

Summary
Race and Media Third Quarter Forum
Recruitment and Retention
Oct. 18, 2000
Madison Newspapers, Inc.

Opening Remarks by Dr. Anthony L. Brown

- The first quarter forum provided an opportunity for representatives from the media sources and communities of color to come together and begin to dialogue about problems that both sides thought existed. It set the stage for improving communication and improving awareness on issues identified by both groups
- The second quarter forum moved one step further by having front line people of color talk candidly about their personal experiences and perspectives as it related being a person of color working in the news media. I think at that session, we identified tangible strategies that could address some of the general concerns
- We left each session equipped with a broadened understanding of this age-old practice.
- As with all tasks, there are times when we lapse back to the familiar, perhaps, you have noticed new stories that have not been as complimentary as you thought they should be. Maybe there were events in the communities of color that didn't get the desired media coverage. I hope that as a result of these forums you have met media contacts to discuss these specific kinds of concerns.
- Which brings us to this session, the theme for this morning is 'recruitment and retention' of persons of color in the news industry. At our last session, it was evident that people were passionate about this topic and provided the group with strategies that could be implemented by both the media and communities of color. A couple examples were: Expand internship programs and recruitment efforts; encourage the involvement of community representatives with professional media associations; be creative in outreach and recruitment efforts by developing programs, similar to the MMSD's Grow Your Own. I hope today, we make additional progress and continue to build positive relationships that support our goal of eliminating racial profiling of any kind, but particularly in news stories.

Opening remarks by Phil Haslanger:

Tom Still and myself were challenged to look at what we are doing and how can we do better in the area of minority recruitment and retention. In response to the call, we have compiled two panels to begin to explore how we can encourage middle and high school kids of color to begin to think about careers in journalism. As a part of the process, we contacted you and asked what you were doing as it related to minority recruitment and retention. (Refer to handout).

The first panel was introduced: Tom Brier, Station Manager-WMTV-15; Connie Walker, News Director, Wisconsin Public Radio; Cliff Behnke, Managing Editor, Wisconsin State Journal and Phil Haslanger, Managing Editor, The Capital Times.

Tom Brier: There are several areas of focus in journalism, news, advertisement and public relations. How do we find interested students of color? How do we compete around pay; what the business can bring to them? How do we expose to the benefits of newspaper reporting, TV was the place/thing to be/do. Newspaper and Radio have been very traditional news mediums. As it relates to minority recruitment and retention, we have conducted about four presentations to school; we have no formal process, just on an ad hoc basis. Young people have time challenges, but we could not be more consistent. We have to be involved in Madison Media Institute, Time for Kids. We have ongoing efforts to report on issues of importance to young people. A Children's Task Force was created to generate ideas and suggestions to reach this audience. We struggled to find individuals who can commit to the time constraints.

Question from the audience: How often do you get kids of color? What are the requirements to make sure that it is a diverse group?

Connie Walker: It is very hard to get young people – TV versus Radio. We target the individuals at the high school/college levels. We are radio, public radio, and it is very hard to get young people interested in radio versus television. In the UW system recruitment is a supported effort from the Administration. The Minority Internship Program, the University pays half and it is a chance for individuals to build personal relationships, make connections with professors and media outlets. We get informal calls from students also. The Chip Quinn Scholarship Programs provide funding for students of color to pursue broadcast journalism. We as Wisconsin Public Radio believe that it takes personal time, relationship because we see it as an investment in the students. I also believe that America has taken a time out from Diversity. Once a year, I take a week to analyze their (other mediums) how accurately they are covering issues, lay-out of pages, people they are interviewing and it's applauding how many white males they interview on

Television. I see the need to increase awareness with media sources. We also work with the State Bar on a Mock Trial Journalist Contest. Utilizing high school yearbook/newspaper student staff and then write stories about the finalist. In addition, we have a mentoree program, where students can volunteer as sports and weekend announcers; we use this as a means of getting people in the door. Retention is not an area we address strongly.

Cliff Behnke, Managing Editor, Wisconsin State Journal: We view high school students as potential readers/reporters. We provide kindergarten children with papers. Our early efforts to recruit minority students was ambitious and a complete failure. We had targeted our efforts at West and Lafollette, about 3 or 4 kids were interested. Kids are very busy. We recruited from the English classes, as West found that we had too much competition with other activities the kids were involved in and at Lafollette, transportation was an issue. We are open to the idea of recruitment in the middle and high school and have ideas based on this failure.

Phil Haslanger, Managing Editor, The Capital Times: Highlight a few things that the Capital Times were doing. There's no formal structure. But we support the Teen Times, with Neighborhood Intervention Program, the Simpson Street Press and other mentorship type programs. We see writing as an avenue to establish relationships. A relationship with Wright Middle has been established; with our media organization is a support for them. The Capital Times has an Evjue Foundation Scholarship for journalism students of color. The Kids Fund support programs like Building Bridges.

The focus today is to identify things we can do collectively as a group to address the issue of recruitment and retention of journalists of color.

Introduction of the second group of panelists:

Milton McPike, Principal, East Madison High School; Major Latimer, Student, West High School; Jon Gramling, Editor; The Madison Times; Dante Viscarra, LaNacion; and Jim Kramer, Simpson Street Press.

Jon Gramling commented that he has found that relationship is the key to building networks with communities of color.

Milton McPike: How much money are you willing to commit at the earlier ages, elementary school level. Elementary school, more into computers, television; how do you tap into their talents? We have a national renowned Career Center and use Career Day to spark the interests of our students to pursue higher educational opportunities.

Jim Kramer, Advisor for the Simpson Street Press: teaches writing and other academic skills through the newspaper. His goal is to develop writing skills of the students. Many of who come from modest backgrounds. In 1992, when the paper started, it had a circulation in the hundreds. Now it circulates about eight thousand papers each month.

Dante Viscarra: At LaNacion, we use acculturation, work experience and academics as recruiting tools. We have built relationships with MATC, UW Madison School of Journalism – for student cultivation. We try to create an atmosphere that is familiar and culturally specific. We also serve as mentors and role models.

Milton McPike: We provide guidance to students; 3 times a year we sponsor career days, to guide students through their searches for career focuses. We have one guidance counselor assigned to this project. A suggestion to you the audience is that we need more people in our schools. The doors are open. The opportunities to mentor kids start at your businesses. What would it take to develop a business plan, proper clothing/dress?

Brian Howell asked where does the journalism program rank with students? Getting them to stay. If they don't like it, they won't do it. Most kids have been involved in chorus-band since elementary school and are exposed to sports because their parents wanted them to participate.

Jon Gramling: What about the environment at your papers, stations, how will they get something out of it?

Victor Arrellano: The media needs to make a serious commitment to recruiting minorities. They need to be consistent, with a strong serious commitment that is ongoing. A system should be developed that would open doors and expose them to the industry.

Milele Anana: There should be a process of recognizing people's achievements in other areas. If the corporate mission was to reach into the communities of colors, and it was a part of the corporate structure and the thinking of the "powers that be" then we wouldn't be having this conversation, it would be a mute issue.

David Sanks asked about retention, how do we retain these individuals once they have been recruited?

DJ Klauser commented on the good turnout at these sessions. Hi is interested in helping out when you (media outlets) recruit to identify proven people, with outreach into the communities, to provide social opportunities. The process of "growing journalist", how will you fashion job fairs, hire for these jobs, hold each other accountable. What are the goals for the short-term?

Greg Jones made the comment that this should be a collective effort. He suggested the development of a summer institute for students. He is willing to assist with the recruitment of kids of color. How do we frame the youth approach to news? How do we structure stories not being told?

Bob Smith stated that he sees this (recruitment and retention) as a bigger issue, this in a national problem. The AM Society, the Editor's Association are all reporting falling short, regionally – Detroit - Madison.

Eve Galanter: State or city doesn't have a good pool of resources available. Is there money available for local students-what national resources are available?

Jim Kramer made the statement, to copy grow your own; we should work with young journalists to teach writing skills and develop lesson plans that will assist students academically.

Susan Canty: how will teens be recruited? What will be the pay-off? How can we get the resources? How do you make media opportunities more appealing? Hosting a summer journalism course is not going to yield you the results that you're seeking.

Anthony Brown: How do we get journalists to make a commitment to partnering with these students?

Bob Miller suggested that the group coordinate with the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association.

Mike McKinney commented that he needs sessions like this to help put things in place. Like getting involved in the community to build relationships. Going back to management and getting the go ahead and expose kids to what it took to get here. I need to give back. He also stated that he would be willing to take a leadership role with other journalists of color to begin this process.

Naomi Patton: Describe being at Association of Black Journalist Conference and there were no Wisconsin media outlets there recruiting. How do you recruit? It's the same network, just a broader outreach.

Hedi Rudd put the idea of magnet schools on the table. In Milwaukee there are specialized schools, like a high school where journalism was the focus.

Ada Deer talked about building links to English teachers, and encourage them to act as talent scouts, because they have access to students on an ongoing daily basis.

Closing remarks:

Phil Haslanger: Gathering from this session today, there are a number of things in place. But we need more collaboration. Some of the suggestions today were:

Journalism Institute, Magnet Schools, Career/Job Fair, Mentorship, Support Program up and going, Speaker's Bureau, Shadowing, Recruitment practices, and Retention strategies.

Anthony Brown: Thanked all the attendees for coming and informed them that a summary of today's session as well as any reports from the work group will be sent to them.