ultimately, what news organizations

## A PRESSING QUESTION FOR JOURNALISTS IS HOW TO TREAT STOLEN DATA THAT OTHER MEDIA OUTLETS ARE COVERING

offer is credibility,” says Kirtley. “By this I mean not only accuracy—because I do think there is a clear responsibility to authenticate anything we publish—but also the practice of vetting information and doing one’s best to put it in the proper context.”

The iCloud leak provides an instructive example of where media organizations voluntarily impose limits on material that would interest the public but which is not in the public interest. News organizations across the world happily wrote stories about starlets’ intimate photographs being dumped on file-sharing sites—and reaped the traffic benefits from search engine optimization that reeled in anyone Googling “naked celebrity pictures.” However, no major news outlets published the pictures themselves. Biddle’s explanation for this is simple: “The iCloud hack itself was deeply interesting, which is why we covered it. But the pictures themselves? Not at all. We’re a lurid tabloid site, but not a pornography site.”

Many agree that individuals have a greater right to privacy than corporations and that revealing financial details or personal opinions is less invasive than revealing naked photographs. But not everyone. Brad Pitt compared the Sony leak to the News of the World’s phone-hacking, when reporters illegally accessed the voicemails of celebrities, politicians, and athletes as well as families of dead U.K. soldiers and a 13-year-old murder victim over several years in the early 2000s, and declared: “I don’t see any difference in [News of the World parent company] News Corp hacking phone calls and people hacking e-mails.” Preston echoes this: “Nothing much in the Sony celeb package even came near a public interest reason for publishing. Yet lofty Brits and lofty Americans just scooped it all



up—something as illegal, as stolen, as anything on the [News Corp chairman Rupert] Murdoch charge sheet.”

It is also worth noting that news outlets may not have hacked the Sony e-mails, but someone did—and that person has committed an offense for which the penalties are severe. Aaron Swartz, who downloaded more than four million paywalled academic articles with the intention of making them freely available online, was facing 35 years in prison when he killed himself. Andrew “weev” Auernheimer, who exposed a flaw in AT&T’s security and passed the information to Gawker, was sentenced to 41 months in federal prison. He served just over a year before his conviction was vacated. Chelsea, formerly Bradley, Manning was sentenced to 35 years’ imprisonment for passing classified U.S. government data to WikiLeaks.





**An art installation in Berlin honors leakers Edward Snowden, Julian Assange, and Chelsea Manning—and allows people to speak out beside them**

While the idea of “public interest” is important in the newsroom, it provides little protection in the U.S. for sources who have broken the law to acquire newsworthy information. In the U.K., the situation is fractionally better. The Data Protection Act recognizes a public interest defense. For this reason, Norton says it is vital for journalists to do what they can to protect sources. She uses Tor and Tails, free tools that make her Web usage almost impossible to track. “But what I need is for my source to use Tor and Tails,” she says. “When I write the piece, my name is going to be attached to that. I’m not going to be anonymous.” Just interacting with her publicly could put a source in danger, she adds: “I’m a high-value target. I don’t know why law enforcement wouldn’t hang around and watch who I talked to.”

Richard Sambrook, director of the Centre for Journalism at Cardiff University and a former head of news at the BBC, says it’s also important to prepare a source psychologically for the effects of publication. He worked at the BBC during one of its biggest controversies, when reporter Andrew Gilligan claimed that the Tony Blair government had “sexed up” a report on Iraqi weapons capabilities to provide a better pretext for invading the country in 2003. Gilligan relied on an unnamed source. The Ministry of Defence investigation into the leak focused on UN weapons inspector David Kelly. Kelly, who told his bosses that he had talked to Gilligan, was distraught at his identity becoming public knowledge, and he was found dead a week later. “The BBC went to some lengths to protect his identity, even allow-

ing misunderstandings about the source’s role to perpetuate, for which it was strongly criticized by the Hutton Inquiry [into the leak],” Sambrook says. “However, to have corrected misunderstandings would have risked identifying him ... Kelly understood he was talking to journalists about matters he shouldn’t, but I do not believe he recognized the scale of risk or what would happen to him once he came forward.”

Handling stolen documents is a fraught and fractious business, one where the ethical and legal boundaries are ill defined. It is therefore vital that news organizations develop robust procedures to protect their sources and their staff and to give their readers the information they need to make sense of the world. As Preston notes, “It’s the job of editors to publish, not to keep secrets.” ■

## Something Up Your Sleeve What the future of news on smartwatches might look like—and who stands to benefit most

BY JOSHUA BENTON

I'VE SPENT THE PAST COUPLE OF weeks with a town crier attached to my wrist.

Or at least that's the best metaphor I can come up with for what wearing an Apple Watch does for (to?) a news-interested consumer. It's tweaked the modern American condition—constantly fiddling with your smartphone—with a system of thumps and buzzes that grab your attention whenever an app believes it deserves it. It is simultaneously a marvel (a powerful little computer, attached to my arm!) and a bore, a transference of focus from a nice 5-inch screen to a tiny 42-millimeter one.

The arrival of any new class of devices leads the journalism-inclined to ask: What does it mean for news? And today, at least, the answer is: not much. Only a small share of news consumers will have a smartwatch in the immediate future. The first class of news apps, from all the usual big players, are annoying to launch, clumsy to navigate, and shallow in content. (For what it's worth, I think The New York Times's "one-sentence stories" and NPR One's focus on audio make them the early leaders.) Reading anything more than a glance on your wrist is surprisingly tiresome; a headline and a sentence are probably all you'll stand for before just whipping out your phone.

What the Apple Watch is really good at is notifications—getting your attention. And that's important. The shift to digital has

pushed news from a scheduled activity—a morning newspaper, an evening newscast—to a constant background noise, something you dip into or stumble upon irregularly. The art of usefully interrupting someone with news is turning into one of this century's key journalistic skills.

And anyone whose memory stretches back more than a few years should hesitate to dismiss the Apple Watch too quickly. When the iPhone debuted in 2007, plenty thought of it as a rich geek's plaything, a niche product for Apple's fan club. There were no apps! Data networks crawled! When Steve Jobs showed off what news would look like on his shiny new slab of glass, he pulled up NYTimes.com in a Web browser—headlines illegible, shrunk to the size of atoms—and described a world where reading news on a phone meant a thousand pinches in and out.

("It's kind of a slow site, because it's got a lot of images," Jobs said at the time—perhaps the first public complaint of a news site loading too slowly on mobile.)

Even among those who saw the iPhone's potential, few would have guessed that, in less than a decade, it would become the primary way many people—particularly young people—get news. Or that the iPhone (and other devices modeled on it) would be driving the majority of traffic to many news sites. Or that it would create entirely new interface paradigms for accessing news and other information.

So while the Apple Watch seems more interesting than important in 2015, it's easy to imagine looking back on today five or six years from now and thinking: Why didn't we pay more attention? (News companies don't exactly have the best track record of anticipating future change.)

**It's 2020. Your Apple Watch knows when you're eating lunch alone and reminds you of the 15-minute read you wanted to get to**

So let's try to imagine what that future vision of the news experience on a smartwatch might look like—and see what's standing in the way.

It's 2020. A light but persistent buzz on your wrist wakes you up at 6 a.m. After giving you a few seconds to yawn and stretch, your watch shows you the few headlines you need to know about this morning. It's been storing up breaking news stories overnight, but it knows enough about your news habits—what topics you care more or less about, what outlets you prefer, what stories you've been keeping up with—that it can judge what's worth telling you about. Today, it guesses you won't be interested in that big national security scoop, but that you will care about the bizarre double homicide two towns over from the place where you grew up.

If the news is truly big—say, Osama-raid big—you'll hear about it no matter what. But in the great muddle of daily news beneath that, the device will pick and choose.

Your waterproof watch goes with you into the shower, where it plays you NPR's morning news package—or, just as likely, a curated audio package of headlines derived from a morning e-mail newsletter you like. The newscast is timed to the usual length of your shower. After you towel off and get dressed, another newscast—a little more feature-driven, more tied to your interests—sticks with you through your commute to work, where it's piped into your car stereo.

At work, your day of answering e-mail is interrupted a couple dozen times by that familiar buzz. But most of them are for bits of information personal to you—texts you need to see, Slack notifications from your boss, meeting reminders, a nudge to pick up bananas on the way home. Only a couple are reserved for news on most days. And even then, the watch is smart enough to know you don't need to see the same story pushed breathlessly by 10 different news outlets.

The watch knows you well enough to know when you might have time to read a little. It can tell when you're grabbing lunch alone, checking for the absence of any friends or co-workers nearby, or when you're locked in a meeting. When it thinks





*The Apple Watch holds promise for news organizations, but they may need to learn more about their readers' habits*

you've got a moment to spare over a sandwich, it reminds you of that good 15-minute read you heard about but didn't get time to read yesterday.

In the evening, when you're having dinner with your family, it knows not to bug you with anything less than big news. (It knows you're in the dining room and can detect your teenage son's cell phone stationary across the table from you—a rare feat.) When you're getting ready for bed, right after it lets you know what's on deck for tomorrow, it serves up a nice, quick, light feature story that it thinks you'll enjoy right before dozing off. Then, it's off to sleep, and the cycle repeats.

So what's standing between today and this sort of smartwatch future? There are boring technical answers: faster processors, better networks. But the real hurdle is intelligence. Personalization. Data. Making those judgments—what you're interested in and in what context—will take huge amounts

of user data. These devices will be personalized in every other important way—your messages, your fitness, your heartbeat—and it's unlikely smart users will stand for a one-size-fits-all package of news.

If that's the future, who'll be in the best position to collect and act on all that data? It's not going to be your local daily newspaper publisher. It probably won't be the major national news brands. It'll be technology companies: the people behind the social networks and the devices they run on. That's not new—it's an extension of what we've seen on phones—but it's discouraging

**Will the Apple Watch become ubiquitous? Who knows but what is certain is that customizing news feeds is key to the future**

for companies that hope to have sustainable businesses around producing news.

Maybe smartwatches will be a fad, our era's pet rock, and how news plays on them won't matter. The move from the desktop Web to phones is huge; the move from phones to watches is ... of undetermined size, at this point. Most likely, the smartwatch will end up ranking somewhere on the spectrum between the iPhone (huge) and Google Glass (laughable) in impact—but where, exactly, is unknowable.

But the problem the watch outlines—that news companies don't know enough about their readers—is a real one. It's a problem for advertisers; it's a problem for building audience; it's a problem for customizing products that meet readers' needs. And that'll be true no matter what's on people's wrists next year. ■

*Joshua Benton, a 2008 Nieman Fellow, is the founding director of the Nieman Journalism Lab*

## Don't Touch That Dial! In "Television Is the New Television," media critic Michael Wolff argues TV is disrupting the Internet much more than the other way around

BY MICHAEL WOLFF

MEDIA COLUMNIST MICHAEL WOLFF, WHO regularly excoriates the media's reporting on itself, has turned his acerbic attention to TV. The death of television, he argues in his new book, has been greatly exaggerated. It's very much alive and kicking, he argues in "Television Is the New Television: The Unexpected Triumph of Old Media in the Digital Age."

In recent years television—not just PBS, but HBO, Netflix, and others—has assumed a greater importance for journalism because it has become a major platform for documentaries. PBS still showcases the American Experience series and the work of Ken Burns, while HBO has jumped in with documentaries like the six-part "The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst," which made headline news when it aired this spring. GNN's film division made "Life Itself," about the late film critic Roger Ebert. ESPN has earned acclaim for its "30 for 30" documentary series about important moments in sports. Netflix has about 50 million subscribers globally and has had an Oscar-nominated documentary in each of the last two years, "The Square" about the uprising in Egypt's Tahrir Square and "Virunga: Gorillas in Peril."

The conventional narrative about "disruptive innovation" has held that the Internet is

disrupting television. Wolff maintains that it's the other way around: Television is disrupting the Internet. He points to Netflix as a prime example of the phenomenon, and in this excerpt from his book, he lays out his argument.

**T**HE SOLIPSISM OF THE TECH community sees Netflix as a satisfying disruption of the TV business. But that's a striking inversion of what's actually happening: TV is disrupting the Internet.

It is not Netflix bringing digital to television, but, quite obviously, Netflix bringing television programming and values and behavior—like passive watching—to heretofore interactive and computing-related screens.

Netflix was a commerce company delivering DVDs, no more part of the media business, or show business, than Blockbuster, the video rental company that once had outposts in strip malls everywhere. But this early origin and business model (you paid them) became the crucial difference in its efforts to break out of the fulfillment business—the need to get paid (or the habit of being paid) pushed Netflix beyond the limitations of digital media.

This was mostly a happenstance segue. Netflix initially was not going into the media business. Rather, it was a disrupter of retail models, first delivering DVDs by mail, offering a larger selection and lower cost, and then delivering the same product via

new streaming technology. Both advances transformed the video rental market. But the perception in the marketplace and at Netflix that this further advance had moved it from the retail business and into the realm of HBO and premium paid television was after the fact, a dawning realization.

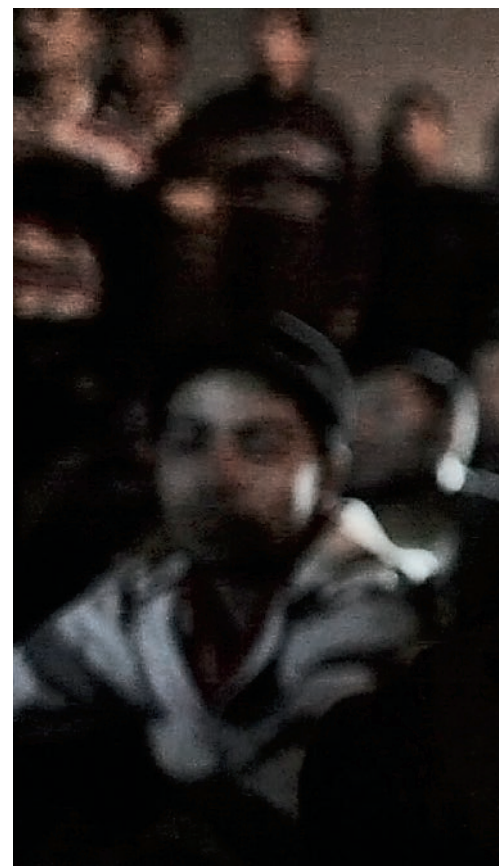
Mirabile dictu: Netflix was the first successful seller of content in the digital world. It proved the subscription model.

And one more unwitting breakthrough: Up until Netflix, television had always been organized on a geographical model. Networks were an association of local affiliates; cable systems, even consolidated ones, were a collection of exclusive licenses to wire specific communities; cable stations lived or died on their ability to make deals with local cable franchises. And, of course, none of this transcended national borders.

Netflix, on the other hand, implemented its streaming service—pivotal with a third-party license of content through Starz, a second-level cable pay-TV service—on a national basis overnight.

Internet protocol (IP) destroyed the myth of television localism—and that there were daunting hurdles in creating a television network.

NOUJAIN FILMS



This is an edited excerpt from "Television Is the New Television: The Unexpected Triumph of Old Media in the Digital Age" by Michael Wolff Penguin Random House Copyright 2015 Michael Wolff



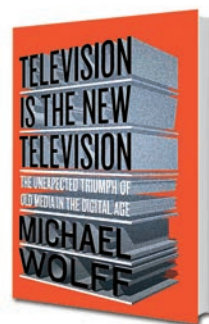
There was one more crucial aspect to Netflix's transformation into media, and its lightning rise to a competitive television network: its CEO, Reed Hastings.

Hastings is a salesman. He describes himself in all the ways that tech guys like to describe themselves, as an entrepreneur, as an engineer, as someone surely with the temperament of a technical and software visionary. But really what distinguishes Hastings is that he sells. He courts; he schmoozes; he begs. He has built what he would like to characterize as a tech company not as tech companies are built, on platform functionality, but as media companies are built, on his ability to make deals and then trade up to better deals.

Curiously, among the many formative moments in the company's development, the loss of its Starz deal, which gave it a trove of movie licenses, a seemingly certain setback, encouraged it to make a different kind of deal that would transform it once again: Netflix had to license television programs. And rather within a blink of an eye, it went from being a feature film rental site (a few million people a day go to the movies) to being a rerun television network (40 to 50 million people a night watch television).

It not only became a de facto television channel, it established the crossover market of licensing deals for television shows. Television's major, if not singular, preoccupation—looking for downstream markets for its product—suddenly had another outlet. Not only was digital, in this regard, not competitive with television, it was a wholly unexpected expansion of ancillary revenue. Digital became part of the television business. An additional Netflix contribution was to turn heretofore ad-support network shows into paid products too.

Reed Hastings and Netflix, surprising nobody so much as themselves, woke up as a television channel. Other than being delivered via IP, Netflix had almost nothing to do with the conventions of digital media. It is not user generated, it is not social, it is not free. It is in every way, except for its route into people's homes—and the differences here would soon get blurry—the same as television. It was old-fashioned, passive, narrative entertainment.



***“Television Is the New Television: The Unexpected Triumph of Old Media in the Digital Age”***  
By Michael Wolff  
Penguin Random House

When it began its move into original programming it rushed to say, in an effort to project its technology bona fides, that its user data gave it the wherewithal to more finely calibrate the market, the zeitgeist, and the chances for a hit. Many press accounts of “House of Cards,” its first original production, had it as the miraculous result of a big data, big brother confection of heretofore unimagined

audience research. In fact, it was a project that its producer and star, Kevin Spacey, had been shopping to all the major television outlets. It landed at Netflix because it had been unsuccessful in finding another home. Its success was an example not of data, but in classic television and show business fashion, the caprice and luck of a needy buyer meeting an eager seller.

Netflix had merely recreated the premium channel television business, in its economic and narrative structure, different only in the way that it had established a third distribution track. There was broadcast, cable, and, after Netflix, IP, but surely this was more an expanding television business rather than an expanding digital business. There was, in fact, rather little that Netflix depended on from the digital system of networked traffic and advertising revenue, whereas it was entirely dependent on its ability to license television content and to attract top writing, acting, producing, and directing talent.

And yet Netflix became a new digital standard-bearer. In 2014 a New Yorker profile effectively made Netflix the official television killer (there have been many prior television killers). Ken Auletta, writing about the media business for many decades, is surely the voice of the establishment in the field, conferring dominance to the players he covers. Very little in this particular piece was new. Rather, the approach here—putting a lot of well-known sources on the record in support of the current and popular thesis—is meant to solidify, rather than challenge, a widespread impression, and to thereby stand as the definitive statement. It is an instructive example of a kind of Silicon Valley agitprop that is so often retailed through traditional reporters and that then becomes the conventional wisdom adopted by the financial community as well as by other journalists.

“Television,” says Auletta, as his pro forma thesis, “is undergoing a digital revolution.” ■

**Netflix is betting on viewers' interest in documentaries such as Oscar contender “The Square”**





## Introducing the 78th Class of Nieman Fellows

Twenty-four journalists, including a political cartoonist and two photographers, have been selected for a 2015–16 Nieman Fellowship

### U.S. Fellows



**Christopher Borrelli**

Chicago Tribune features writer, plans to study the decline of regional identities in the United States and the role that economics and social policy play in that change.



**Andrea Bruce**

Conflict photographer, will study the history of democratic theory and new storytelling techniques beyond photography.



**Mary Meehan**

Reporter at the Lexington Herald-Leader, will examine the impact of the Affordable Care Act and barriers to sustained health improvement among the previously uninsured.



**Todd Pitman**

Bangkok bureau chief for the Associated Press, will study the causes and consequences of military intervention in emerging nations and examine ways to advance reporting in countries under army rule.



**Christopher Weyant**

Cartoonist for The New Yorker, will examine the repositioning of editorial cartoons as a critical asset to journalism's digital business model.



**Christine Willmsen**

Investigative reporter for The Seattle Times, will study emerging toxins and chemicals that impact the health and safety of our workforce.



**Debra Adams Simmons**

Senior news executive at Advance Local, a group of news outlets, will study the impact of the digital news transformation on newsroom leadership and diversity, media ethics, and on local communities.



**Mariah Blake**

Most recently a senior reporter for Mother Jones, will study the intersection of science and U.S. government policy.



**Christa Case Bryant**

Jerusalem bureau chief for The Christian Science Monitor, will study the technology and international politics of cybersecurity, with a particular focus on cyberwarfare.



**Mónica Guzmán**

Technology and media columnist for GeekWire, The Daily Beast, and Columbia Journalism Review, will study how journalists can better meet the demands of online public discourse.



**Wendi C. Thomas**

Columnist for the Memphis Flyer, will study how to deepen the public conversation on economic justice using a multimedia news website and civic engagement campaign.



**Kim Tingley**

Contributing writer for The New York Times Magazine, will study the history and philosophy of science, specifically the science of navigation and its relationship to memory and sense of place.



**Wonbo Woo**

Producer for NBC News, will examine how major media events affect communities and the collateral effects of competitive news coverage on residents after the spotlight fades.

## International Fellows

---



**Cansu Çamlıbel**

TURKEY

Senior diplomatic correspondent for Hürriyet, will study the rise of political Islam and how religion shaped contemporary Turkish political discourse.



**Naomi Darom**

ISRAEL

Writer at Haaretz, will study the relationship between feminism and the messages about gender conveyed by popular culture.



**Tim de Gier**

NETHERLANDS

Head of digital and a staff writer for Vrij Nederland, will study the political and economic challenges of digital technology and the relevance of modern leftist theory.



**Fan Wenxin**

CHINA

Reporter for Bloomberg News, will study how China's domestic politics and economy impact its relations with other countries.



**Olivia Laing**

U.K.

Writer and critic for The Guardian and The New Statesman, will study literature and the crosscurrents between art and trauma.



**Hamish Macdonald**

AUSTRALIA

International affairs correspondent for ABC News, will study innovative modes of storytelling to develop new models for the delivery of international affairs reporting.



**Stephen Maher**

CANADA

Political columnist at Postmedia News, will study the use and abuse of surveillance in the absence of effective civilian oversight.



**Fabiano Maisonave**

BRAZIL

Senior reporter and editorial writer at Folha de S.Paulo, will study the impact of social and economic policies on inequality and the environment in developing countries.



**Grzegorz Piechota**

POLAND

Head of the Innovation Lab at Warsaw-based Gazeta Wyborcza, will study patterns in digital news content engagement to identify best practices.



**Anastasia Taylor-Lind**

U.K./SWEDEN

Documentary photographer, will study the ways women are portrayed in ancient and modern conflict.



**Fungai Tichawangana**

ZIMBABWE

Managing editor of Zimbo Jam, Zimbabwe's leading arts and culture website, will study digital storytelling techniques, the development of interactive media, and online security.

---

In selecting the Nieman class of 2016, Nieman Foundation curator **Ann Marie Lipinski**, a 1990 Nieman Fellow, was joined by **Anna Griffin**, storytelling editor at The Oregonian and a 2012 Nieman Fellow; **Blair Kamin**, architecture critic for the Chicago Tribune and a 2013 Nieman Fellow; Robert Faris, research direc-

tor at Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet & Society; Rebecca Tabasky, Berkman's manager of community programs; **James Geary**, Nieman's deputy curator and a 2012 Nieman Fellow; and **Joshua Benton**, director of the Nieman Journalism Lab and a 2008 Nieman Fellow.

## 1971

**Theunissen Vosloo** retired as chair of the South African international media group Naspers in April. A former editor turned publisher in 1983, he served as chair for 23 years. He has been appointed visiting professor in journalism at Stellenbosch University's Department of Journalism.

## 1981

**Howard Shapiro** has joined the staff of NewsWorks, the online portal of Philadelphia's NPR station, WHYY-FM, as a theater critic. Before starting at NewsWorks in April, Shapiro

spent more than 40 years at The Philadelphia Inquirer, including 10 years as the paper's Broadway critic.

## 1982

**Anita Harris's** memoir, "Ithaca Diaries: Coming of Age in the 1960s," has been published by Harris's Cambridge Common Press. It is based on the Cornell University graduate's diaries, letters, and firsthand accounts.

## 1983

**Gilbert M. Gaul**, a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, has written a new book, "Billion-

Dollar Ball: A Journey Through the Big-Money Culture of College Football." It will be published by Viking in August. An investigative journalist, Gaul has worked for The Washington Post and The Philadelphia Inquirer.

**Eli Reed's** photojournalism is showcased in "Eli Reed: A Long Walk Home," published by University of Texas Press in May. Photographs of Hollywood stars and conflict across the globe are among the more than 250 images in the book. A Magnum photographer since 1988, Reed is a professor of photojournalism at the University of Texas at Austin.

## 1984

**Derrick Z. Jackson** co-authored the book "Project Puffin: The Improbable Quest to Bring a Beloved Seabird Back to Egg Rock." Published by Yale University Press in April, it describes the journey to bring puffins back to three Maine islands, which were their historic breeding grounds.

## 1986

**Geneva Overholser**, former director of the University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Journalism, has been named a senior fellow at the Democracy Fund. She will advise the D.C. nonprofit's Informed Participation Initiative, which works to strengthen state and local journalism and increase public engagement with the news media.

## 1993

**Sandy Tolan's** book, "Children of the Stone: The Power of Music in a Hard Land," was published by Bloomsbury in April. It follows the journey of a man who works to transform the lives of Palestinian youth through music. Tolan is a professor at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Journalism.

## 1995

**Lou Ureneck's** book, "The Great Fire: Two Americans' Heroic Mission to Rescue Victims of the 20th Century's First Genocide," was published by Ecco in May. It tells the story of two American men who helped rescue 250,000 people during the genocide of Armenian and Greek Christians that took place in 1922. Ureneck is a professor of journalism at Boston University.

## "A PASSIONATE CRUSADER"

*Bruce Locklin, NF '78, recalls his Nieman classmate Danny Schechter's penchant for questioning authority and speaking out for justice*



**Danny Schechter, NF '78**, whose journalistic output took shape in print, radio, television news, documentaries, books, and blogging, died of pancreatic cancer on March 19 in Manhattan. He was 72. In the 1970s, he was famed for his media criticism as the "news dissector" on a Boston radio station. Human rights was a driving force in his journalism. In 1990, "South Africa Now," a weekly TV show produced by Globalvision, of which he was a co-founder, received a special George Polk Award.

I think he was my favorite Nieman, so different from the rest. He was a local celebrity—hardly a week would pass without the Boston Phoenix mentioning Danny. He was a passionate crusader. You could call him progressive, liberal, radical, or maybe something worse if you hated his stance.

Danny was talented, proud, but surprisingly insecure. Early on he told our curator that he wasn't sure he belonged in the Nieman program, that he didn't seem to fit. Jim Thomson said Danny more than belonged—he made the class better just by being there.

I remember listening to some tapes of his old WBCN radio programs. They seemed almost visual, a blend of news, opinion, and rock 'n' roll. The college kids loved his stuff. It was gutsy and entertaining.

Our year was a convocation year and Henry Kissinger was the speaker at the gala dinner. The room was packed with prominent people. Kissinger brought his teenage son David. After his speech, Kissinger took questions. Of course Danny had a question. I can't quote the exchange verbatim almost 40 years later, but here's the gist:

Danny stood and kept glancing around the room as he spoke. He thanked Kissinger for coming and then asked how he explained to his son what he did in Vietnam.

The room seemed to shudder—a group exhale. Kissinger remained calm. He said that as secretary of state, he tried to be a statesman, not a poseur.

Danny was crushed. Later, back at his apartment, he said his journalism career was finished. He had tried to speak his truth to power, but instead appeared to have tossed a bomb at a distinguished Nieman guest.

Danny more than survived as a journalist, author, filmmaker and master of media. David Kissinger turned out all right, too. He's been running Conan O'Brien's production company for 10 years.



**Lorie Hearn** is a recipient of a 2014 Investigative Reporters and Editors Award, which recognizes outstanding investigative journalism, for her work on “An Impossible Choice,” which documented “vent farms,” facilities where thousands of people are kept alive on life support. Presented in written narratives, radio stories, graphics, and more, “Impossible Choice” was produced by inewsource, a nonprofit Hearn founded.

## 1997

**Paige Williams** recently became a staff writer at The New Yorker, where she has covered issues ranging from death-penalty politics in Alabama to the cultural misappropriation of a Tlingit totem pole. She was the Nieman Foundation’s narrative writing instructor and the editor of Nieman Storyboard before leaving, in 2014, to become an associate professor at the Missouri School of Journalism.

## 1999

**Chris Hedges’** book, “Wages of Rebellion: The Moral Imperative to Revolt,” was published by PublicAffairs in May. Hedges argues that environmental destruction and wealth polarization will result in popular uprisings.

## 2001

**Ken Armstrong**, now at The Marshall Project, was part of The Seattle Times staff that shared a Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Reporting for coverage of the landslide that killed 43 people.

## 2003

**Bryan Monroe** has been appointed the Verizon Chair professor at Temple

University’s School of Media and Communication. He joins the faculty in June. Most recently, from 2011 to February of this year, he served as an editor—first of online political coverage and then of opinion and commentary in the D.C. bureau—at CNN.

## 2006

**Brent Walth** is leaving his post as managing editor of Willamette Week, an alternative weekly in Portland, to become a journalism professor at his alma mater, the University of Oregon. Walth began his career at the paper in 1986. He joined The Oregonian as an investigative journalist in 1994 and shared a Pulitzer for Public Service before returning to Willamette Week in 2011.

## 2007

**Eliza Griswold** is a recipient of a 2015 PEN Translation Prize for her translation, from the Pashto, of “I Am the Beggar of the World: Landays from Contemporary Afghanistan.” The book, released by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, is a collection of Afghan folk poetry.

**James Scott’s** “Target Tokyo: Jimmy Doolittle and the Raid that Avenged Pearl Harbor,” was released by W.W. Norton in April. The book is a dramatic account of the Doolittle Raid, one of America’s most controversial military campaigns. Scott is a former reporter and investigative journalist with The Post and Courier in Charleston, South Carolina.

**Craig Welch**, now reporting for National Geographic, was part of The Seattle Times staff that shared a Pulitzer Prize for Breaking News Reporting for coverage of the landslide that killed 43 people.

## 2008

**Kate Galbraith** has been hired as a general assignment reporter at California Matters, an online media venture producing stories on policies, personalities, and money in Sacramento. The site is expected to launch this summer. Previously, she covered energy and the environment for The Texas Tribune and The New York Times. She is co-author of “The Great Texas Wind Rush.”

## 2010

**Lisa Mullins** returned to WBUR in June as the new local host of “All Things Considered.” She hosted “Morning Edition” for the Boston-based NPR station between 1985 and 1995 before going on to serve as host and senior producer of “The World” at WGBH.

## 2011

**Pablo Corral Vega** started in February as Quito, Ecuador’s secretary of culture. A photojournalist, he has had images published in National Geographic magazine, The New York Times, Audubon, and many other publications. He is also the founder of NuestraMirada.org, the largest network of photographers in Latin America.

## 2012

**David Skok** has been appointed The Boston Globe’s managing editor for digital. He was previously the Globe’s digital advisor. This new job comes with additional responsibilities—Skok will also be general manager for Bostonglobe.com, meaning he will oversee the website’s designers, engineers, and product managers.

## 2013

**Paula Molina** is the recipient of Chile’s Elena Caffarena Award, which honors female leaders. Caffarena, a lawyer and politician, devoted her career to promoting women’s rights. Molina is a news anchor for Radio Cooperativa, a radio station based in Providencia, Chile, and she is also a correspondent for BBC Mundo.

## 2014

**Hasit Shah** received a \$35,000 grant from the Knight Foundation in February for his smartphone app Ketla. He aims to provide consumers in India with news in a comic book format. The grant will fund six months of work to help the start-up launch the app.

## 2015

**Melissa Bailey** joined a new Boston Globe Media publication devoted to the life sciences in June. She is developing a new beat covering the people, science, and culture of Boston’s Longwood medical community. Bailey previously served as managing editor of the New Haven Independent.

**Gabe Bullard** has joined the staff of National Geographic as a senior producer. In the position, he will edit digital content for the magazine’s website. Prior to his fellowship, Bullard served as Louisville Public Media’s director of news and editorial strategy.

**David Jiménez** has been named editor in chief of El Mundo, Spain’s second-largest daily newspaper. A former Asia bureau chief for the Madrid paper, Jiménez has covered disasters, wars, and conflicts.

Find additional Nieman Notes online at <http://nieman.harvard.edu/news/>

## Hear Here Hooked on the power of sound

**W**HEN I HEAR THE “All Things Considered” theme, I hear vegetables sizzling in a pan. I think about being 6 years old and playing with toys at the kitchen table while my mom cooked dinner and caught up with the news from NPR.

I’ve heard the “All Things Considered” theme thousands of times since then. I’ve heard it several times a day, every day of my career. I work in public radio. But not one of those times has ever replaced the memory of the vegetables, my mom, and the news.

Sound is powerful stuff. It’s also something we hear all the time so it’s easy to take it for granted, especially if you work in radio.

The line from youthful listening to my current career in public radio is fairly obvious and straight. But it’s not quite smooth. I wanted to work in journalism not because of what I heard, but because of what I didn’t hear. My dad was a coal mine inspector, and many evenings, after dinner, I overheard him telling my mom about work, which meant talking about mining accidents. I didn’t hear much about mining deaths and injuries on the radio. I didn’t see it in the newspapers. This made me want to be a journalist.

While studying journalism, I developed an unhealthy addiction to podcasts and an affinity for audio production classes. Leaving college, audio was the natural outlet, and public radio was the natural place to go.

When I got my first job in public radio, I wanted to put things on air that I didn’t hear anywhere else. I wanted to amplify fresh voices. I wanted to tell stories that pointed out what’s wrong with our world, and stories that tell us why it’s so great, too.

I also wanted to make these stories sound like nothing else. Fortunately, I ended

up at a public radio station that welcomed a degree of experimentation. As a reporter and later as an editor, I put things on air that I hoped would inspire the next group of kids playing at a kitchen table. We aired oral histories. We aired fiction. We aired a mash-up of people in a state fair beer tent growing increasingly loud and incoherent. And, close to my heart, we aired a documentary on the people most affected by the coal industry—the miners. These stories weren’t all hard news, but they explained the world—its highs and its lows—in a way only sound can.

Despite this, I’m not a radio nut. I don’t geek out about call letters, station history, or broadcast technology. And I’ve never thought of myself as a “radio guy” at all. There’s always been the Internet for me. The radio in the kitchen was on all day when I was a kid, and so was the family modem. I’ve never had a job that didn’t involve writing for the Web, and, because I grew up with a mouse in my hand, I always loved doing it.

As powerful as sound is, it’s also fleeting. Most stories air only once or twice. As an editor trying to make our local station into a news force, the lack of permanence of my team’s work was discouraging. Thousands

of people were listening to their stories on the air but few listened to them online. And whenever I mentioned podcasts, people looked at me like I had mispronounced Neda Ulaby. So in the year or two before I became a Nieman Fellow, I stopped thinking heavily about radio. Ratings were good so I started focusing my energy on really good Web storytelling.

But sound is powerful stuff. As I was benignly neglecting radio, more people started listening to podcasts. We started making them at the station. Then I moved to Cambridge.

I’ve gained so much from my Nieman year, but one thing I never predicted was that I would understand what it means to be a public radio listener again. I haven’t just listened in nearly a decade.

I’ve learned that radio is still powerful. It remains a great way to give news updates. But it’s not always what I want to listen to. Outside of morning headlines, I listen to podcasts, and most of them aren’t public radio shows. But what might seem discouraging for someone in public radio is energizing our industry. The shows I listen to aren’t typically public radio, but they sound like it. There’s an army of people who want to tell stories they don’t hear anywhere else, and they’re doing it. And they’re reaching an audience that doesn’t care about radio, and probably won’t ever buy a radio. When I walk across Harvard Yard and see white cables in people’s ears, I know not everyone is listening to music, and it makes me hopeful. It’s a generation of listeners no one expected. Maybe these podcasters are competition in the business sense, but they’re spiritual allies.

The way we find and listen to audio online is due for an update (and maybe we can find a better word than “podcast”). Technology is changing. But the way we produce good audio remains solid, and the reasons why we make it won’t change.

Now when I talk about Web audio, ears perk up. So many people have told me they listen when they work out, when they commute, and when they cook. I hope some of them have kids at the table. ■

### Gabe Bullard



**There’s an army of people who want to tell stories they don’t hear anywhere else**

*Gabe Bullard, a 2015 Nieman Fellow, is former news director at a Louisville public radio station*



*Jill Abramson, former editor of The New York Times, addresses this year's Christopher J. Georges Conference on College Journalism, which provides training for student journalists*

**+ NIEMAN.HARVARD.EDU, AWARDS & CONFERENCES**

**“I’m an incredible optimist about journalism right now.... I think this is the great heyday of quality reporting and quality journalism.”**

—JILL ABRAMSON

FORMER EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES

## NiemanReports

---

### 5 Questions

- Washington Post senior editor Cory Haik explains its “artisanal” Kindle app
- Masha Gessen, NF ’04, on the Boston Marathon bombers and terrorism

### From the Archives

The Spring 1993 issue presented excerpts from a gathering at Harvard of 24 black columnists from across the country. Among the topics discussed at “The African-American Voice in the Mainstream Press” were the “N” word, “white people’s stuff,” and the culture of celebrity

## NiemanLab

---

### The Future of Our Wrists

Nieman Visiting Fellow Jack Riley examines the risks, challenges, and opportunities that the Apple Watch presents for publishers

### Everything Old Is New Again

Lab staff writer Joseph Lichterman on listicles and aggregation in newspapers from the 1800s

### Crossing the Streams

Competing publications are deciding to team up on podcasts

## NiemanStoryboard

---

### Annotation Live!

Evan Osnos shares a regret and tells the stories behind his New Yorker story about former Chicago mayor Richard M. Daley

### Narrative News

Los Angeles Times reporter Diana Marcum talks about the writing and editing of the drought stories that earned her a Pulitzer. During the process, she kept John Steinbeck’s “Grapes of Wrath” at her side

### 5 Questions

Science journalist Ari Daniel talks about curiosity, story fatigue, and science on the stage: “It’s so important to show stories that have hopeful threads”



NiemanReports

The Nieman Foundation for Journalism  
Harvard University  
One Francis Avenue  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

SPRING 2015  
VOL. 69 NO. 2

TO PROMOTE AND  
ELEVATE THE STANDARDS  
OF JOURNALISM

