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NewsWatch

Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism at San Francisco State University Summer 1998

2010

Diversity ~~2000~~

A New Era For Journalists of Color

Rainbow of Color?
People of Color Underrepresented in the Gay Press

Wanted: A Hispanic Male
Should Race Be a Description?

Attention Sports Writers:
Native American Mascots Unsportsmanlike?

Sovereignty 101: A News Coverage Primer
Common Pitfalls From the Caribbean to the Pacific

News

The **News Watch Project** is a news media monitoring and advocacy project of the Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism at San Francisco State University's Department of Journalism. The project's partners are Unity '99, which is comprised of four national journalism associations of color — Asian American Journalists Association, National Association of Black Journalists, National Association of Hispanic Journalists and Native American Journalists Association — and the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association.

The project monitors news media coverage of communities of color — African American, Asian American, Latino and Native American — and of gays and lesbians, and advocates fair and accurate coverage of those communities. In addition to a quarterly journal, the project also offers a web site with analysis of current coverage issues, a style guide with tips to improve coverage, links with our partner journalism associations, text of prior News Watch Project journals, and other related diversity publications issued through the university.

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The News Watch Project journal is free to members of our partner journalism associations, academic journalism departments and news media organizations. For all others, the cost is $3 per copy, including postage and handling, for U.S. addresses (for international addresses, add $2). Please send a check payable to the News Watch Project at the address below.

NEWS WATCH PROJECT | 942 MARKET STREET, SUITE 309 | SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102

PHONE: (415) 398-8224 | FAX:(415) 398-8706

E-MAIL: NEWSPROJ@SIRIUS.COM | WEB ADDRESS: HTTP://NEWSWATCH.SFSU.EDU

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Publisher
Iván Román

Editor
Fernando Quintero

Contributors

Alex Montaño
Kara Briggs

Project Staff
Fernando Quintero
Director

Judy Gerber
Assistant Director

Stephanie Renfrow Hamilton
Staff Writer/Researcher

Robert DeMallac
Information Technology Specialist

Theodora Consolacion
Gabriel Martinez
Researchers

Design
Chi Dang
Joaquin Siopack

Editorial Office
942 Market Street, Suite 309
San Francisco, CA 94102
Phone (415) 398-8224
Fax (415) 398-8706
E-mail: newsproj@sirius.com

INSIDE

A. Enrique Valentín

Puerto Ricans are among those who face issues of sovereignty in the United States. Many reporters don't have the background to understand and write about such issues.

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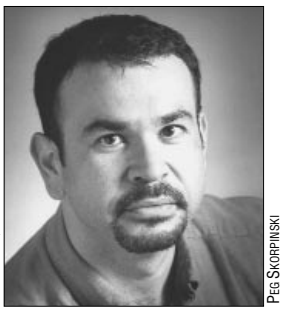
"The way we were supposed to learn English was a humiliating process," wrote my older sister, Norma Quintero de Bialek, in a letter about her experience as a non-English speaker in the days before bilingual education.

"I can vividly recall seeing myself, a seven-year-old daughter of Mexican immigrant farmworkers, squirming in my chair, desperately needing to go to the bathroom and not knowing how to ask in English. I waited for Mrs. Anderson, my first grade teacher, to come and tell me to go to the nurse's office because my pants were wet. I was given an old long dress to wear the rest of the day. The dress added to my humiliation.



PEG SKORPINSKI

Fernando Quintero
Editor and News Watch Director

While others interacted with the teacher, I was given pictures to color. I remember showing my drawings to my teacher, seeking some form of approval or acknowledgment, but all I can remember is being ignored. The first year in school I made little progress in learning the language. I repeated first grade twice. Not understanding that the school system had failed me, I instead began on a road of self-doubt and low self-esteem that would last the remainder of my life."

The dismantling of bilingual education was approved by California voters in June, and I can't help but wonder if the election results would have been different had there been more people of color in newsrooms. Am I biased in favor of bilingual education? I am. It is an issue that clearly touches me and my family in profound ways.

Had I been a reporter or editor covering the proposal to do away with bilingual education, would I have reported and written about the issue any differently? You bet – starting with a look at the educational as well as emotional issues involved for those who had bilingual education versus those, like my sister, who did not.

In a study of bilingual education conducted by the Media Alliance of San Francisco, news stories in three major California newspapers failed to provide readers with the information needed to understand Proposition 227, the California ballot measure that will substitute one year of English immersion programs for bilingual education. Many of the stories left out important information that would have put bilingual education into context:

- Two-thirds of the stories examined failed to include any definition of bilingual education.
- None of the stories included a visit to a classroom.
- None of the stories examined the academic research on bilingual education.

These gaps in reporting are not about reporters and editors failing to "do the right thing," but simply poor journalism. Journalists of color bring the kinds of experiences and perspectives that add cultural and historical context that is often missing in important news stories. More importantly, they provide valuable contributions toward fairness, accuracy and credibility – the basic tenets of journalism excellence.

Sometimes, words and phrases are obviously racist, homophobic or sexist. Sometimes, misrepresentation and stereotype is a result of something more subtle like tone or story placement. But the most pervasive form of unfair coverage seems to be lack of context. We cannot look at the present without including the past. And we cannot write about a multicultural society without the perspectives of different people.

In this issue of News Watch, which was produced and written mostly by project staff, we examine some of the background issues that color the way news is looked at and reported on by journalists and editors.

Why are so few people of color represented in stories about the lesbian and gay community? Perhaps it is because they are also excluded in the gay press.

Why does the use of race in descriptions of criminal suspects raise the ire of so many minority journalists? Race and nationality are not descriptions.

Why are sports team names like "redskins" or mascots like the one belonging to the Cleveland Indians so offensive? They dismiss and trivialize a culture that is largely ignored and misrepresented to begin with.

And why are stories about U.S. sovereignty issues so often biased and inaccurate? Many journalists simply lack the historical knowledge and contextual understanding of them.

We begin this issue with a look at how some journalists of color feel about recent developments in newsroom diversity efforts, including the American Society of Newspaper Editors' proposal to scale back its goal of reaching racial parity. It is our hope that a renewed commitment to diversity will be made, and that lack of context in journalism will become a thing of the past.

Diversity ~~2000~~ 2010

ASNE Goal Setback And Other Changes For Journalists of Color

BY FERNANDO QUINTERO

In a large blue conference room on the 21st floor of a San Francisco waterfront high-rise, about a dozen local journalists and media professionals – mostly people of color, gays and lesbians – formed a half-circle. They had gathered after hours one recent clear night to discuss the state of diversity in newsrooms. With the setting sun their only source of light and the panorama of San Francisco Bay their backdrop, the group tore into the subject at hand.

Aurelio Rojas, a veteran reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, described a conversation he overheard earlier that day between two white male co-workers, an editor and a reporter. The editor had assumed the victim of a fatal shooting by local police the previous night was a minority "coke whore" because the incident was thought to be drug-related, so he downplayed her death.

"If they had heard she was white and from Contra Costa County (the suburbs), the story would have gotten team coverage," Rojas said, his face tinged with anger. "Ten years ago, I would have gone on a rampage. But you can only go on so many rampages before they say, 'There he goes again.' The other minorities at the paper, their hands are up in the air. They've given up. We have fought the battles, but management is tired of listening to people like us."

At a time when it seems the news industry has given up on the goal of promoting diversity in newsrooms and in news content, and the latest buzzword in the industry is "diversity fatigue"– both among mostly white editors who have bought into the false notion that the playing field has leveled, and among journalists of color frustrated by their inability to change an entrenched newsroom culture – there is likely be a fair amount of soul-searching going on.

And if there isn't, there ought to be.

Recent developments, including the American Society of Newspaper Editors'(ASNE) proposal to scale back its diversity goals and a Federal appeals court decision striking down a Federal Communications Commission minority hiring requirement for radio and television stations, come at a time when the dismantling of affirmative action, English-only ballot initiatives and anti-immigrant sentiment have deepened the racial divide.

The nation, it seems, is turning back to a familiar-sounding chapter in history.

Thirty years ago, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, dubbed the Kerner Commission after its chairman, former Illinois Gov. Otto Kerner, was appointed by Lyndon B. Johnson to investigate the underlying causes of the urban, race-related riots of the 1960s. The commission's 1968 report declared that "the news media have failed to analyze and report adequately on racial problems" and that they reported and wrote "from the standpoint of a white man's world."

> ***"There is a critical mass of journalists of color, but has there been a fundamental change in newsroom culture?"***
>
> **– William Wong**
> Columnist
> *San Francisco Examiner*

The Kerner Commission report warned that the "nation was moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal." Although the commission focused on the inequities facing African Americans at the time, its findings could easily be applied to today's multicultural society. Thirty years later, the nation's racial problems remain institutionally entrenched. And the media all too often presents a narrow and biased view.

In stories about poverty, crime and other social pathology, blacks and Latinos are disproportionately represented. Asian Americans are still often portrayed as foreigners. And coverage of Native Americans is riddled with misinformation and stereotypes. In newsrooms, the language of bias shows up in the common use of the phrase "politically correct" without quotation marks or attribution, or the word "preferences" in affirmative action and gay rights stories, or the term "illegal alien," coined by government bureaucrats to dehumanize undocumented immigrants for enforcement purposes.

Acknowledging that ASNE will not meet its 1978 pledge to achieve racial parity in U.S. newsrooms by the year 2000, the ASNE board of directors voted in April to extend its timetable to the year 2010 and to broaden its

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definition of diversity to include gays, lesbians, women and journalists with disabilities. The proposal, which will be voted on in October, encourages newspapers to increase representation of journalists of color to 20 percent within the next 12 years and to achieve parity within local communities as quickly as possible. The plan sent shock waves throughout the news industry, with some calling it a major "retreat" in newsroom diversity efforts.

"I think ASNE was able to retreat without a lot of noticeable protest because people feel comfortable and are complacent. Plus, you can't take the retreat out of the broader political context. The overall hostile climate for affirmative action makes it a lot easier for ASNE to make a retreat," said Cynthia Tucker, editorial columnist for the *Atlanta Constitution*.

Unity '99, the umbrella organization for the four major national journalism associations of color – National Association of Black Journalists, National Association of Hispanic Journalists, Native American Journalists Association and Asian American Journalists Association – has urged ASNE to maintain its goal of parity in newsroom minority representation, saying "ASNE should stand firm on the Year 2000 Goal and take a high profile leadership" on the issue.

Nancy Hicks Maynard, past president of the Maynard Institute for Journalism Education and a former *New York Times* correspondent who, along with her late husband, Robert Maynard, were the creative force behind the ASNE goal, stated the need for renewed resolve.

"Different circumstances have undermined that commitment to diversity we fought hard for 20 years ago," she said. "In all of this, I come to one place: It's about level of commitment. The leadership of ASNE must recommit to diversity – an inter-generational commitment to hire people of color, and provide professional development and advancement opportunities. It's that kind of thing that isn't happening. For the future presidents of ASNE, diversity has to be a top priority. It would be symbolically meaningful, as it was 20 yeas ago."

In 1978, only 3.95 percent of the nation's newspaper photographers, reporters and editors were black, Asian, Latino or Native American, according to ASNE, which has since kept an annual count of minority repre-

Diversity in Six Easy Steps

BY BETTY MEDSGER

In 1998, it's hard to imagine a newsroom without computers.

Even the smallest of newspapers has used at least one generation of computers in the last 20 years. Though technology junkies might decry the slowness of the speed at which newsrooms have embraced ever more advanced systems, there is no question that news organizations have integrated technology into nearly all aspects of news production and publishing.

That spirit of risk – staking a claim in cyberspace simply because it was a new frontier and not because it was ever clear that The Web would become a major news delivery system – has permeated most news organizations. Some larger news organizations have spent huge sums of money creating new technology they could not be sure would work. In some cases, it didn't.

It is sobering to realize that during these last two decades, when the news organizations of this country were willing to risk – squander, in some cases – millions of dollars on technology, they spent mere pennies by comparison to achieve a goal that the American Society of Newspaper Editors set in 1978: to have newsroom staffs by the year 2000 that would reflect the same level of ethnic diversity as the nation.

The will to buy computerized bells and whistles was much greater than the will to achieve that loudly trumpeted goal of newsroom ethnic diversity. While there have been some good intentions – even fervent commitment – among some managers of news organizations, few of them ever created a plan of action aimed at achieving that goal. That might explain why newspaper newsroom staffs today are only 11.5 ethnic minority while the country is 26 percent ethnic minority, and nearly half of all daily newspapers still have no ethnic minority staff members.

Realizing that it will be impossible to achieve the year 2000 goal, ASNE officials recommended at their April convention to reduce the goal for ethnic composition of newsroom staffs to 20 percent, and to extend the date to achieve that goal to the year 2010. By then, of course, the portion of ethnic minority people in the U.S. population will be much greater than the 26 percent it is today, and 20 percent will seem inadequate to those who believe that inclusive news coverage only happens when news organizations reflect the ethnic makeup of their communities.

Failure was not inevitable for ASNE. Things can still be turned around quickly and easily – if the will is there.

Success in newsroom diversity will require a financial commitment that involves more than just sending recruiters to job fairs, but a mere pittance compared to the resources committed to new technology. Unlike technology, there are no risks involved in investing in ethnic diversity. News organizations that have diversified their staffs in significant numbers soon discover important and compelling news stories that white-only staffs often overlook.

For those news organizations that truly want to diversify both staff and coverage, here are some steps to take:

- Get an attitude. Decide that diversity is as important as technology and an annual increase in profits. Believe in and

sentation in the industry.

Today, about 6,300, or 11.5 percent of the nation's 54,700 newspaper journalists are people of color. However, gains in newspapers have leveled off since 1993 while the percentage of minorities in the United States is a projected 30 percent in 2000. More than 43 percent of all newspapers in the country do not have a single person of color in their newsrooms.

In the broadcast industry, nearly 20 percent of radio and television news journalists and directors are minorities. While steady gains have also been made in TV newsrooms over the past 20 years, the number of new minority hires has also flattened over the last three years.

Robert Garcia, general manager of CNN Radio Network and a longtime board member of the Radio Television News Directors Association, believes ASNE's proposal has little effect, if any, on the television news industry's diversity efforts.

"We are working to get more people of color into management positions, and to get more young people interested in television news," said Garcia. "We can't ignore market forces. If we don't have our viewers represented on TV, they'll eventually tune out."

While progress made toward newsroom diversity goals is substantial, there remains a strong undercurrent of frustration that the efforts have not paid off. Setbacks in recruitment and retention continue. Coverage of people of color remains biased and stereotypical. And for many white newsroom managers, at best, diversity is seen as the "right thing to do" rather than an essential element of quality journalism. At worst, it's a numbers game.

"There is a critical mass out there of journalists of color, but has there been a fundamental change in newsroom culture?" asked veteran reporter William Wong, a columnist for the *San Francisco Examiner* who was among the pioneering group of journalists of color that met with ASNE leaders 20 years ago to push for specific diversity goals.

"It's extremely hard to change the culture," said Wong, who also attended the recent gathering of mostly minority journalists in San Francisco. "It's an ingrained culture in which the tougher you are, the better you are. If you play the game in order to rise up the ranks, you compromise your individuality, and everything about you that made you an asset in the first place. The cover-

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promote the idea that fair, accurate and credible coverage of ethnic minorities as well as gays/lesbians is a tenet of good journalism.

• Get to the root of the problem: recruit. Find the journalism education programs in your region that try to do a good job preparing students to become journalists. Chances are, they do not recruit ethnic minority students, but could be convinced to do so. Ask minority and other staffers from your newsroom to help educators recruit students of color.

• Be coaches and mentors. Journalists like to work as writing, photo and design coaches with young people. Many ethnic minority journalists are especially eager to serve as positive role models for aspiring journalists. Capture this generous spirit and organize mentoring and coaching programs that bring high school and university students together with your staffers for weekly coaching. (At San Francisco State University's Department of Journalism, it has been proven that such support greatly increases students' chances of success, even if they have had relatively weak preparation in language skills.)

• Open your doors. On weekends or during the summer months, invite local high school studentsinto your newsroom to work with journalists on a special page or broadcast of news about teenagers. Create well-structured internships for university students, ones in which feedback is provided.

• Improve your future, and theirs. Encourage your entry-level hires to commit to a career in journalism and to improving coverage. Pay salaries that are above the near-poverty level that many recent grads are still earning in newsrooms, and encourage them to set their own goals for advancement. Help them either achieve or restructure their goals.

• Be truly diverse. Be inclusive of all races in all efforts, but make a special effort to assure recruitment and success of ethnic minority people. In order to minimize the likelihood of alienation among people from different ethnic groups, be open with all staffers about the need for diversity in hiring and coverage and the need for a newsroom atmosphere that is welcoming toward all.

For years, news organizations have somewhat arrogantly assumed they did not need to recruit journalists. Future hires, they thought, would stand in line at their door, begging for a chance to write or to photograph. Many newsroom managers have not seen the handwriting on the wall: the line is getting short. Low salaries and the declining reputation of journalism have diminished attraction to the profession.

The steps suggested above will not only help attract and retain ethnic minority staff, they will also help newsrooms rebuild their credibility and uphold quality journalism. News organizations must reinvest in their future. They must commit to being a place where it is worthwhile to invest one's time and talent for the public good.

Betty Medsger, former chair of the Department of Journalism at San Francisco State University, is author of "Winds of Change: Challenges Confronting Journalism Education," a national study of journalism education conducted for The Freedom Forum. She is a former Washington Post *reporter.*

Wanted: A Hispanic Male

Is Race a Description?

BY ALEX MONTAÑO

The police scanner at my first television news job in Alpena, Mich., often sat silent for days. So when a call finally came out over the black box, it commanded attention.

The anonymous police dispatcher had described a suspect in a traffic violation as "a Mexican male." The same description later came in a press release.

How did they know he was Mexican?

They didn't.

Police told me the man "looked Mexican." Didn't they know that "Mexican" is a nationality, not a physical description? I wondered: If it hadn't been me screening the press release, would the description have gone on the air?

As a TV news anchor, I have been handed scripts that, in essence, asked me to describe myself (Hispanic male, 5'11" to 6'3", 170-190 lbs.) as a suspect: If you've seen me, please contact police immediately.

Over the years, I have learned that vague race-based descriptions of criminal suspects are not particular to communities with a small number of minorities. The descriptions are aired in markets of all sizes and read by anchors of all backgrounds.

In a 1990 study of San Francisco Bay Area media conducted by Erna Smith, professor and chair of the Department of Journalism at San Francisco State University, criminals identified by race or ethnicity in newspaper stories were far more likely to be people of color. Minorities were also disproportionately represented in television crime stories.

Some journalists believe broadcasting a suspect's description can be a valuable tool for police, and therefore, provide a public service. But questions have been raised as to whether the practice constitutes fair and accurate journalism.

"It is a myth of journalism that race-based descriptions of people have any true value in the apprehension of criminal suspects," said Keith M. Woods, associate in ethics at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies.

Remember the police sketch of the Unabomber? It emphasized two realities: One, even the most carefully crafted descriptions and professionally rendered sketches can be woefully inaccurate. And two, seeing the Unabomber's sketch on the television screen repeatedly was unlikely to reinforce false stereotypes about white terrorists.

According to Woods, something different happens when a suspect is a person of color. It is a phenomenon he calls "racial identification."

"Many journalists. . . remember a not-so-long-ago time when news organizations identified only black, Hispanic or Asian suspects by race. Race wasn't used then as a descriptor. It was used to distinguish from white. It was used to support the myth that social pathology and race were related," Woods recently wrote in response to comments published in a TV news trade listserve about the use of race-based identification of criminal suspects.

Woods maintains that the consequence of carrying on a practice not grounded in journalism has also been the perpetuation of the myth that the word "black" actually describes someone.

"As a color, 'black' describes. . . the color of coal. As a 'race,' it describes people whose color runs the gamut from typing paper to pitch. 'Black' describes people with kinky, straight or curly hair, flat noses, sharp noses, brown eyes, gray eyes, green eyes, round faces, narrow faces, thin lips, thick lips – the possibilities go on. There are 'black' people who look white, Asian, Latino or Native American," he said.

The same can be said for Latinos, Asians, Native Americans, and other ethnic groups.

Monica Allen, an anchor in Montgomery, Ala., instituted an informal policy at her station on suspect descriptions. Under her guidelines, no racial suspect descriptions should be broadcast unless they are accompanied by detailed information about the person. The idea is that a viewer would be able to recognize a suspect if they saw him or her walking down the street. She said she decided to do it after "constantly" getting scripts that described someone as vaguely as a 'Hispanic male.'

Allen believes the use of ethnic or racial descriptions is often the result of simple laziness.

"[The media is] blamed for racism, when it's just laziness or sloppy journalism. You get [reporters or producers] regurgitating the information that they get. They say 'that's what the police department said.' I have to remind them we're not PR for the police department."

None of the television journalists interviewed had an official policy at their stations for describing suspects. "When we run these descriptions, 9 out of 10 (suspects) won't get caught," said Jimmy Phillips, executive producer at KTMD-TV, a Spanish-language Telemundo affiliate in Houston, Texas. "I've always wondered [about using the descriptions], but I've never heard anyone complain about it."

The ethical dilemma created by these descriptions is not unique to broadcasters. Like KTMD-TV, the *Temple Daily Telegram* in Temple, Texas, uses "whatever suspect description police will give us," said

managing editor Steve Walters.

Walters said the newspaper usually prints what little information they have in order to help police arrest a suspect. But once a suspect is charged, the paper has a policy against identifying a suspect by race after they've been arrested.

Other newspapers, like the *Sacramento Bee*, avoid printing vague descriptions altogether. "Those are the kinds of descriptions that don't do anybody a lot of good. We're not going to capture anybody," said managing editor Rick Rodriguez.

But the policy, though well-intended, has resulted in a backlash against the newspaper. "It's not a popular position to take," said Rodriguez. "The police don't like it and some readers assume if we don't use race, [the suspect] is a minority."

So how much is enough information?

"If somebody says, for example, that the suspect is 5'10" to 6'2" with short black hair, that could apply to a lot of folks," said Rodriguez. But he adds that if the description is accompanied by specific identifying marks, such as a scar on the left cheek, that may be specific enough to include in a story. "It's not always clear what constitutes enough information. It's not an exact science, unfortunately. There is no formula."

The policy at the *Sacramento Bee* regarding race-based descriptions is open to interpretation - and lobbying. "Sometimes the reporters or police will appeal," said Rodriguez. "We have internal meetings to decide."

Ashleigh Banfield, a Dallas anchor who is originally from Canada, believes that vague race-based descriptions should be aired if they are accompanied by additional information such as where a crime happened or a description of the suspect's car.

"You could miss out on giving out a valuable description, and endanger people," said Banfield. "[Reporters] act too much on the side of caution for fear of reprisal."

While some journalists may resent such descriptions going over the air, others feel undue pressure to ignore information that is important to their stories. Blake Comby, a weekend anchor in Terre Haute, Ind., defends the use of race-based descriptions for criminal suspects.

"When you talk about using race, the knee-jerk reaction is that you're a racist. I don't appreciate that," said Comby. "The majority of criminals [in my area] are white. We put vague descriptions in for all races. We try to be as politically correct as we can."

But it isn't about being politically correct – "whatever that means," Woods wrote. "It's about being accurate and concise. It's about being journalistically responsible."

When using race or ethnicity to describe criminal suspects, Banfield recommends journalists ask themselves: Would this offend me? Would it offend my neighbor? Can this lead to an arrest?

Woods said he has heard such justifications before.

"If it saves one person, it's worth it. And that's fine, if you're not one of the 100 people who are harmed by it."

Alex Montaño, a Michigan-based television journalist for nine years, has held nearly every TV job imaginable including producer, anchor, reporter, photographer, editor, news director and weatherman. In May, he received an Emmy for his work on a documentary depicting the daily life of migrant workers in Michigan farms.

Tips

Racial identifiers in news reports can communicate negative information about people of color, create and perpetuate stereotypes, and push wedges between people. We can improve our journalism if we flag every racial reference and then:

1. Make sure the racial reference is relevant to the story. Race is relevant when the story is about race. It typically is not relevant in reports of crimes, or arrests, or accidents. Just because people in conflict are of different races does not mean that race is the source of their dispute and thus is a part of the story. Likewise, stories about interracial dating or housing discrimination certainly are about race and would be places where race would be mentioned.

2. Explain the relevance of the racial reference. Journalists sometimes assume their audience will know the significance of racial references in stories. In fact, a range of interpretations likely exists. So rather than risk reinforcing stereotypes, consider reporting why you used the reference.

3. Make sure you say what you mean. Adjectives like welfare, inner city, underprivileged, blue collar, conservative, suburban, exotic, middle class, uptown, south side or wealthy can be euphemisms for racial groups. Replace those terms with exact locations, or specific incomes, or consider removing them altogether.

4. Use racial identifiers when they can really add value. When police issue a description of a crime suspect, be sure before you use racial identifiers that they are part of a description specific enough to eliminate the vast majority of people in that racial group. For example, "Black male, wearing blue jeans, about 25 years of age" would not satisfy this guideline.

5. Inform yourself about people of races different from yours. Assess how much you know about people of other races and figure out ways to learn more. How do they refer to themselves? What medical conditions are more likely in various racial groups? Treat reporting on race as carefully as you do reporting on other multi-layered issues like religion and science and be just as rigorous with your research and backgrounding.

Valerie Hyman, Director, Program for Broadcast Journalists, The Poynter Institute

Attention Sports Writers:

Native American Mascots Unsportsmanlike?

BY KARA BRIGGS

Seven Native American leaders are suing the owners of one of the country's most hallowed institutions over a trademark name they call scandalous, scurrilous and derogatory.

The institution? A professional football team.

The name? The Washington Redskins.

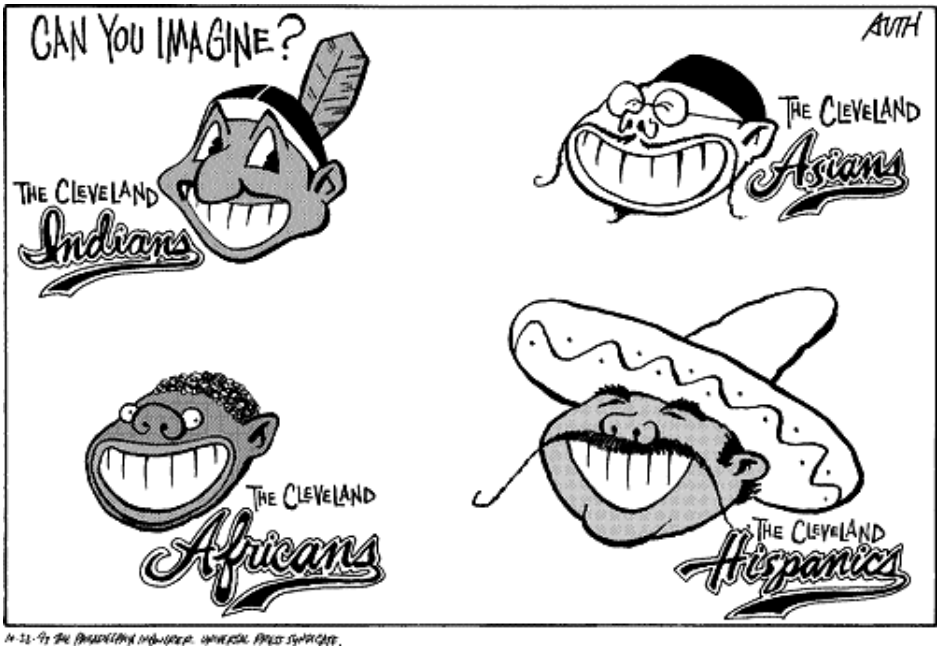
"All these sports team names are going to be gone in ten years," predicted Suzan Shown Harjo, a Cheyenne political lobbyist based on Capitol Hill. "When people look back at the 1990s, these names will be looked on as an oddity."

Harjo believes names such as "Redskins" will become a part of history the way segregated football teams did. And like segregation – which the Washington team held onto longer than any other team in the National Football League until the federal government intervened – it will probably take a similar government action before the offensive team name is dropped.

Team managers say that's wishful thinking on Harjo's part. But a growing number of sports journalists are giving the use of Native American names for team logos and mascots a second thought. Three newspapers – *The Oregonian* in Portland, Ore., *The Star Tribune* in Minneapolis, Minn., and *The Salt Lake Tribune* – have established a policy not to reprint the names "Redskins," "Indians" or "Braves" in stories. Instead, they simply refer to the teams' cities: Washington, Cleveland and Atlanta, respectively. Some television news photographers at game events have chosen to bypass fans who wear turkey feather headdresses and paint their faces to mock Indian warriors. And columnists for *The Plain Dealer* in Cleveland, Ohio, and *The Washington Post* have called on their local teams to abandon the names.

The name "Redskins" is dated, admit the Washington team's owners, but no more offensive than the word "colored" in the name National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. That argument may hold in the court of public opinion, among the thousands of ticket-buying fans for whom sports team names border on the sacred. But the administrative trial judges at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office – who will issue a decision on the use of "redskins" later this year – are having to look at a few of the facts. Along the way, there are lessons to be learned by both team owners and sports journalists alike. Sports fans could use a bit of enlightenment as well.

The word "redskins" first appeared in the Oxford University dictionary in 1699. It was defined as a derogatory name for North American Indians. It dates back to an era



Political cartoonist Tony Auth exposed racism in sports mascots with his October 22, 1997 cartoon in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Seeing the Cleveland Indians mascot next to caricatures of other people shows just how bad the image is. At News Watch, the "Indians" logo looked so bad, we had to go to a Cleveland site to doublecheck that it was the real image. (J.G.)

when bounties were offered for each Native American killed.

Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, dropped the "redskins" name from its sports teams a decade ago after the Miami Indian tribe, for which the university is named, complained. In the last 30 years, dozens of universities including Stanford, Dartmouth, Syracuse, Marquette and Oklahoma have given up team names offensive to their Native American students.

One college in New York state squelched the nickname "squaws" for its women's teams after a Seneca tribal elder advised them of the word's real meaning: vagina.

School districts as large and diverse as the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Dallas School District, and as tiny as the local high school in Enterprise, Ore., have abandoned similar Native American names within the last year.

Still, several professional and collegiate sports teams have hung onto names like Redskins, Indians, Chiefs and Braves. Harjo said such names reveal an attitude that says Native Americans are less than human and insignificant historical figures. It dismisses and trivializes Native American culture and religion.

This attitude pervades American society like "poison gas," Harjo said. Vernon Bellecourt, president of the National Coalition Against Racism in Sports and Media and a longtime Native American community leader, agrees.

Otherwise, he asks, how could Time-Warner, Inc., one of the nation's largest, most respected media companies, acquire and continue to operate the Atlanta Braves? Or how could Jane Fonda, who once considered herself a political activist, do the tomahawk chop along with a stadium-full of fans?

For Native American activists, the biggest challenge is convincing fans.

Michael Wilbon, a *Washington Post* sports columnist, said it's worth remembering that the word "fan" is derived from "fanatic."

Bud Shaw, columnist for *The Plain-Dealer*, believes fans aren't necessarily racist, they just haven't thought through the significance of Indian names and logos.

"Every opening day, a group of Native Americans assemble outside Jacobs Field with signs that say, 'We're people, not mascots,' and there is absolutely no response from people in town here," he said. "I don't know if talk radio is a barometer for anything, but people will call in and say, `What's their problem? Is the name Dolphins an attack on dolphins?'"

The teams defend their logo or name as something that, in fact, honors Native Americans. Mike McCall, director of public relations for the Washington team, said his organization's logo is a dignified profile of a Native American, not a cartoonish character or a tomahawk. "Our logo is not a caricature like the Cleveland Indian's logo," he said.

Bob DiBiasio, Cleveland's vice president for public relations, said his team wants to be sensitive. "There's always been a touch of controversy surrounding our nickname and our logo," he said. "And understanding that it's an incredibly sensitive issue, we have tried to act accordingly." Chief Wahoo (the team's buck-toothed, feather-wearing Native American mascot) won't get a speaking voice or a body. That's out of respect, DiBiasio said.

John Sanchez, a Yaqui-Chiricahua professor of communications at the University of Pennsylvania, doesn't see any nobility in the Cleveland team's gesture.

For Sanchez, the use of Indian names and symbolism for sports is more than a subject of his research, it is a personal one.

Five years ago, the professor's nine-year-old nephew came home from school one day and refused to go back. His teacher had asked the little boy with braids and brown skin to do a war cry like she had seen on television.

Sanchez captured his nephew's story on video tape and now shows the tape to journalism students to demonstrate to them how stereotypical media images can hurt people's feelings and affect a person's self-esteem.

"When you say the 'n' word, you're talking about an entire race of people," Sanchez said. "When you say 'redskins,' you're talking about an entire race of people, too. If you say it to me, then you are saying something negative about my mom, my dad, my grandma, my children. Why would you do that?"

Tips

- Avoid words that conjure up Native American stereotypes in stories and headlines. Do not use words and phrases like "warpath," "pow-wow," "Indian giver," and others (for more, check the News Watch Project style guide at http://newswatch.sfsu.edu). If you must use offensive team names in sports and other stories, avoid the name in the second reference and simply name the team's city. Avoid referring to the Cleveland Indians by their nickname, "The Tribe."
- Do not trust everything you see or read in news reports to be either accurate or sensitive to Native Americans. Before you reprint information from another source, double check it.
- Expand your knowledge of Native American issues and history. Attend courses or training such as the "Covering Native America from A to Z" workshop held in June in Tempe, Ariz. and sponsored in part by the Native American Journalists Association. Read Native American books or newspapers.

Kara Briggs, a Yakama Indian, is a reporter for The Oregonian *in Portland, Ore., and current vice president of the Native American Journalists Association. She is a 1992 Howard Simmons Fellow and a 1989 graduate of the Summer Program for Minority Journalists.*

Rainbow of Color?

People of Color Underrepresented in the Gay Press

BY JUDY GERBER

The rainbow has long been used as a symbol of lesbian and gay pride. But in the gay press, the rich symbol's diversity of colors are missing. Gay people of color are all too often excluded from coverage.

For many journalists in the mainstream news media, gay publications are the sole way of keeping up with events and issues of importance in the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (l/g/b/t) communities. In the early 1980s, mainstream journalists learned about the importance of the gay press because it was just about the only place to find in-depth information about the AIDS crisis. So if people of color are not being included in the gay press, the result is a similar lack of visibility in the mainstream press.

At News Watch, we often hear dissatisfaction with mainstream and gay media coverage from gay people of color who feel their voices are important yet excluded. We also hear from straight people of color who see gay issues as mainly a white concern, and white gays who think people of color are more anti-gay than they are. For this report, a representative sample of the lesbian/gay media is examined to see how it addresses these perceptions.

Three glossy magazines and three newspapers from different parts of the country were surveyed – five aimed at both men and women, and one lesbian-focused. The glossies are *the Advocate, Etcetera* and *Girlfriends*. The Los Angeles-based Advocate bills itself as "the national gay and lesbian news magazine." *Girlfriends*, "America's fastest-growing lesbian magazine," is headquartered in San Francisco. *Etcetera* is produced in Atlanta for distribution throughout the South. The newsweeklies are the *Washington Blade* from Washington, D.C., *Bay Area Reporter* (*B.A.R*) from San Francisco, and *Southern Voice* from Atlanta. Recent issues from 1998 were selected, beginning with a simple count of the number of images of white men and/or women vs. men and/or women of color. Advertisements or crowd shots like the Gay March on Washington were not included. Finally, magazine and newspaper covers and article content were also examined.

Out of a total of 809 images in the six different publications, 85 percent were of white men or women. Of the 122 total images of blacks, Latinos and Asian Americans, 35 percent were musicians, actors or other entertainers. One newspaper included an image of a Native American on the cover of a travel book. Only the newspapers showed people of color involved in activities specific to their communities. In contrast, of the stories with white images, 52 percent of the photographs were of activists or professionals: writers, lawyers, health workers, legislators, lobbyists and others involved in the lesbian/gay movement.

Of the nine glossy covers in the sample, only one featured a person of color– entertainer Ru Paul – on the March 27 cover of *Etcetera*. In a separate look back at the 1997 covers of *the Advocate*, the January issue featured a person of color, basketball star Dennis Rodman. The following month included a small mug shot of San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown in a photo of the city skyline. *Girlfriends* has not had a woman of color on its cover in 16 months.

Advocate editor Judy Wieder said she would like to see more diversity in her magazine, but cited business and marketing factors as a major hurdle. Wieder said when a person of color appears on the cover, sales go down and people who "would be naturally inclined to buy it," don't.

Out of 181 images looked at in *the Advocate*, 95 percent were white, most of them male. As a national gay and lesbian publication with the largest circulation, it had fewer people of color pictured in its pages than any of the other publications surveyed.

"I don't want to get too rigid," Wieder added, "but with a 70 percent male audience, sexy young white is what they respond to."

Girlfriends totaled l95 images, of which 85 percent were white women or men. Editor Heather Findlay said her audience is 78 percent white, and that market forces are key to what determines the magazine's content. As a

lifestyle magazine, she said her readers want to see and read about women who look like them.

Mike Salinas, *B.A.R.* news editor, agrees that all readers want to see themselves represented in gay publications, and said it is just as important for people of color to find news of their communities in the paper. "When I read about a Hispanic lesbian in *Hispanic* magazine, it gives me a rush. I assume other people of color get that in reading stories about their people in the *B.A.R.* It's a good thing to give people."

Of the 137 images found in three issues of the *B.A.R.*, 81 percent were of white men or women. The *Washington Blade* totaled 93 images, 85 percent white. *Southern Voice*, 136 images, 85 percent white. And *Etcetera*, 77 images, 78 percent white.

The reasons editors of gay media cited for the lack of diversity in their publications are similar to those we hear from editors of the mainstream press: On deadline, reporters go with the easiest source to get a hold of, often a designated spokesperson who often turns out to be a white man.

Salinas said it creates a vicious cycle, because "the gay press is really strapped for resources."

As a result, people of color are often left out of stories that cross racial and ethnic lines. Taking the extra step to include more people of color results in a more realistic view of the gay community. White gays and lesbians are not the only ones concerned about domestic partner benefits, drug funding sources for AIDS, or the latest anti-gay move by religious fundamentalists. Although the same sex marriage suit in Hawaii includes two native Pacific Islanders, coverage of the issue has rarely included the views of Asian Americans.

The content of quotes from people of color in gay media is another indicator of how the gay press places minorities outside the community norm. *Southern Voice* and *the Advocate* both run a column called, "Quote, Unquote." Out of six columns examined, only one included a quote from a gay person with a Spanish surname. Otherwise, all the lesbians and gays quoted were white. As an analyst of right wing developments, Scott Nakagawa said he is not surprised by this observation.

"This mirrors what the Christian right wing's spin (on gay rights) has been," said Nakagawa, executive director of the McKenzie River Gathering Foundation, an Oregon-based organization which funds programs committed to social justice, including gay rights groups. "The gay press has failed to take the more proactive step of highlighting the leadership and participation of the l/g/b/t/ people of color in their struggle."

Gay Latino writer/photographer Robert Castillo said making gay publications more relevant to everyone by including issues of concern to people of color is not that complicated a feat. For example, including stories about people of color coming out.

"Some people think coming out is not a Latino or African American issue...but I'd like to hear more about it in the queer press." he said.

Tips

- Seek out stories from ethnic gay communities, whether their interest to white readers is immediately apparent or not. Find out what gay activists of color are doing about issues that concern the entire community and feature their work or include their comments/perspectives in the story.
- When running quotes from published columns or stories from the gay press, diversify sources. Check out ethnic gay publications like *Venus*, *Blacklines* or *En La Vida*. Avoid repeatedly referring to and picturing anti-gay minority activists to the exclusion of people of color who are allies.
- Expand the image of people of color beyond the stereotypes of entertainer or athlete by including pictures of lesbian and gay people of color in all walks of life.

Castillo added that such stories would have an additional benefit: "Coming out stories would break down the myth that people of color are more anti-gay."

Etcetera has given itself a mandate to include women and people of color as much as possible. Jack Pelham, *Etcetera* editor who established the policy when he took over five years ago, said he caught heat from some readers. "We'd get calls, like 'why did you put that woman or that n-- on the cover?'" But Pelham's view is that eventually, people get used to seeing more diversity reflected in the magazine.

"We have to do this," he said. "We have to push ideas and subconsciously make it what our readers are picking up. If they see diversity, then they can realize and appreciate it more."

Given the magazine's space limitations, Pelham said if he has to make a choice between a story about a white person and a person of color, he goes with the latter. In our study, *Etcetera* had the highest percentage of images of people of color of all the publications (22 percent).

Some minority journalists have tried to fill the void in gay coverage by creating their own publications. *Venus Magazine* publisher Charlene Cothran attributes the success of her New York-based magazine to the strength of the gay African American community, which demanded its own space in print.

Another gay publication, based in Chicago, has taken a different approach. *Outlines* editor and publisher Tracy Baim noticed how little news of the African American and Latino gay communities were in her paper, billed as "the weekly voice of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans community." So she went to several black gay community organizations in Chicago and asked if they wanted to produce an independent newspaper. The response was overwhelmingly positive, resulting in the emergence of *Blacklines*. Also published by Baim, the paper is primarily

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Sovereignty 101:

A News Coverage Primer

BY IVÁN ROMÁN

Last March, when U.S. congressmen debated for 12 long hours – in speech after speech – about whether people in Puerto Rico should be allowed to vote on becoming a state of the Union, an independent nation, or remain a Commonwealth with limited autonomy, the discussion caught most Americans by surprise.

For N*ew York Daily News* columnist Juan Gonzalez, who is Puerto Rican, "it was a debate long overdue," he wrote in a column published two days after the event. "For the rest of the country, it was an eye opener."

Unfortunately, a lack of historical knowledge and contextual understanding of U.S. sovereignty issues is true for far too many journalists, commentators, and opinion writers across the country – all contributing to often inaccurate and biased news coverage.

As the United States faces the legacy of colonization and frontier expansion, more and more journalists are faced with reporting on issues of sovereignty. The call for sovereignty, the push to obtain it, the drive to define it, and the struggle to defend it, continues to emanate from the Hawaiian Islands and other parts of the Pacific, the Caribbean, and dozens of Native American lands throughout the United States.

For instance, at a packed congressional hearing in Seattle last April, the Muckleshoot Indians invoked sovereignty to defend their right to build a 23,000-seat amphiteatre on their reservation, and the right of the 554 Native tribes in the United States to be immune from civil lawsuits.

Native Hawaiians, spurred by a cultural reaffirmation and remembrance of the day their Queen Liliuokalani was deposed and imprisoned more than 100 years ago, continue to seek sovereignty for themselves as a people, but are still divided about just what that means.

"If I had to grade the media on this, I would give it a 'C plus,' maybe a 'B minus,'" said Mark Matsunaga, managing editor of KHON-TV, the Fox television affiliate in Honolulu. He covered native Hawaiian sovereignty issues full-time for the *Honolulu Advertiser* in the mid 1990's. Matsunaga points to journalists' lack of historical knowledge as one of the main problems in coverage of sovereignty issues.

"It's that old saying that those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it," he said. "The media just keeps repeating the same mistakes."

It is no coincidence that sovereignty-related stories have cropped up in larger numbers this year, the centennial anniversary of the Spanish-American War, which turned the United States into an empire with territories in the Caribbean and the Pacific. With its sensationalistic coverage, the dueling Hearst and Pulitzer newspaper dynasties fueled the American public's outrage, nationalistic pride and crusading morality that led to Congress declaring war on Spain in 1898.

"It's that old saying that those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it. The media just keeps repeating the same mistakes."

– Mark Matsunaga
Managing editor
KHON-TV, Honolulu

Ironically, it is the responsibility of the press today to accurately explain the ramifications of those actions it helped foster 100 years ago.

While Cuba and the Philippines ended up gaining independence after they were ceded to the United States by Spain, Puerto Rico and Hawaii, which was not a Spanish colony but got caught up in the events of the time, met quite different destinies. The U.S. Navy, on its way to the Philippines, raised a flag over the uninhabited Wake Island, which later became a naval base, and Congress annexed Hawaii. The islands had been ruled largely by sugar plantation owners who, with the backing of the U.S. Marines, overthrew the Kingdom of Hawaii six years earlier in 1893.

In 1952, Puerto Rico, initially kept by the United States for strategic military reasons and governed for decades by U.S.-appointed bureaucrats, became a Commonwealth. This granted the island limited autonomy under ultimate authority of the U.S. Congress and the U.S. Supreme Court. Much of the coverage of the congressional debate about Puerto Rico's political status laid bare gaps in knowledge of history that led to the portrayal of Puerto Ricans as freeloaders dependent on the U.S. government's benevolence

– except for some longer, thoughtful pieces by East Coast newspapers who sent reporters to Puerto Rico for more context.

Boilerplate paragraphs used in news stories for background often mention that Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, pay no federal taxes, have one non-voting member in Congress, and do not vote for the President of the United States. Figures show they receive $9 billion a year in U.S. aid, which would increase to a disputed figure of $13 billion a year if the island were to become the nation's 51st state. It would be the poorest in the country.

Usually left out in stories: Puerto Ricans were given U.S. citizenship just in time to fight in World War I and every war since, what some call the "blood tax;" the island remained a key strategic military post on the horn of the Caribbean during the Cold War; U.S. sugar interests destroyed the agriculture-based economy in the early part of the century, forcing hundreds of thousands to flock to the cities and to the United States (the island now exports a huge middle- and professional class to the mainland); and U.S. companies have made billions in profits by taking advantage of lax environmental standards, cheap labor and tax shelters Washington set up on the island.

"The background and history are things you can't repeat enough. Journalists won't go into the relationship with the United States too much and Puerto Rico is referred to almost as a foreign place, not as a place under the U.S. flag for 100 years," said Maria Padilla, a former business editor and editorial writer who covers Hispanic and Puerto Rican affairs for *The Orlando Sentinel*. "Some (journalists) don't like to get into a whole lot of subtext in the story. But to me, if you leave that stuff out, then it's not really worth it."

In the news business, time and copy length constraints are formidable obstacles to telling a more complete story. For newspaper stories, it's about including key details. In broadcasting, picking the right guests helps.

ABC and NBC's terse treatment of the Puerto Rican debate lacked substantive background. Although NPR's "Talk of the Nation" devoted more time and depth to the issue, it was the selection of guests – an author, a professor and a former Puerto Rico chief judge representing all three political status preferences – that made its reports stand above the rest. They talked about conflicted feelings over nationhood and identity. They didn't just frame the debate, like most everyone else did, around whether the island should be the 51st state. Guests on other networks mostly represented the extremes.

News media critics say the same can be said about coverage of the push for native Hawaiian sovereignty. Mainland reporters often include facts such as native Hawaiians, the third largest ethnic group in the state, are a disproportionate part of the prison population and have the worst health statistics and highest mortality rates of any ethnic group. But they rarely explain that many community leaders feel this is tied to the decline of the Kingdom of Hawaii and the suppression of their language and culture.

Except for a few occasional full-time beat assignments

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Tips

- Study the history. Don't depend on clips or one source for information, but consult various sources. It is said that history is written by the victors, and those on the other side of the equation often rightfully feel that the news media just repeats that interpretation and does not consider giving the same weight to their point of view. When describing an historical event, offer examples of the event's legacy, which most often provides the connection to the current situation. This would help dispel the myth of special status or privilege often attributed to people fighting for or defending their sovereignty.

- Offer more depth and perspective. One sure way to do this is to actually interview people who are the subjects of the sovereignty debate, whether it's Puerto Ricans, native Hawaiians, specific Native American tribes, or others. Past coverage shows that all too often stories are heavy on legislative, congressional or judicial sources. Develop a few solid paragraphs that can be plugged into any story on the issue when pressed for time. It may be useful to run these paragraphs by editors or other relevant sources, particularly if they pertain to a contentious issue or to varying interpretations of history or politics.

- Explain sovereignty to your audience. If you find yourself stumped when writing about sovereignty, chances are you don't understand the subject enough yourself to be fair and accurate. Besides explaining the concept, try to illustrate the impact that a change in sovereignty would have on a particular group or place. Try to equate the situation to something the majority of readers or viewers can relate to. For example, challenging Native Americans on gambling interests or land rights is like telling people in Illinois they can't build a concert arena because people in Indiana, who consider their laws more valid, don't want you to.

- Cover these communities as part of overall coverage. Mainstreaming these groups of people into coverage of a whole myriad of issues -- education, housing, real estate, the arts, entertainment, social issues, politics -- not only provides a more complete and fair picture, but is sure to open doors to more sources in the community when reporting on complex sovereignty issues. It's a way to develop trust in the communities and provide an accumulation of information that provides richer context.

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age doesn't change. The newsroom culture doesn't change. Nothing changes."

Twenty years ago, as ASNE prepared for its annual convention in Washington, D.C., centering the theme of its gathering around the tenth anniversary of the Kerner Commission report, change was in the air.

DIVERSITY THROUGH THE YEARS

"There was a sense of excitement and hope as we saw an awakening in certain elements of the news industry," recalled Leroy Aarons, a co-founding Maynard Institute for Journalism Education board member and former executive editor of *The Oakland Tribune*, who also helped lobby for the Year 2000 Goal in the days leading up the ASNE's historic conference in 1978.

"The goal was a device," remembered Nancy Maynard. "The idea was to have something that the industry could take ownership of, and that seemed nonthreatening. It was part of a strategy to get the industry moving beyond their so-called 'efforts to raise awareness' to something more substantial."

Along with the adoption of the ASNE Year 2000 Goal, other efforts to diversify the news industry took off from the late 1970s to the end of the 1980s. The Summer Program for Minority Journalists, a news media boot camp that was founded by television news producer Fred Friendly and initially based at Columbia University, flourished under the direction of the Maynard IJE and went on to become a major source for highly qualified journalists of color. Conferences and job fairs for minority journalists, led by ASNE's own annual events, began to spring up. The four national journalism associations of color were started, as well as regional groups like the California Chicano News Media Association.

In 1980, the Maynard IJE started the Editing Program for Minority Journalists at the University of Arizona, Tucson. In 1985, the Management Training Center at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill. was added. At the journalism department of the University of Missouri, Columbia, the Multicultural Management Program was formed.

"People of color began to trickle up into management ranks. Some of the conscientious urban papers and chains, like Gannett and Knight Ridder, were very aggressive in their minority hiring. They began to tie bonuses and MBO's to racial parity," said Aarons.

Meanwhile, IJE studies conducted by then institute president Ellis Cose suggested that hiring alone was only part of the diversity effort. Advancement was also important. A 1985 report by Cose concluded that 40 percent of minority journalists expected to leave journalism "largely due to lack of opportunity within it."

"We've solved the entry problem, it's still an advancement issue," said Aarons. "People leave because they reach the glass ceiling. What you ultimately rub up against is, how high can a black or Latino journalist go? As long as I didn't come out as a gay person, I had no limits. People of color and gays get a sense they can only get so high. How do you change entrenched 'good old boy' attitudes?"

Marianne Chin, a recruiter for the *San Francisco Chronicle* who also attended the recent evening discussion of newsroom diversity, agreed diversity was more than just a matter of hiring.

"It's not enough to bring people in. You have to create an atmosphere that's supportive. How do you change newsroom atmosphere? We had diversity training. Some people thought that was laughable. They thought it was all about labels, and which ones to use," she said. "What is the alternative? We haven't done much to find one."

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, diversity took on a broader meaning. ASNE established a disabilities committee, and a first-of-its-kind ASNE survey conducted by Aarons revealed that most gay and lesbian mainstream journalists were in the closet for fear of discrimination. At the 1990 ASNE convention, Aarons ended his presentation of the survey results by coming out. Soon after, he formed the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association.

By the mid-90's, on the heels of the Unity '94 gathering of minority journalists, it became clear that the newspaper industry would be far from reaching its diversity goals. While the number of minorities in the news business grew at a steady pace between 1978 and 1993, the curve has since flattened. In the last five years, minority representation grew by two-tenths of one percent a year, according to ASNE figures.

The proposed ASNE goal, which calls for newspapers to reach parity within local communities as quickly as possible, has raised concerns among some ASNE members who argue that placing the emphasis on community parity will lower the number of people of color in newsrooms, particularly in smaller markets where fewer minorities live. The broadened definition of diversity beyond racial minorities has also stirred up controversy, pitting ethnic minority journalists against gay and lesbian journalists, and raising a dilemma of sorts for those journalists who are members of both groups.

"Racism is the country's most pressing issue, and we want to remain focused on ethnicity," said Vanessa Williams, president of NABJ and secretary of Unity '99. Mike Frederickson, executive director of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association, countered that his group "does not feel the inclusion is a distraction to the goal of boosting diversity."

Meanwhile, the current focus on diversity issues from a black versus white perspective has caused other ethnic groups to feel left out of the picture. Although the Kerner Commission accurately concluded the press had

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From the News Watch Project Web-Site:

People Are Talking

http://newswatch.sfsu.edu

Judy Gerber
Assistant Project Director

A lot of people are talking about news coverage of people of color and gays and lesbians these days – just check out our News Watch web site. More and more of you are taking the time to send in your reactions to news stories. As we expected, opinions about coverage issues are rarely all the same (except, of course, for the occasional blatant use of racial epithets). We hope that the variety of viewpoints provides support and stirs up discussions in newsrooms everywhere.

If you have not visited News Watch online recently, we urge you to check it out. The newly redesigned site simplifies navigation with content now organized around the kind of sections or departments found in most news publications. We suggest you visit us at least once a week to read the latest updates.

We could not produce the quality or frequency of our updates without the addition of our new News Watch writer/researcher, Stephanie Renfrow Hamilton. A member of NABJ, Stephanie has worked as an editor at *Essence* and *Parenting* magazines, and recently completed a book on holistic parenting.

We welcome unsolicited materials regarding news coverage. If you see a story we should know about, send us a copy with your comments. Details are available online at http://newswatch.sfsu.edu.

Sovereignty 101...

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at local newspapers that lasted through short periods in the 1970's and 1980's, coverage of native Hawaiian sovereignty remained spotty until 1993, when thousands of people went to the Iolani Palace in Honolulu for the centennial observance of the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy. That event, coupled with Congress' joint resolution signed by President Clinton offering an apology to native Hawaiians for the overthrow, drew the focused attention of the Hawaiian mainstream press. Three years later, as sovereignty organizations grew to dozens, native Hawaiians voted in a controversial state-sponsored election in favor of creating some sort of native Hawaiian government.

Writing complete and accurate reports of the Hawaiian issue remains a challenge as the number of groups and key players in the sovereignty movement, the laws they use as tools in their struggles, and the varying alternatives for self-government continue to change at a dizzying pace. Understanding the subtle and complicated differences takes time. Experienced journalists in Hawaii know that when dealing with a topic about a culture with a strong tradition in oral history, selecting information and picking sources from the clips doesn't always work.

"All that is coming through now in the press is the infighting among the groups," said Becky Ashizawa, Grants Writer/Editor for the Native Hawaiian Legal Corporation, who covered native Hawaiian issues for the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* for five years. "I guess you can say you can't blame the press for covering the infighting, but as a reporter, ask them what are some of the issues they have thoughts on or can act on instead of fighting about who is going to be king and queen."

Some say the problem goes beyond a lack of knowledge about history or the complexity of political relationships. For journalists with little or no ties to colonized lands and displaced peoples, or who are too young to even remember Richard Nixon's resignation from the Presidency, they simply do not have enough of a personal or emotional connection to understand what sovereignty means, particularly since theirs has never been challenged.

"It comes up almost always in a highly politicized context in which there is this rather blunt conflict between someone who is in a white American political position challenging the logic or the appropriateness of sovereignty," and someone defending sovereignty, said Alex MacLeod, managing editor of *The Seattle Times*, which has about a dozen Indian reservations nearby. "In some ways, it's like covering affirmative action in that it's a story which if you let it exist on the level of rhetoric, is largely meaningless. You have to go beyond rhetoric to reality."

In the case of the Native Americans, this reality includes the success stories of tribes who have made strides in educating their children or preserving the environment. Instead, stories about such issues as Indian gaming, tribal immunity from civil lawsuits, and land and water use rights are often framed from an outsider's perspective. In coverage, the result is more of a prominent voice for federal or state agencies, or other opposing groups simply because their claims are something most readers can understand.

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Diversity 2000

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"contributed to the black-white schism in this country," today, the press can now be blamed for the black-white paradigm. Recent examples include coverage of the President's initiative on race and the cover story of the Columbia Journalism Review about newsroom diversity gains and setbacks that focuses specifically on blacks.

Tucker says the broader issue is one of frustration for black journalists who were struggling for parity, only to see their representation reduced as they became part of the overall diversity mix.

"That is why the efforts of Unity '94 were long overdue," Tucker said. "It helped us get over the idea of battling each other for a small piece of the pie, and insist on a larger piece instead."

Threats to Diversity

Thirty years after the Kerner Commission report, the social and political realities of a new era threaten to undermine past and future diversity efforts. "It is a different era," said Nancy Maynard. "But I think it's a much better era to the degree that we're talking about these issues."

Still, the challenges for the diversity movement are as formidable as they were in 1968. The main threat to newsroom diversity is what Félix Gutiérrez, executive director of The Freedom Forum's Pacific Coast Center in San Francisco, describes as the "numbers game."

"In 1968, the year I came out of Northwestern University, the media said no (journalists of color) were qualified. It went from being a hiring issue to a supply issue. When the supply was there, then progress toward diversity became a numbers issue, and bred tokenism and a slot mentality. Newsrooms and stations that had previously no blacks suddenly had one black, one Chicano and one woman. And that was it. The feeling was, what's the least I have to do take care of this problem instead of what's the most I can do to take advantage of this opportunity."

Gutiérrez added that for those few minorities who became successful and rose through the ranks, many assimilated and lost touch with their respective communities.

"When I was in college, there was no benefit to being in journalism because assimilation was the price to participate," he said. "A lot of us in the late 60s thought, 'Screw it. I'll be who I am.' I never was a separatist. I just felt like, 'I've gone to your side of the street, now you can come over to my side to see where I'm coming from.'"

Wong said he has seen his share of "good minority journalists" who rose and "paid a price for rising. The corporate bosses, they know the numbers game well. It's not the number of minority journalists, but what they do in the newsroom to bring diversity to news coverage. If you read the Kerner Report, you saw that coverage was the issue. You could have more inclusive coverage with a more inclusive hiring policy. But the means became the end. The numbers became an end to themselves."

Another threat Gutiérrez and others cite is the influence of marketing and profit-driven goals on diversity efforts. Specifically, the segmentation of the news media based on readership and audience demographics. Newspapers such as the *San Jose Mercury News* and *The Miami Herald* are putting out their own publications for the Latino and Vietnamese communities. "There seems to be nothing geared toward a mass audience anymore," said Gutiérrez. "Can there be inclusive coverage in an era when the media is so fragmented? Is there still a role for mass audience media? Is it commercially viable?"

Journalism Education and Other Solutions

Betty Medsger, former chair of the Department of Journalism at San Francisco State University and author of "Winds of Change: Challenges Confronting Journalism Education," believes there is a role for both mass audience journalism and diversity beyond the year 2000. She says greater cooperation between the industry and journalism education is the key to the future.

"Historically, journalists and journalism schools haven't had the synergy that medicine, architecture and other fields have had. Investing money in job fairs, coaching and mentoring programs – which have proved enormously successful at some colleges and universities – is not a common practice. It's time to form a partnership with the industry to make better gains in diversity efforts. It should be a joint mission between journalism educators and the journalism profession. If they made journalism education part of the focus of Year 2000 Goal, I believe we would have met that goal."

Tucker agrees.

"The pipeline is an important place to put our energies. I think people like me ought to be going to college English classes and political science classes and encouraging students who don't have an intense interest in journalism to write for their school paper. Some of these kids might get bit by the bug," she said. "We have an obligation to create our own pool."

Among the innovative ideas and approaches providing optimistic inspiration in the diversity movement are San Francisco State University's Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism. Its Coaching and Mentoring Program has addressed minority recruitment and retention – the biggest problem for many schools – with tremendous success. The center's Community Press Consortium, which recently teamed up with the New California Media to host the first awards program for ethnic media, is working to enhance the visibility

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Diversity 2000...

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and viability of this influential segment of the news media. And the News Watch Project is fostering dialogue among journalists and journalism educators around news coverage issues.

The Ford Foundation also recently committed to major funding of the Maynard IJE, which under the leadership of longtime Maynard institute board member and former Associated Press reporter Steve Montiel, has come up with creative ways to address diversity in newsrooms and in news content. One program, Total Community Coverage, teaches news organizations to analyze its own news content for fairness, accuracy and inclusivity.

And Unity '99 is bringing together the talents and unique perspectives of journalists of color to build a better future for journalism, facilitating honest and important dialogue about diversity issues among both white and non-white journalists and editors.

Fernando Quintero is director of the News Watch Project. He has worked as a journalist for newspapers in Fresno, Modesto and San Jose, Calif., and Albuquerque, N.M. He served on the board of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and is a founding member of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association. He is a 1987 graduate of the Summer Program for Minority Journalists.

Comments on the ASNE board's draft diversity statement can be sent to Veronica Jennings, ASNE's diversity director, via e-mail (vjenn@asne.org) or fax: (703-453-1133).

Gays Underrepresented...

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written by gay and lesbian African Americans.

Shortly after *Blacklines* began, Chicago's gay Latino community called for their own magazine, *En La Vida*. Since *En La Vida* reaches a Spanish-speaking audience, and Latino and black people have different cultural issues, Baim said she supported starting a third publication. However, Baim added that having separate publications does not mean *Outlines* should leave out news about communities of color.

With the lesbian/gay press playing a major role in communicating information both within the gay community and to the broader society about efforts for acceptance and social change, our hope at News Watch is that they include more people of color for a truly fair and open dialogue.

Judy Gerber is the assistant director of News Watch Project. She also works as a freelance television and print news journalist. Gerber has been an openly lesbian journalist in both community radio and network news for more than 20 years. She was associate producer of "CNN World Report," and hosted a public affairs radio program in Atlanta.

Sovereignty 101...

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Explanations of sovereignty in the news media are often in the form of a standard background paragraph or quote from a Native American invoking the concept, offering little or no explanation as to why certain treaties and certain rights exist. For example, in a recent Associated Press dispatch about a face-off between some Native tribes and California Gov. Pete Wilson over the right to have more lucrative kinds of slot machines prohibited by state law, the article stated that federal law recognizes tribes as "quasi-sovereign" self governments, but left it at that.

"It says they are quasi-sovereign, but they don't explain why or how. So you get readers thinking these people are living off the government and don't have to pay taxes," said Mary Ann Weston, associate professor of communications at the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University and co-author of the book, "U.S. News Coverage of Racial Minorities."

"With Native people, it should be explained what law governs reservations, what the federal government is obliged to do on reservations, why it is that state laws don't apply, and why something that happened 100 years ago has reverberations today," said Weston.

By omitting such information, or taking a certain tone, the press subtly challenges the tribes sovereign right to exist, said Mark Trahant, a columnist with *The Seattle Times* and former president of the Native American Journalists Association.

"If we can figure out how to manage sovereignty as a relationship," he said, "it can help the whole West get along together."

Iván Román is Executive Director of the Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism. He spent 12 years reporting in English- and Spanish-language newspapers in Miami, Rochester, N.Y., and San Juan, Puerto Rico. He has covered ethnic communities, local issues, national Hispanic affairs, and foreign news in the Caribbean and Central America.