

Civil Rights and the Press Symposium
Emerging Civil Rights Issues

Sunday, April 25, 2004

Panel: Walt Swanston, Pedro Ramirez, Rob Porter, Amy Falkner, Shiu-Kai Chin, Shaw Dallal, Francis Ward.

Professor Charlotte Grimes: Thank you for being with us this morning. Yesterday we had a wonderful time reflecting on our history. Today I hope that we will, with the aid of our wonderful panel, reflect on our present and future. As many people pointed out yesterday, civil rights is an ongoing issue and an evolving one. We have folks with us today who can talk with us about different aspects of it – the civil rights issues that are emerging, or maybe the ones that should emerge. Thank you very much for being with us. I'm now going to turn everything over to our moderator, Emilie Davis. Thank you.

Emilie Davis: Good morning. Welcome to this morning's panel discussion called "Emerging Civil Rights Issues." My name is Emilie Davis, and I teach in the newspaper department here at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. This weekend's symposium – Defining Us: Civil Rights and the Press – has centered around three themes: courage, conviction and coverage. We have heard many stories about people who had the courage and the conviction to act to effect change during the civil rights movement. We also have heard stories and experiences of the journalists who had the courage and the conviction to cover the civil rights movement.

This morning we bring together our esteemed guests, who will focus on current struggles over rights for a wide range of people. People who are gay or lesbian, people who are bisexual or transgender, people who are of any race, people who are of any ethnic background, people with disabilities. It's a privilege to introduce our panelists. Starting at the far end – Walt Swanston. Walt is the director of Diversity Management for National Public Radio in Washington, D.C. Her job is to shape diversity strategies and staff development and programming for the national non-profit radio service. Walt has worked for more than two decades in print and broadcast journalism, and for more for than 16 years and for diversity-focused work with the media.

Pedro Ramirez. Pedro has reported for The Post Standard in Syracuse, New York, for the past five years, covering local government, education, public safety, and military affairs. In 2001, Pedro began teaching newspaper journalism at the Newhouse School as an adjunct professor.

Rob Porter. Rob is formerly the attorney general of the Seneca Nation of Indians. And he is now a law professor and Dean's Research Scholar of

Indigenous Nations Law at Syracuse University. Rob founded the Center for Indigenous Law, Governance and Citizenship. He serves as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Sac & Fox Nation of Missouri and is a consulting expert or counsel to several Indian nations and organizations.

Amy Falkner. Amy is a professor at the Newhouse School specializing in media planning and media sales, retail advertising, and advertising strategy. Amy is the lead researcher for the 2001 Gay/Lesbian Consumer Online Census and ensuing online polls with GL Census Partners and Zogby International.

Shiu-Kai Chin. Shiu-Kai is a professor in the department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at Syracuse University, and the program director of computer engineering. Shiu-Kai is a commissioner on the Onondaga County City of Syracuse Human Rights Commission. He is also a trainer in the Alternatives to Violence Project at Auburn Prison, which is a maximum-security prison in New York.

Shaw Dallal. Shaw teaches comparative Middle East politics, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Middle East and the global political economy for the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University. An international lawyer and scholar, he has served as the chief legal advisor for the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries in Kuwait.

Francis Ward. Francis has been a journalism professor in the Newhouse School since 1990. He is a 20-year veteran journalist with posts at the The Black Scholar, Ebony and Jet magazines. Francis also wrote a weekly column about the black community for The Miami Herald, and he reported on civil rights and urban affairs for The Los Angeles Times.

Welcome, all. We're glad to have you here with us this morning. I know you're eager to hear from our panelists, and we're looking forward to a robust debate – not only among our panelists, but with you, the audience. So I would invite you any time you have a question or a comment, not only at the end, but in between, raise your hand and we'll recognize you so we can get you in on the discussion.

Let's begin with something Hodding Carter III said yesterday in his keynote address. He said at the end of his speech, he has often asked himself, what would come close today to the civil rights movement. His answer, or he said, was, "What would come close would be a Supreme Court ruling that gay marriage is constitutional and that a ban on gay marriage is unconstitutional. So I now direct the question to the panelists. Why is gay marriage a civil rights issue? Why should we be concerned about it?" I'd like you to take it away, I'm going to step back, and you guys can jump in as well.

Francis Ward: You want us to deal with that? I'll start if it's all right with the other panel members. First of all, my apologies for being late. Normally when I

mess up things like that, I blame it on my wife. But I couldn't blame this one on my wife.

I think that the gay marriage issue is a civil rights issue primarily because gays as a group have been the object of institutional discrimination, just as African-Americans as a group were the object of institutional discriminations for many, many years. That is one essential parallel. There are some differences, and the differences don't go across the board. There's one essential similarity: that because gays as a group, gays have been the object of institutional discrimination. In that sense, it is a civil rights issue, whether they can or cannot marry.

Also, some of the justifications used to prohibit marriage between blacks and whites, some of those same justifications are being used now, biblically-based perhaps, to bar marriage between people of the same sex. Those are two key similarities, which make this indeed a civil rights issue.

Walt Swanston: I would have to agree. Any law that discriminates against any group of people is one that creates violations of civil rights. I think we're working towards a society in which different perspectives are valued, different ethnic groups are valued; all sorts of differences are valued. If we devalue people in the LGBT community, then we are doing a disservice to diversity, and certainly the interest of diversity.

Amy Falkner: You're probably wondering why an advertising person is up here on this panel. I started as a reporter, and my partner and I decided we might want to own a newspaper someday. I lost the coin toss and so I ended up going into advertising. My background is with newspaper industry.

The survey work that I'm doing on the GL census – we just recently did a poll. We've done some work with the Gill Foundation, which is an organization that has a \$260 million endowment for gay rights groups. We're working them to figure out what issues are important to the GLBT audience. Last March, we did our first poll, and three issues came out very clearly on top. The first one was equal opportunity in employment. The second was parental rights for same-sex parents. The third was the legalization of same-sex marriage. What's interesting is we did this poll again this past February, and the order was reversed. Right on the top was the issue of same-sex marriage. Even within our own survey base, and this particular last poll was about 2,000 people who took this poll, and this is before all the news broke about same-sex marriage, that this is definitely on the top of the list of the GLBT audience as well.

Audience Question: Can I jump in? It's somewhat contrarian. The direction of my contrariness on this facing agreement that it's a civil rights issue. I don't disagree that it's a civil rights issue. But in terms of framing it, there's really a question not of devaluing, but in terms of language, I really question – it's not so

much that I question gays and lesbians as being married, because that's not for me to define they're married. In terms of the confusion factor, I'm not sure that the language has been adequate in terms of discussion. I'll raise that as an issue. What I'm saying is I think we are coming out in the direction – for example, in traditional marriage, we're coming in the direction from; I'm a Roman Catholic. There's a really great wake that marriage is for the procreation of children and the love of the couple was traditionally secondary consideration until the last 50 years. Then psychology caught up and said, "Hey, be real." Now we're in the situation where, at least from my background, the question of sexual intimacy, what is the purpose of that? What is the meaning of that in a traditional marriage? Where do women's rights in bed come to play, so to speak? Does the man's rights of having a married partner preclude having the woman from having any say? The language of, not just the meaning of in the bedroom, but the meaning of society of what relationships mean and intimate relationships mean, needs to be a little more defined with less cliché, and less rhetoric, and almost more science and more psychological merit than I've heard.

Davis: We have a contrarian view, which is excellent in a panel discussion.

Shiu-Kai Chin: I was wondering when the topic of religion would come up. Perhaps it seems strange that a computer engineer would engage at this level of the debate.

Ward: Not strange at all.

Shiu-Kai Chin: From my own religious standpoint, which is that of a United Church of Christ person, I joined my particular church primarily because it is an open and affirming church that recognizes the validity of all sexual orientations. In fact, we do support gay marriage. From an engineering standpoint and actually from a civics standpoint – again, I'm not a scholar in civics, but I do know a lot about constructing systems that are safe – are we going to construct a society that is safe for all to participate in? The question of rights from a technical standpoint: Rights essentially are what it is that you can access as a member of the system. If some members have less access, then some members can't fully participate. Are we willing to tolerate that? That's the question.

I'm not wise enough to come up with the resolution on a purely scientific basis. From a human basis, I have seen my previous denomination – The Presbyterian Church, and now the Episcopalians – sink millions of dollars wastefully on basically an issue that says, "This person is better than that person. Therefore, you can't participate." People are dying around the world in their own country; it is a travesty, in my opinion, to have discussions of who is better than whom.

Ward: Let me just add one other point. The gentleman mentioned he is Roman Catholic. One of the problems, it seems to me, in basing laws on religious

interpretation in a country like the United States, is that we have religious pluralism. That will inevitably lead us to the argument of which religious interpretation are we going to obey. Because Christians are the predominant ones does not necessarily mean that it's only the Christian interpretation of the Holy Scriptures that should apply here. Of course, all Christians don't agree on this either. It seems to me that the argument should be based on what is just, what is legal, what is moral. But when it comes down to which religious interpretation of the scriptures are we going to follow on this, it seems to me that that's going to lead us into a whole set of new problems.

Audience Question: Let me throw out this possibility. It may seem strange, but we need to define marriage, the word marriage. If you ask a lawyer what is marriage, he or she would say it's a contract, a very special kind of contract to be sure. But a contract in which the law and the state has an interest and will enforce in certain ways. If you ask a Catholic priest or an Episcopalian minister or a Presbyterian minister what is marriage, they say it's a sacrament, an oath of which the church has control and not state. So you've got this conflicting definition problem. Where the rub comes is the fact that the state has given certain authority to ministers and, therefore, you've got this hazy area. I don't think there's any question that the courts can say, if you're defining marriage as a matter of law or legal contract, then courts have full jurisdiction over it. If you're defining it as a sacrament, then they don't. Where you have it in between is where the minister becomes a de facto agent with the government. That's where the problem is.

Falkner: I get asked this question a lot. The issue really is, if you're looking at marriage as what you mentioned, a contract. The fact of the matter is, there are thousands and thousands of benefits that straight people get, that gay and lesbian people don't, because they are able to get married. It doesn't have anything to do with the church. It has to do with the state, it has to do with the government. Whether I actually was raised Catholic – I no longer participate in the Catholic Church because I find it very discriminatory, obviously. I think that you have to separate the issue of church and state, just like we've always been told. That's really what this is about. My partner and I have been together for 18 years. We have two children. We have gobs and gobs of paperwork that we have to have in addition to what anybody else would have to have because of our situation. We can't file our taxes together. There's a whole bunch of things that we are just not allowed to do because we can't get this piece of paper that says, "Yes, you are legally married." You really need to look at it as the contract that we talked about and those things – what comes with that? There are just so, so many benefits that people are unaware of, until you are forced to backtrack and come up with those documents that would substantiate your relationship.

Audience Question: I want to take a differently contrarian position. There's no question in my mind – frankly, I'm a lesbian, there hardly could be – that we should have the right to marry. But I'm really disturbed by the discourse

surrounding this issue, which assumes that rights should be conferred as a product of marriage, rather than as a product of existence. In other words, part of what is being said, in all communities, is that we should have access to certain kinds of benefits as a consequence of marriage. I would like to propose that maybe we should have access to those benefits as a consequence of citizenship. Single people are left out of this picture entirely. I would be interested actually in, from all sides, how people respond to the notion that things like health care, the right to have a person that you designate be at your side when you're in the hospital, all the rights that are invoked in the gay marriage discussion, are, in fact, human rights, not married rights.

Falkner: Just to pick up on the two things that you mentioned, I'm not sure how I see health care benefits are a problem if you're a single person. Why is that exactly an issue?

Same Audience Member: I couldn't, for example, put my mother or my child or my sister on my health insurance as a party to a right.

Falkner: You could put your child.

Same Audience Member: You see my point. There is running through this an assumption that married people should have a set of rights that other people who are not married don't have the right to. I also have this mountain of paper, my partner and I pay thousands of dollars to produce that paper because there's a need for paper. Obviously the right to marry would solve that problem. But it wouldn't solve, what seems to me, the much larger problem, which is that people in this country don't have basic needs fulfilled as a product of citizenship, as opposed to a product of marriage.

Shaw Dallal: Shortly after President Bush suggested that he wants an amendment to make gay marriages illegal, I spoke to a thoughtful friend of mine, who is a lawyer, what he thought of that. He very honestly said that he agreed with the president emotionally, but disagreed with him intellectually. I think the conversation that's going on indicates that many of us who are not emotionally ready for the job perhaps should be given more time to reflect on it. The gay community, by the suggestion that you just made, can help all of us who are not used to this, adjust to the idea of centuries and years of denial. Eventually, I think we'll come around.

Pedro Ramirez: If I could just say something to practice my skills as a reporter, and be an objective one. If I was interviewing someone on this issue, I might bring up the point, well, if you talk to someone, a minister or someone who has that belief that marriage is a sacrament, there are some people I don't think they are going to change. I think some people – more conservative groups, Christian groups in particular, since that's the only one I know much about, are going to say that they're not going to because it isn't a matter of a legal contract, it's a

sacrament. Some churches have definitely embraced that, and that's fine for them. I don't believe that some people are ever going to catch up, so to speak. One of the things I might suggest to bring up because this is something that has been discussed, what if we didn't call it marriage? I'm just bringing that up as a reporter. I might ask someone that I'm interviewing. It's something that I've heard in other articles and other debates: if it's the marriage thing that is the problem with some aspects of our population, and what you want is the legality of it, the contractual benefits, then why not call it something else? Just bring that out. Like I said, as a reporter, I would ask someone I'm interviewing that question to see what kind of response I would invoke.

Audience Member: They would say, "Yes, there is an alternative – civil unions." What I'm saying is, that I could see where a court, if I were a judge, I would have no problem at all hiring the city clerk to perform a gay marriage. I wouldn't have any problem at all doing that under equal protection of the law. I would have great problems ordering a Catholic priest to do it, even though this Catholic priest is a de facto agent of the state. That's where the problem comes in.

Another Audience Member: (Inaudible)...my own understanding of marriage. First of all, the way of nature. Let's go with it that way. Common law marriage is respectful. Common law marriage has no official other than the people, or the community that the people stand in and marry in, and yet that's respected. There may be, in legal terms, a wait of seven years of cohabitation, but there is no official in common law marriage. Whatever ritual you use to define that as a couple in common law marriage. I would maintain, I'm divorced, and so I've looked at this very closely in terms of what happened. I wrote a piece a week ago that tried to define: what is the vow of marriage, and what are the corollary substantial primary expectations in the vow of marriage? If you were to write out what you're doing at the altar or in your first bedroom or your first dance, what's the ritual of the marriage? What goes along with it?

When people get into a marriage nowadays in America, some Cinderella situation, you write your own vows – which I did, and my ex-wife did. They aren't very detailed, they really aren't very detailed. In our vows, there was nothing about taking care of vows, responsibilities to children, responsibilities at the table, responsibilities for building an estate, deeply emotional sessions, how would weekly emotions be handled in terms of bonding. None of that was ever detailed. As a rule, we handle marriage very sloppily. Very sloppily. You begin with personally and think of it as one of the most important events of our lives, and we handle it so sloppily in terms of our expectations and defining our expectations, what can we expect, except for a lot of messiness in terms of living out those expectations when they continue to be seen as, "Oh, this was the event of marriage." At the point of the event of marriage, they are not clear. Afterwards, they don't have to be clear because we're already married.

Swanston: I don't intend to be dismissive of this issue. We're not going to solve it today. I still think that race and ethnicity are the single most divisive issues we've got going now. Again, meaning no disrespect, but it's not going to be solved today. I'd like to see us talk a little bit more about how we can be inclusive rather than divisive. This issue does divide us, and we're not going to reach a conclusion today.

Davis: I know we have another question in the back, but this might be a good time to turn our attention toward the press, since this is "Civil Rights and the Press" and ask ourselves what kind of a job the press is doing of covering this issue. And we could segue into other issues as well. Do you want to start, Walt?

Swanston: Yeah, I sort of have deep roots in both the past and the present in terms of civil rights and how the issue is covered. The single most important thing that we're dealing with now is getting more perspectives, getting more voices, getting more people of color, women – however you define diversity. Getting more of those perspectives. We don't see each other a lot in the media. When I was growing up as a child in Oakland, the newspaper was a terribly racist one. The only time African-Americans appeared on the pages was when we were accused of a crime. That happens a lot today still in too many communities. Forty percent of American newspapers still have no people of color on staff in the newsrooms. We're losing ground day by day in radio and television broadcasts, in terms of where people of color and others who represent differences are. We're not making any gains in management. As long as those things are happening, we're not going to have the kind of representational coverage of the kinds of issues that are important in our communities; in our communities, I mean, broadly defined, as anyone who represents a difference.

Falkner: Emilie, there's just one thing I need to respond to, to Pedro's question, before I move on. The court has said time and again "separate but equal" doesn't work. If you call this something else, you are setting the stage for exactly the same thing to happen all over again. The reality is that civil unions are not the equivalent of marriage. They do not come with the same laws. At this point, the only one that's been tried is in Vermont. And it only works if you physically live in Vermont. And even those folks do not necessarily get the same set of benefits that come with marriage.

The question really on the table is those thousands of benefits. Right now, the only way that those would be the same is actually marriage.

Ward: I'd like to, if we don't mind, shift the focus a little bit. I'm wondering beginning by referring to two points Hodding Carter made yesterday. He mentioned, first of all, how prevalent the Southern white press was in supporting the system of legalized segregation. I want to take off on that point to make another point, which I think is relevant to us today.

Back during an earlier period, when some of you were not born, you younger ones were not born, when the United States entered World War II, following the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, there was a wave of hysteria that swept the country. Many people, some of them perhaps who called themselves Christians, who became hysterical about the presence of Japanese-Americans here in the United States. There was a widespread feeling that Japanese-Americans – though they were American citizens – would become collaborators with the Japanese who bombed Pearl Harbor. The result was that in February, 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt promulgated an executive order which legalized the internment of Japanese-Americans in internment camps. The fear was that if they were allowed to remain free, the Japanese-Americans would become collaborators with the enemy. Therefore, the most vulnerable part of the United States to attack by the Japanese would be the West Coast of the United States. The reason that's relevant to the press was that the newspapers were very much active in promoting this hysteria. The Hearst newspapers were particularly bad in promoting the hysteria that Japanese-Americans were the enemy and that they, therefore, should be interned.

Also, it didn't become publicized about the Japanese internment until after the war was over. The newspapers in the United States and radio, which was one of the big media of mass communication at the time, went along with the government's desire that this story be kept secret and that this story be censored. So there was not widespread coverage in the media at that time of the internment of Japanese-Americans. The story really did not come out in full force until after the war was over. The point I want to make here was the role that the mass media played in helping to promulgate the hysteria, in helping to promote and reinforce the stereotype. That role has been played over and over again by the media in the United States.

It is particularly relevant today at the time following the events of 9/11. I think it was John Seigenthaler on one of the panels yesterday mentioned about the role that Arab-Americans play and their future in the United States and the need to protect their civil rights in the wake of hysteria that followed 9/11. I think that the country very much is in danger of repeating the mistakes of World War II if we allow ourselves to become so emotional and so fearful that another attack is so imminent. I think that's exactly what the Bush Administration is trying to do. Of promoting the idea that an attack is always imminent, and therefore only they can protect the country from this kind of an attack again.

I think the news media need to be particularly vigilant, on guard against spreading that kind of hysteria. The news media need to be particularly vigilant, on guard against allowing politicians to exploit the fear that swept the nation following 9/11. These kinds of catastrophes occur only when there is mass hysteria, only when there is mass fear, and only when the media of mass communication become the instruments to spread propaganda, which is useful

only and benefits only a particular segment of our society, i.e., those who want to exercise political control.

Dallal: I heard John Seigenthaler mention this last night. I was moved by his concluding remarks when he alluded to the plight of Arab-Americans. I want to share with you an anecdote. I have a granddaughter who was a freshman in one of the finest small colleges in the nation. After 9/11, one of her professors asked her, "Why do you people do this?" She called me up. She was a 17-year-old girl, and she couldn't understand. I explained to her, I told her about Japanese-Americans. I don't think this will happen again.

I want to say some things about the role of the press. I think when the founding fathers gave the press "freedom of the press," they assumed that the press would be responsible and would be informative. Their fear was that governments would control the press. What we have today in the press, we have a very sophisticated, technical press with instant information. The fear is not only from the intrusion of government, but from the intrusion of special interest groups on our freedoms. Those special interest groups are so powerful, and they can deny the rest of us the platform to speak, especially if what we say may not agree with their agendas. I don't know what the answer to this is, but it's always been a problem, very troubling to me. The press has become almost hijacked by powerful organizations, powerful groups that feed you and feed us a lot of disinformation, misinformation, inaccurate history. I'm not suggesting that the First Amendment be amended. But I'm suggesting that there ought to be a mechanism to address this very important issue.

With respect to my granddaughter, I assured her that I thought this professor, if he reflected on what he said, he would probably review it. I asked my children not to call him, not to raise any issue because it could make things worse. Arab-Americans, in the light of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in the light of the war in Iraq, are really vulnerable to this issue. I'm grateful to those of you who are willing to raise it as an issue. I'm sure just raising it is a comforting thing to all of us.

Ramirez: As a reporter, I wanted to also say how we cover these things. I agree with some of the statements that have just been said. It is something we have to be careful with. Government isn't the only institution that can influence what the media covers. As a working journalist and also as someone that has been in the classroom, one of the things that I try to remember and to tell young journalists-to-be is that anyone you talk to has an agenda. You're out there to interview them to get a story. They're going to try to give you their take. It's our job as journalists to be objective and get the other sides, so to speak.

However, as we have instruction on that for young journalists, one of the things that I do think maybe we need to devote a little more attention to, is not the special interests of the people we talk to, but our own special interests. Any issues that are covered are best covered when they are approached by reporters

themselves. If it's an assignment that the reporters feel strongly about, passionately about, and they go out and pitch the story to their editors. It is a challenge to be objective. It is a part of our code of ethics. It is something that maybe we need to work on a little more, maybe because there are special interests that are influencing – media, national media, local media. I'm not sure how to address that, but it's just something that needs to be addressed.

Chin: In terms of coverage, this is to pick up on things that Walt and others have said, my plea to students – I'm an engineering professor. My plea to my engineering students, the reason I'm so hard on them is because I say, "When I get old, and I'm in the nursing home, I'm going to be using the products that you designed." What I would ask for students in terms of coverage, is please, please make the invisible visible. That gets to some of the remarks about the Japanese-Americans, but also to other groups. Also, please move the conversation to a more sophisticated level when it comes to race and diversity.

Are you all familiar with these cell phone commercials about in-network, out-of-network? The way I feel, I won't speak for anyone else, is that there's this commercial where the dad walks in, throws the cell phone to his son, he says, "You're in." And he's happy, he says, "I'm in. Okay, great." He throws the cell phone to his daughter. He says, "You're in." The son says, "You mean, she's in, too?" Some of us feel like sometimes we're in the conversation, sometimes we're not. When it's convenient to talk about non-whites on a committee, it's convenient to count me. When we're talking about senior leadership positions in universities, this university included, it's not convenient to count me. I'm sure this has played out in other arenas. If the invisible doesn't become visible, we can't talk about it. That's your role.

Audience Question: I'm thinking about the civil rights movement and how long it took African-Americans to gain the rights they gained and how they went about it. I believe that anyone who is trying to change the attitudes of people in the country and to gain the rights that they deserve. As someone who covered the entire civil rights movement and looked back at the entire history of racism in America, I see the long struggle and the loss of life and the horror of that that they had to go through. As a Southerner, as an Alabaman, I've been aware of how that history evolved and how their victory came about. I think that whether it's gay marriages or any other rights that citizens need in America or in the world, there is usually a struggle. It begins with conversations like this, panels like this.

But how many gay couples would be willing to go to Selma and march across that bridge and fight that battle for a long, long time? Maybe that is what is happening now. But just to make all aware of how long it took African-Americans to be accepted as citizens of the U.S. with every way, with every right that everyone else had. That may be happening now, maybe it's the beginning of maybe a long struggle.

Falkner: Well, I would disagree it's the beginning. I mean, Stonewall's in 1969. So there have been events happening. What you have to realize is, like Francis was saying, there are some parallels and there are some things that are not parallel. In terms of struggle, you have to want to be out to do this kind of stuff. It's difficult. There are still 38 states that can fire you for being gay. (To audience member.) You're saying we need to struggle longer and more publicly.

There are things – everybody knows Matthew Shepard and knows what happened to Matthew Shepard. There are lots of Matthew Shepards. It's just that the press hasn't covered them as much as Matthew Shepard. There are things that are going on. Because of the debate of gay marriage right now, it's becoming obviously more in the news. But it's been going on for a long time.

Swanston: The struggle about getting African-Americans and others into the newsroom is not over. I've been working with media companies for now 17 years. First, starting off working for the Newspaper Publishers Association to try to help the industry get more women and people of color into the newsrooms. The papers that were making the best efforts to do that were finding that they were losing people of color, especially, in great numbers. We started to look at the reasons why.

I went in newsroom after newsroom. What I found was, those papers that had people of color on staff were suffering in those newsrooms. They were suffering because others in the newsroom were making assumptions that they were not qualified for their jobs – that they were there only because they were people of color or women – there were a lot of parallels there. If you were a person of color and looked at who was running those newspapers, who was making the decisions about the stories that got covered, the people that got hired, and you didn't see anyone who looked like you at the top of that news organization, your chances for getting there were not very good.

So what we saw was a pattern that started to form. People of color in particular would try one or two newspapers. They were getting out of the business. Retention became a problem. The newspaper industry started to address the environment in newsrooms that looked at some of those issues that were driving people out. I could tell you that culture is still alive and well in most American newsrooms that I've been in in the last 17 years. Those negative assumptions are still there. It is still uncomfortable for a lot of us to work there. We do it because we love the work. But we endure a lot to stay in those jobs. We're now fighting for the next generation. We've got to grow. The next generation of young journalists who represent all different perspectives – not only people of color but all sorts of perspectives to help make these newsrooms more vibrant, more reflective of the communities they serve. I'll leave it at that.

Rob Porter: I want to bring it back a little bit to this parallel to what's going on at Iraq and Japanese internment as it relates to indigenous peoples. It's not really a joke, it's just a sense of amazement and wonderment really to see what's going on in Iraq and the way it parallels to what's happened to the indigenous peoples of the United States. Native peoples are dumbfounded at some level the way that history is playing out almost exactly the way it is playing out in Iraq. Conquests in these contexts are justified on the basis of national security, economic security, and humanitarianism. It is the three-part recipe for every colonial episode that the United States has engaged in.

It happened to us first. Our nations were the very first to be colonized on the basis of economic security, national security, and humanitarianism. Add into this realization that we are the most fragile, the most isolated by choice of the polity in the United States that our position is one of a sovereignty that predates, that preexists the United States. This civil rights discourse is a little awkward and strange because it doesn't really fit right in terms of the issues of defending self-determination of sovereignty of our nations.

But the press has an important role to play in this, in ways that I've become increasingly sensitive to as a lawyer and as an advocate. There is a civil rights issue, for example, playing out right here in Central New York, in a sense. That relates to the land claims and the respect that the people of the United States give to the first treaties that were entered into with our peoples over 200 years ago. What is ironic, at some level, is the conflict of interest you see in the media in terms of dealing with these kinds of issues. As an advocate, I look at the press as kind of that conduit right to the people. What is the age at which we have to write newspapers, about 7th grade? Is that the age? That's where the people are in terms of their comprehension, I guess, in terms of their ability to understand the complexity of things.

There's an important need for the media in situations like this. I'll give you a specific example. In the Cayuga Nation lawsuit that's been pending for the last 27 years just west of here, there was a determination of liability in that case right off the bat. There's just simply no dispute as a matter of the law, in terms of what the courts are saying, that the Cayuga land was illegally sold over 200 years ago. That the State of New York was the responsible party. And that for some 20 years, they have been fighting over what to do about it. The legal issue is not in question.

There was a ruling in that case that was the most focused ruling of all. The Cayugas sought ejection of the non-Indians who were living in their territory. For the lawyers, this is kind of a no-brainer. If you're illegally occupying someone else's land, and you are judged to be wrongfully in possession, you were ejected. You don't get to keep the land. You don't get to stay and just pay someone for it. You get kicked off, and the sheriff will come and remove you.

So here's an issue that's presented to the federal judge. He finally gets to this after 27 years. He basically makes new law. He says, "Well, there's equitable principles here that we need to bring into this." He goes through this very complicated analysis of why in this particular context the ejection of wrongful possessors of land should not occur. One of my colleagues, formerly at the University of Iowa, said, "Well, that's the rule of American property law. Ejection is the proper action, is the proper remedy for the wrongful possession of land unless you're the Indians. The Indians actually don't get the land back, if in fact, you're wrongfully dispossessed of it."

The media has an important role to play in this. Having been a recent re-immigrant, I guess, back to this area just last summer, watching media coverage of this issue, this to me is the equivalent of, say, a federal court order ordering the desegregation of the schools in the South, in which the President of the United States mobilizes the National Guard to ensure that that federal court decision is played out. We have a federal court judge in this situation – I don't mean to criticize him personally. It's just that the pressures and the way he reasoned through the case was, "This would be chaos to society if we were to eject and enforce the treaties and the laws of the United States." To me, that is a real sad moment, in terms of, on the hand, we see a historical parallel in which the National Guard is going to be mobilized to enforce the laws of the United States. But in this instance, the federal judge is worried about the social discord that would result because of the very same enforcement of American law.

In that sense, the media has a real – maybe it's an evolving – mission in some of these issues. But it's a very convoluted one, and one that I think you see play out in Iraq as well.

Davis: What would you think that the media could do differently that they're not doing now?

Porter: I don't know if it's come up in this conference at all. I remember there was quite a bit of discussion about whether journalists should wear the American flag when they're reporting on the war. I remember, of course, the embedded journalist who is involved. What's the difference between reporting the news, and reporting propaganda about what's going on in the war? These are fine lines. Of course, the media is owned by corporations that make money. The people, back to the people who read these things and listen to the news, want to hear good stories. They want to hear part of it. It's a very difficult conflict of interest.

I'm not supposing that we get beyond it. It's just the way it is. I don't know that we can say, "Do the right thing." There are people who do the right thing. Sometimes we call them the "alternative press" – they don't make a lot of money. In law, we call them defense lawyers. That's sort of the equivalent, right? People who take on the noble cause because it's the right thing to do. I actually

don't think at the level at which this is going to have serious impact on people, that there is much that can be done about it. The conflict is too deep.

Audience Question: To me, one of the obvious solutions to all these problems is having more diverse newsrooms with reporters, editors who have more diverse interests and backgrounds in order to lead certain people who wouldn't know about these stories. I think, ideally, every single newsroom is not going to have the amount of diversity it really needs. What do you think a solution would be to a newsroom that can't get, can't recruit authorities for whatever reason? There are white journalists who have to cover issues, who don't know anything about them. What can the different communities do to help journalists understand this disrespect?

Swanston: I think it's sort of a two-way street. There has to be pressure from the community. But there also has to be people in leadership positions at these news organizations to recognize that diversity is a value. So it sort of goes both ways. Even in newsrooms that don't have a lot of people in color or people who represent different perspectives, that's not an excuse for not knowing, not learning. There are training programs offered by the associations that represent journalists of color, that do training for folks – The Poynter Institute. There are other ways of finding out about how to do a better job covering communities of color or people who represent differences. Just because there isn't a diverse newsroom or diverse staff, doesn't let you off the hook in my mind, if you're committed to doing a responsible job in covering and telling the stories, telling our stories.

Ward: I'd just like to add to that comment that one of the roles the news media needs to play is to frame the issue in ways that people understand it. One of the problems with the whole Affirmative Action debate is that there is one segment, some people who I regard as ideologically directed in the news media, who like to define Affirmative Action as racial quotas. This school of thought goes on to make the argument that race really should not be an issue in the United States because the civil rights struggle is over. In other words, the argument is that now that legalized segregation has been outlawed, and now that we have a Civil Rights Act of '64 and the Voting Rights Act of '65 and the Housing Act of '68, that the laws should protect all people of color. So in effect, there is no longer any struggle. So we can stop talking about race, we can stop talking about struggle, we can stop talking about Affirmative Action. I think that's wrong. I think that's the wrong way to look at it.

One of the things the news media need to do is to refocus the issue back along the lines of Walt Swanston was talking about. Even though we have had legal change in the country, even though there have been improvements, there is still room for improvement. There is still a way to go before we will have what most of us regard as the ideal of equality. So we don't need to stop talking about race, we don't need to frame the issue with one of being racial quotas. I think all too

often people in the media get caught up in this notion that that's how the issue should be framed, and they tend to propagate the idea that race is no longer an issue in the country and that Affirmative Action amounts to nothing more than racial quotas or something called reverse discrimination. I happen to believe there is no such thing as reverse discrimination. But again, I respect those who have a different point of view. The news media needs to understand that how the issue is framed and how it's interpreted ultimately will affect how people feel about it. The media people need to understand their role is not one of becoming advocates for any particular side. But their role is one of trying to get the truth out and to represent different points of view in the debate and not to become advocates themselves.

Dallal: I just want to say something about the media and its role. I have heard these criticisms many times. The question's always asked, "What can the media do?" I think unless the public recognizes that a media that is not doing its function, is not performing its role as an information source to the public, a media that sides with the government, a media that abdicates its role, is not in the national interests of this country. That's how we go to war. Misguided wars. If the media doesn't function, we're all at risk. Because the media is so powerful. It controls all the tools of information. And there are people who just listen to the media. We can all sit here and say, "The media should do this, the media should do that."

I think it is something very basic, that perhaps we should begin with the schools. An institution like Newhouse should begin to educate those who go to Newhouse that you have a function much more significant than just being a moneymaking proposition. If the media doesn't do this, you all know what happened in The New York Times. When somebody in The New York Times was fabricating stories – just one reporter. And also USA Today, one reporter. These are the ones that we know about. God knows how many others we don't know about. There is an endemic problem with the media that has to be addressed deeply and thoughtfully and carefully. That's what makes people hate us maybe. Because the media is not informing us enough to check our government and tell everyone "Stop doing this."

But the media is in bed sometimes with the government, sometimes with people who have an agenda, against the national interests of the country. Unwittingly, perhaps. This is what we ought to find out – how we can address this very serious issue.

Audience Question (Dorothy Gilliam): The Maynard Institute for Journalism Education, on whose board I served, has developed a tool to help journalists better cover the realities of America. It was originated by a black journalist named Robert C. Maynard. The tool which he has come up with is called "the fault lines theory." Its basic concept is that America is divided along five major lines: race, ethnicity, gender – which includes sexual orientation: male, female,

etc., class, geography. There are certainly other divisions. The point of this tool, and it's really to help journalists, is to take journalists beyond the assumption and almost sometimes the clichés that Americans have about themselves. But to use this "fault lines theory" to both look at ourselves and acknowledge each of us has a repository of these fault lines, and to use these fault lines in our reporting.

Someone talked about a more sophisticated way of covering the news. I'm not doing full justice to this fault lines theory, but it has been picked up by the APME – Managing Editors. We're trying to have it used more and more. It's a way for journalists to use these divisions almost as a grid in looking at issues. The idea is that, the more journalists look at issues through this grid, the more honestly and more realistically they can report on the issues that actually affect all Americans. I just think that it's important to know that there are some tools that we have tried to come up with, and that one of the challenges is getting this knowledge out to more people. Getting more and more journalists to use it.

Another Audience Question: I think a diverse newsroom is a better newsroom. I also think that a very good journalist can cover really any issue regardless of race, background, ethnicity. One of the dividing lines is skills of language. I really believe that is the case. I'd like for you guys to address that. Do you feel that way? Do you disagree? Do you agree?

Falkner: I'd like to address that if I could, and then I'd like for you (Pedro) to follow me actually. I speak to all kinds of reporters all the time. I agree with your theory that reporters should be able to do this. But frankly I get really dopey questions from reporters, most of them. I can tell if a reporter is straight or gay over the phone, just by the questions that they ask me. It sounds ridiculous that I should be able to do that, but I can tell by the insight they have into the questions. I will have reporters ask me, "Why don't you just get married?" That's basic 101 stuff they should know ahead of time before they even call and ask questions.

So I would encourage the reporters in the room – you really need to do your homework before you make the phone calls. Yes, you can do it. But especially, the GLBT audience requires insight, just like any audience. That's why I'd like the reporters on the panel to follow me. It goes to your question up there at the top. Do I have to put the Hispanic reporter on the Hispanic beat then? Do I have to put the black reporter on the black beat then? Can't we cover these things otherwise?

With my personal experience, the insight that you need to ask a question, it helps if you are gay or lesbian. That doesn't mean you have to be. You just have to want to do your homework first and make the call. You don't have to be a gay reporter to do a gay story. You do need an editor on the other end. You need someone who understands the issues on the other end to make sure whoever is

writing the story, that the issues that come forth are relevant to what's in there, and you're not obviously offending anyone. What do you guys think?

Ramirez: I definitely agree that you don't have to be Hispanic or gay or lesbian or African-American to cover any one of those beats. It does help to have that expertise, as she said. If a reporter is conscientious enough to do his or her research, then you can intelligently cover something and not make the mistakes that some people might make. I think, also, you need to have a diverse newsroom with people of all orientations. I think we're still at a learning curve. I don't think that, as a whole, anyone and everyone can cover every aspect of the news yet. I'm here because of my contributions to diversity. The only reason I'm a reporter is the university has a program to bring in people of diverse ethnicities to become reporters and to go into the newsrooms and to help them in their coverage of those types of issues.

That's played out here locally. We do have in my newsroom – this is my personal opinion, so I don't get myself in trouble. We do have a dedication to covering diverse issues. However, stuff falls through the cracks. The daily demands of the news and the people just don't have that knowledge base. I do remember, I covered the big Black History Month coverage. We put out a very big package, and I helped put together one story a day on African-American veterans, since I happened to be the Military Affairs reporter. But do I remember last fall, as Hispanic-Latino Month was coming up, I'm like, "It's getting close." I made the call downtown, "Do we have any plans?" "Oh, it's coming up, isn't it?" "Yeah, do you have ideas?" I'm talking to editors here.

So there's a learning curve. It's just a reality. I didn't see that as something that was a personal affront. I just think there is a learning curve. That's why diverse newsrooms are important. But I don't feel as though I have to be the Hispanic Affairs reporter. In fact, I would actually resent the fact if I had to be.

Porter: My reaction to your question is that you do need difference. If everyone's the same, has the same experiences, the same skill level, then what difference does it make who's going to cover the story? Sometimes it's just as simple as who's going to talk to whom. I just see in the context of men, women, people of color, people not of color, and their ability to communicate with one another. There's just inherent boundaries that fall away when you're dealing with journalists who have a personal connection or their own personal experiences with your background.

Here's the other problem. Assuming that the diversity of the newsroom is akin to the issues that I deal with, which is the diversity of lawyers in the legal profession, within the legal academy, legal scholarship, there's a big problem, which is we may bring people into the profession, but the system demands such conformity to succeed. That the voice is lost. I don't know, in the journalists, how it's dealt with, but for the lawyers, there's this notion that you have to suck

up for a while, play along in the firms, or the government agencies or the way the system works. Then maybe you'll get to that point someday, where your own voice will matter. The problem is, by the time that happens, you've forgotten what your own voice was, and that you've just become part of the system. It has this kind of white patriarchy orientation. That you sort of rig yourself to that longstanding, deep-rooted system. The diversity of the voice gets sacrificed year-by-year-by-year-by-year. It's really hard to see the highest level journalists, and that's why we have to have such respect for them. When we see them, we can tell their voice, their perspective is different because of what they've had to do all the many, many, many years in the system to get to that point where they are the ones who are on TV, or they are the ones who are in the newspapers. I think that that's an inherent problem, mainly for the legal profession. It's just the way the system conforms the voice, even if we start out with a much more diverse one on the front end.

Audience Question: It's more of a comment. I want to tack on what Dr. Gilliam was saying about the Maynard Institute. At the University of Missouri where I help team-teach a course on cross-cultural journalism, which is required for every student who gets a degree from "Mizzou," we employ the fault lines theory starting on day one. To explain to the students that we all have our fault lines and we use that as a foundation throughout the rest of the semester in helping them address various minority groups, including privilege – the issue of privilege as it relates to Affirmative Action and such.

These students, many of them come in initially, "This is a required course, I'm going to sit here and listen to this PC course that I have to take, and I'll just get through it," and we see the evolution that takes place with the students. By the end of the semester, they're looking at this, "Well, I do have some fault lines. Maybe, although I recognize what those fault lines are, as I go out and do my reporting, I can become a change agent, simply because I recognize the fault lines. So if I do a story on a group of people that I'm not familiar with, I know the sources to go and ask someone about it. I know how to do the back-grounding in order to make the story more applicable to that community. I know I have a deadline to get the story out, but that I should go back, maybe a day or two later, and do a follow-up that would be relevant to that community."

I think that's the goal of a training journalist. That's part of that learning curve that you're talking about, as we train journalists to exist in a diversified culture.

Audience Question: I'd like to know how good of a job you think the press is doing on reporting on the issue of civil rights and Arab-Americans and Muslims in the U.S. since 9/11.

Ward: I think the job is mixed. I've seen some good stories on what has happened since 9/11. But I don't think there has been nearly enough of that kind of reporting. Also, I think that, I would agree with Mr. Dallal's point that, when it

comes to reporting on the war in Iraq, on the potential for the threat of domestic terrorism, some in the media, not all, are too close to the government and rely much too much on what the government has to say. And they stop there. They don't go beyond what the government has to say.

I think that there is also a residue of fallout from 9/11 that even affects people in the media how they approach this. I think the country needs to get beyond that. But particularly those in the media, we need to get beyond the fallout from 9/11 and try to become as fair and as even-handed as we possibly could. In answer to your question, I think the picture is mixed, but I think there is much more room for improvement by media across the board, both print and electronic in reporting on what is happening with Arab-Americans. Also, what is the long-term future of Arab-Americans in this country, the more and more the United States gets involved in the war in Iraq and the more and more the United States promotes the idea that problems in the Middle East only have a military-style solution?

Dallal: I agree. I think that the domestic politics enter into this a great deal. The administration, for example, would like to promote a culture of fear. The media, I think, should think this clearly before they fall into this trap. It is in the interest of the present administration to keep all of us on edge. Unfortunately, when you fear and you're always genuinely afraid, these fears associated with terrorism. Terrorism is associated with Muslims, with Arab - consciously or unconsciously - the public becomes worried about anybody who is an Arab or a Muslim.

The media can play a very significant role in alleviating this fear, and challenging it, and I respectfully say that they have not done enough of that. This is where they become almost an agent of government, when they promote the government's agenda in keeping all of us scared to death. I don't know what else to say about it. It's one of the most serious things that promotes anger, fear, distrust, hate. It's a vicious cycle.

Audience Question: Just because the United States has been through the civil rights movement, do you think there's a tendency on the part of the press and the American people to think that the United States is a lot more sophisticated than it used to be? And that instances of prejudice or racism or discrimination are usually on an individual basis instead of an institutional basis? Do you think if they were examined differently by the press that different issues involving minority groups would seem a lot more important? Or, like you said, there's Matthew Shepards all over the place, and they don't get reported on. Do you think that's because the press has this other perception that these are individual instances instead of a larger problem? The press needs to analyze these issues as a larger issue instead of on an individual basis.

Falkner: I think the press is starting to come around. What's interesting is our perspective versus, frankly, what goes on in other countries, the issue of gay marriage in other countries is a non-issue. There are three countries that allow

gay marriages already. Most of Europe thinks in terms of our discussion of this issue, and sex in general, that we're behind the times, frankly. I don't know that I would agree with your theory that the civil rights stuff is over. Now because gay marriage has all of a sudden come up much more frequently just in the past year, that it's starting a new round of stories. I did mention that there have been other things, like Matthew Shepard, that have happened. But unless you reading gay press, you wouldn't know about them. Those happen, unfortunately, all the time. I don't know that because of this issue of gay rights being on the table, that they will get more coverage than they have perhaps in the past. That's certainly possible.

It's really an issue, when looking at newsrooms again, of someone being within the newsroom and bringing this up. Like Pedro said, "Hey, we got a Hispanic thing coming up. Well, June's Gay Pride Month. Oh, that's on our calendar. So I'm going to do something about that." Those things kind of sort of happen. But as a day to day news thing, it's really not on the radar, and only has been because of the gay marriage issue. So it may change.

Porter: I just want to follow up with it. I would agree with the question, in the sense that I think a lot of the problems in terms of the non-coverage are derived from a sense of arrogance about how great things are in America. You don't colonize other countries unless you think you're great. If there's a big Canadianization movement going on in the world that I'm missing, so be it. No offense to the Canadians, but there just doesn't seem to be the same imperial strain that's rooted in the Canadian identity, or lack thereof.

I think a lot of it is, unfortunately, it wouldn't naturally affect American journalists. As Americans, in terms of how Americans are wired and educated, in terms of, is it an accident that the public schools frankly teach so little about history and where this country came from. What's the point of that? In terms of being a taxpayer, or a soldier, or what you need to be a contributor in the future. There's a lot of the way the system is established – I feel like, I was only 3 in the '60s, but I feel like a throwback to talking about the system. I think it's just the way in which the society is structured to be prospective, to be forward-looking, and to be extraordinarily confident and culturally grand in terms of the way it views itself. That that's what's worth exporting. That will affect journalists naturally. Good journalists will always be trained to be sensitive to their own biases. But I think that that's inevitably one of the problems that trickles into media coverage of such issues of civil rights in this country.

Audience Question: I'd like to turn the subject at least for a moment. One of my great biases is that people have come off the farm. And that society is much less secure because people don't feel they have the choice of going back and growing their own vegetables and cutting their own firewood. So what happens is, when people come up for the choice, they have more limited options than

taking care of themselves more self-reliantly. They're being taken care of by their current career.

Part of this part process, if you want to add on another factor, I really think we're brain rich and hand dead in this society. Partly because coming off the farm and partly because of the Horace Mann style of education – where a teacher is up there for 20 years saying, “Let me tell you what's important because I know - because people have told me that I know - because I'm certified and because the state's behind me and you've got to be here.”

We get 20 years of people standing in front of us using the alphabet and not a saw, or not a screwdriver. For example, how many people in this room know how your plumbing works between you and the street? You use it every day, as well as read the newspaper. But I bet there's probably not two people in this room that could really explain the plumbing in their house. What I'm saying is, to draw this back into the question of peace, I think there's a lot of contentment to be had in the garden. I think a military solution is a three-dimensional solution, which gets away from ideology because you have to move from the plan on paper to a three-dimensional solution. To get this even more intimately, people don't look at other people's faces. People do not read other people's faces. They just don't because it takes work to read other people's faces. Especially if you ask yourself when you read someone's face, “What's going on in their heart?” And you pay close attention, and then you challenge them about what's going on in their tone. “Do you mean it this way, or do you mean it that way?”

If you're not reading people's faces, then you're not learning much. If you're not challenging what you think the meaning is in yourself, then you're not really communicating because you're accepting what you think the meaning is before you confirmed it. I want to say, that we're going off on a lot of levels that aren't really terribly advanced.

Audience Question: I'm just curious. After all the discussion about individual quarters and training and so on, Professor Dallal referred to the sort of government impact on the press and what's covered. I'm curious about the impact of corporate consolidation of the media. And whether in the last 40 years, reporters can do what we've done in the '60s. I'm curious about what kinds of constraints are in place that might not have been in place before consolidation.

Swanston: We are losing ground every day. We're losing reporters out of newsrooms. We're losing media outlets. Consolidation is making it more difficult for more organizations to do better journalism. I know in one market, there is one person doing news for 12 different radio stations, using a different name and a different voice, reading copy from a wire service. That's not news. That's not covering a community. That's doing a great disservice. But more of that is happening, and it's very sad. Consolidation has taken a toll.

Dallal: I think your question is very, very well taken. When one individual, for example, owns a multibillion dollar media organization, it's not in the interest of freedom of the press. This is what is happening. This consolidation is another thing that really should be addressed thoughtfully. The antitrust laws were devised originally to prevent that sort of thing from happening. I don't know how it snuck into this business of the media. The media now is concentrated in the hands of very, very few people. They are promoting their own agenda. They are feeding the American people their own rubbish. An uninformed America is very dangerous to the security of the world. This is what promotes fascism. This is how the fascists came into power. They controlled the media. They began to feed the public a lot of false information. When the public are disinformed or misinformed, they are directed to hate certain groups. It's terrible. It's terrifying. I don't know what the answer is.

You put your finger right on one of the very sensitive issues that should be discussed publicly and debated, especially by eminent journalists that we saw. I was very touched yesterday with the role of the Southern journalists in promoting civil rights. It's a lesson to be learned by all of us in doing this, especially the issue of peace and war. This issue of peace and war. If the American people feel threatened by a dictator like Saddam Hussein, "death to all Iraqis" type of thing, do you know how many hundreds of thousands of civilian Iraqis, their lives were destroyed? They lost their lives, their livelihood, because somebody thinks they have weapons of mass destruction. Where are they? I think if you took a poll, just before the war, 90 percent of the American people believed this. I didn't believe it. I told a symposium just a few days before the war, it's an act of lunacy to go into war against Iraq. But it's too late now.

So where's the media? The media should have alerted us. They should have alerted you. These are the issues that are very significant.

Audience Member: I'd like to respond to that just a little bit, this question of newspaper ownership. When I began my career in newspapers in roughly 1950, practically every newspaper in the United States was locally owned – the publisher lived in the community. Now, practically every newspaper in the United States is owned by a group, many groups – not just one or two, that you might suggest. Just to give you a capsule view, I can take both sides of that issue. I found that when I worked for a local publisher, I had all the space I needed to report the news, but he wouldn't let me report it. When I worked for a chain, I found that they would let me cover all the news I wanted to, they just wouldn't give me the space to put it in the paper. All in balance.

I think after 50 years of reflection, I would take chain ownership for this reason only: the publisher is no longer a local person. He's just someone sitting in for corporate headquarters, who's looking to the next biggest job he's got. He usually lets his editor alone. The biggest development in journalism in my career

was the growing independence of the editor, which is fairly strong today, and was not strong at all when I went into it.

Audience Question: This is sort of going back to the discussion that maybe happened 10 minutes ago. I think maybe the definition of news has to do with why coverage is not as diverse as it could be because in some part, we tend to look for things that are timely. For example, Gay Pride Month. Is there an event happening? If we want to cover inequality that does not necessarily have an event tied to it – for example, if it's institutionalized – what are some methods of going about doing that?

Ward: For those of you who may not have heard her comment, she was talking about how the definition of news ultimately affects what gets reported. I think that's a problem that media need to face. I think that too much of news that we get, particularly on television, is defined not because of the inherent value of the information, but because it has elements of sensationalism, or elements of conflict, or elements of emotion that tend to appeal to some people – particularly, news directors and editors. A lot of fluffy stuff gets reported, which may not sound like news to me or may not sound like news to you, but it sounds like news to someone because there are executives in the business who feel that that kind of information will boost ratings for television or will boost circulation for print outlets, and, therefore, it gets reported.

I think there's far too much emphasis these days on stories like the Kobe Bryant trial. There's far too much emphasis wasted on stories about people who are presumed to be missing. That kind of story often gets slanted to report only a particular kind of person who is missing. I think that what is driving that coverage is the idea that news coverage needs to be consistent with whatever is going to boost ratings for television or boost circulation for print outlets. That's what we need to get away from. We need to go back and redefine news which is important to people, which helps people to make important decisions in their lives, and not news which simply is sensationalist and which will drive the ratings of network television or local TV stations.

Swanston: Too much of what happens in newsrooms in terms of coverage is coming about because news organizations are hiring consultants to do surveys about what the audience or what the readers want, rather than information that they might need. So some of the stuff we're seeing is really a waste of time and air space, when we could be devoting more time to original reporting, if we had the staff to do it. Those numbers are going down in the newsrooms. If we had fewer hours of news to fill. For example, I worked for a television station in Washington that was bought by a chain, and they started adding hours of news. We used to have reporters that you could let off the air for several days at a time to pursue an investigative story. You got three hours of news that starts at 4 o'clock. That reporter has got to file a story for the 4 o'clock, the 5 o'clock, the 6 o'clock news. They don't have time to go out and report.

At the same time, a layer of researchers, the associate producers, was cut out of the newsroom, so that there was nobody doing the research that would allow the reporters to do the kind of quality work that they needed to do. Those kinds of changes that are happening in American newsrooms that are affecting the kind of news that you get. There's just too much air to fill, too many deadlines to meet, and too few people to do it.

Porter: I think if there's any room for a quota, it would be the quota of human interest stories. I'm still trying to recover from the episode, long time ago, about the baby who fell into the hole. Baby Jessica. It seems like there's tragedy everywhere, and people of color's tragedy doesn't seem to get the same degree of coverage. I don't know whether you need a story a week on that, or just rotate through the diverse groups in society, just to make sure everyone's being treated fairly. It really is disproportionate, and it makes sense, of course, that it's tied to the market – the people who have the money and the people who are watching the TV. That's where I would argue for some quota system.

Ward: My advice to young reporters is to stay true to the ideal of journalism as public service, not journalism for the sake of profits or journalism for the sake of ratings. But journalism which serves the needs of people, which helps people in their daily lives, which helps civil society to function. That kind of journalism would drive people to select stories, not based on the popularity of some celebrity, but which would drive people to select stories, and to cover stories, and to be interested in issues which genuinely help people to function as good citizens in a democratic society.

Ramirez: I think as a practical bit of advice, if you're out on the street and you're doing the stories, one of the things that I have said to young journalists is, you have to get as many voices into your story as you can. And not just settle for the one government voice, or the one dissenting voice, but you have to look at it objectively. You got to ask yourself, "Who could care about this? How's this going to affect people?" You get as many voices as time, the news demand, and the space allows. That's how you help not get that skewed a story. And maybe become a mouthpiece for an organization or for the government. You got to have that balance. It's tough out on the street to do that. But it's something a good reporter will fight for.

Porter: I will offer, and this is also tied to minority journalists, people of color in journalism. In relation to just professional training, I tell this to lawyers, to law professors because it was told to me. When I was just teaching, I knew my voice in terms of legal scholarship, was not going to be down the mainstream relating to Native peoples. I said the hell with it. I did what I thought was right. But how I did it is an important lesson, for journalists generally and for minority journalists. Just make sure the work that you do is excellent. That you go the extra mile. That you make sure in terms of process. I had 400 footnotes for every article

that I did, and it was saying the most outrageous stuff you could ever imagine. But the convention was sound. It forced the discourse to the merits, not the process.

If they can critique your work because it's sloppy, or they can critique your work because your sources aren't good, then that's how they'll take your voice out of the picture. You got to make sure that the conventions are sound, that your professionalism is top-notch. And if that means you have to work twice as hard as the white journalist, then so be it. But in terms of making sure that your voice is heard, it's got to be professionally sound. I actually think that's good advice for all journalists.

Falkner: I know the young reporters in the room are in the business or want to be in the business because they're good writers and hoping to become good writers. I would like to make a plea that you become good at math. I say this because what I work with all the time is numbers. Those of you who are doing any research on the census site look at numbers. You can't become dazzled by percentage of growth. If you have something that comes from a small base, of course it has a high percentage of growth. If you don't know that, if you can't figure out the basic algebra for that, you are not going to be good reporters. You can see trends everywhere, especially in terms of diversity, looking at things like the census. But if you can't do math, you're not going to be able to ask good questions. You really need to have that as a strong suit as well.

Davis: At the beginning of the panel, Walt made the comment that we weren't going to solve all the issues that would be brought up this morning. But we certainly have had what we hoped for, and that was a robust discussion on the issues. I thank the panelists for their time and expertise on that regard, and also the audience for being such great participants with questions and comments. Thank you all very much.