

# Diversity

How do you make the newsroom better reflect the communities it serves? Over the past 25 years that question has centered around questions of race and gender, questions of numbers and hierarchy. In a changing nation, how has the idea of diversity changed? What have been the successes, and failures, in moving forward?

## Alberto Ibargüen

If you didn't have a diverse newsroom — never mind that you wouldn't reflect the community, which is an obligation — you wouldn't know what the heck was going on. You wouldn't get the news. You wouldn't have the tips, you wouldn't have the contacts (or the diverse sources).



I think when you have people who come from a variety of backgrounds, the conversation you can have around the table is significantly improved, assuming you've got smart people, self-confident people.

## Nancy Maynard

The movement has become mature, and it's suffering the infirmities attendant with age. In the late '60s, we believed coverage couldn't be whole unless journalists came from a variety of backgrounds. The theory: You don't try to change the mental set of individual reporters. What you change is the mix of those who are reporting. They'll have different sources and different experiences.

But what happened — and it happens in everything — is degradation over time. You start with principles and apply practices to them.

By the third generation, which is where we are now with diversity, no one's looking at the principles. They're only dealing with the practices. The practices in the long run won't get you to the Promised Land because they'll need to change over time. Too many haven't.

## Tim McGuire

We have a formal program for young people of color. We assign them to a veteran

staffer. That staffer coaches, answers mundane questions and deep philosophical questions.

Coaches [in turn] tip management if there's a problem, if there is someone who's feeling distant. ... The only way we're going to really achieve diversity in American newspapers is if the people sitting in chairs like mine are very diverse. That needs to continue to be the effort.

## Burl Osborne

We came to think that for us diversity may not be quite the right term, and we began to talk in terms of inclusiveness.

In some ways, but not all, these are the same things. We were attracted to the notion of finding things we have in common and including everyone in the process. That differs slightly from more focus on celebrating our differences. This is a nuance, but we thought it important.

We must seek diversity, or inclusiveness, beyond the important cultural and ethnic distinctions. It is important to be inclusive among the lines of socioeconomic strata, geography, gender, sexual orientation, religious and educational background. So we have an ethicist writing about sports and a securities dealer writing about the markets, and clergy writing about religion and occupants of think tanks writing on our editorial pages.

## Arthur Sulzberger Jr.

I try to make it to two minority journalism conferences a year, even today, for two or three reasons: One, they're the best parties in town.

Two, the joy of minority journalism conferences is you can find yourself in a conversation with three or four different people. One's going to be a student and one's going to be an editor and one's going to be a foreign correspondent. It crosses journalism in the way that almost no other conference does. The editors' conference only has editors; the publishers' conference only has publishers. This really sweeps across our profession and that's exciting.

And third, (I go) so that nobody in The New York Times Company can say they don't have time to attend things. If I'm going to be there, you know the message it sends.

You've got to use the obvious tools. Yes, put it in people's MBOs, their bonuses. Yes, demand that every pool of applicants, for any job, includes at least one minority. Force the front end to at least broaden itself. The minute you go to the National Association of Hispanic Journalists convention, you will never again say, "I can't find a Hispanic journalist of quality." So you have to force your lowest level of hiring managers to find the talent.



We've made enormous strides in the last few years. *Fortune* magazine has chosen us as one of the 50 best companies for minorities to work in.

*Working Mother* magazine has chosen us one of the hundred best companies for working mothers. And a gay and lesbian organization has just announced we are one of the hundred best companies in America for gays and lesbians. And I like to think that's true. But to what end? Well, we were recently chosen last year by *Fortune* to be

the number-one company in our sector, the leader in the publishing and media industry. We rank number one in their global and in their American surveys of the best-led, best-run companies.

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I honestly believe if we had not set the structure to win those earlier awards for minorities, for women, for gays and lesbians, that we would not have won that award for global most admired in our sector.

We've created a work environment that allows, I think, I hope, people to flourish and not to be in fear as they come to work, or to be driven out. Think of the talent we drove out for so many years — not because we were bad people, but because we didn't build environments that allowed various segments of us to succeed. And that washes back on us old white men.

### Monica Lozano

It is not, do I have a Hispanic strategy or what is my Asian strategy? Or, how do I interact with the African-American community? Each one of those is so complex that you have to be willing to do the hard work of trying to strip it out. If we are not relevant to these communities and population groups, then I think we will have a serious issue of sustainability in the industry. Because that is the future. And it is a future that is thirsty for information and wants to be informed and wants to participate.

### Karen Jurgensen

The industry has failing grades in diversity. Originally, diversity meant a few African-Americans and women in the newsroom. It didn't mean pay much attention to them, it just meant get them in the newsroom. Now I think diversity means that you have to reflect the broad richness of the country, whether it is Latinos or African-Americans or Asian-Americans or whatever. And everyone has a part of the news decisions.

Diversity is what the country is. So you have to reflect that in the newsroom or you are not producing something that speaks to large chunks of the population or is accurate. At the same time, those people have to be in a position to make decisions about what is going into the paper or not going into the paper.

You can't have (just) one of each. I remember there were times in my history at *USA TODAY* when I would run the daily news meeting. And it was me and 15 white guys. ... With all due respect to white guys, the world is not entirely populated by [them]. I would feel that I had to be the one voice for women at the table.

It gets very lonely out there. I worked with well-meaning, smart people. But you and I will see the world differently in some ways. Neither one of us is right or wrong, it's just we see the world a little bit differently.

### Jay Harris

Over time, diversity came to be seen, by the wisest among us, as a means to an end. And that end was doing journalism that told the story of a community or the nation fully and fairly and in all its dimensions. It is not that you need a certain number of people of various types. It is that you need a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives to tell a story from all its dimensions.

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### Ben Bradlee

At *Newsweek*, I knew (African-American) leaders, Roy Wilkins and people like that, who were in the news.

But I just didn't know part of the city at all.

Bishop Paul Moore ... was so worried about this when I became managing editor that he got Father Bill Wendt, who was an Episcopal priest on 16th Street, to make me an honorary member of the Upper Cardozo Men's Association. These were a bunch of black Washingtonians, half of them just out of jail, who were talking about the city. And I met with them for about a year and a half, and I learned a lot from them.

### Sandy Rowe

I think newspapers, in particular, have done a good job of keeping a focus on the questions around issues of diversity, acknowledging the richness of America, and putting that out there for people to see. I think we've really done a good job of that in the broad [sense]. When you get to the specifics, there are lots and lots of flaws, and we're still not as good as we should be.

I do wonder what would have happened if newspapers had not made sure that their pages started to reflect the diversity of their communities, in photographs and use of expert sources and the types of stories we were writing.

### Dick Wald

I'll tell you about my failure. Along with other people, I decided we didn't have enough minority representation among our reporters. And I hired a woman then working for the New York *Daily News*. She was an excellent reporter, a smart woman. I had one of the producers give her a crash course in how you put together a television piece, and we sent her out to do pieces. It was a dead failure.

She was miserable and we were miserable with her. It didn't work well at all and she left. She's now got a wonderful column, and she's exactly as smart as I thought that she was. And it was after she left that I began to realize that we had done her a terrible disservice. It's hard to learn what we do. It's hard to be the only black reporter in an all-white system. It's hard to change the way people think of you. And we pitched her into the pool and told her to swim, and you can't do that. I wanted diversity for purely pragmatic reasons. I didn't do it out of a sense of bettering society. I just wanted more ratings, and I figured minority people aren't watching as much of our news as they should. We'll get some people who look like them and we'll get more viewers. And that has haunted me for a long time. It's one of the reasons we instituted a system that ABC now has of a long period of minority training.

### **Jack Fuller**

One challenge in diversity is to continue to be ruthlessly intellectually honest, even though it may be painful.

You have to create an organization which is inclusive, in which there's enough mutual respect that everybody can actually talk to each other straight, and not be inhibited.

### **Mark Whitaker**

The real issue is, how does that diversity actually contribute to the culture of your organization [and] most importantly to the product that you are ultimately delivering to your readers?

One of my frustrations coming up through the organization here at *Newsweek* is that sometimes I felt like people were hired and promoted and put in positions more for the numbers and for the show than for the impact. And not necessarily because they couldn't provide the impact, but sometimes they weren't given the opportunity to provide that impact. Or they were people who really were more suited to a different kind of journalism.

And what I have really worked hard at since I've been in a position to make a difference in this area is not just making sure we're diverse, but that the people we hire and promote are really high-impact players, people whose actual views and voices get reflected in the magazine.

### **William Hearst III**

People's experiences in American civil life are very different, depending on their background. I'm not just talking about class. I'm also talking about race, ethnicity and origin. There's no doubt that the experience of an African-American who is stopped by the police multiple times, without cause, creates a different point of view.

If the audience is your city and the responsible people within it who are contributors, or will become contributors because they're young people, then it is almost impossible to tell the story of that city if you don't get these points of views included.