

# Diversity in the Washington

Newspaper Press Corps...



A joint project of UNITY: Journalists of Color, Inc. and the University of Maryland's Philip Merrill College of Journalism

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A group of multicultural Washington journalists served as the project's advisory committee, helping to craft the study's scope and providing guidance throughout. Committee members were: Joie Chen, correspondent, CBS

News; Edwin Chen, White House correspondent, Los Angeles Times; Catalina Camia, regional editor, Gannett News Service; Charles Ericksen, editor/publisher, Hispanic Link News Service; Ron Hutcheson, president-elect, White House Correspondents Association and White House correspondent, Knight Ridder Newspapers; Steven Holmes, assistant news editor, New York Times; Matt Kelley, special projects reporter, the Associated Press; Ken Moritsugu, national economics correspondent, Knight Ridder Newspapers; Eunice Moscoso, homeland security reporter, Cox Newspapers; April Ryan, White House correspondent, American Urban Radio Networks; Carole E. Simpson, senior correspondent, ABC News; Liz Spayd, assistant managing editor, The Washington Post; Dr. Lee Thornton, Richard Eaton Chair in Broadcast Journalism, University of Maryland, and Juan Williams, senior national correspondent, National Public Radio.

Ernest R. Sotomayor, president of UNITY, provided guidance and support throughout the project. UNITY

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The project relied on past research, including the analysis of individual newspapers and their communities conducted by Bill Dedman and Stephen K. Doig for the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; the annual census of diversity in daily newspaper newsrooms by the American Society of Newspaper Editors; Dr. Lawrence T. McGill's 2000 "Newsroom Diversity: Meeting the Challenge" study for the Freedom Forum and the "American Journalist" survey conducted by Dr. David Weaver and his colleagues at Indiana University's School of Journalism.

Cristina Chuang, head of publications at the Merrill College of Journalism, designed this report. Ira Chinoy, a former computer-assisted reporting specialist at The Washington Post who now teaches at the University of Maryland, assisted with the data analysis.

# Executive Summary

The following are highlights of the census of the Washington bureaus of U.S. daily newspapers and the subsequent survey of journalists of color within the press corps.

- ◆ Less than 10.5 percent of the reporters, correspondents, columnists, editors and bureau chiefs in the Washington daily newspaper press corps are journalists of color — 60 out of 574. That compares to the non-white U.S. population of 30.9 percent (2000 U.S. Census) and the 12.5 percent of reporters, editors and supervisors found in daily newspaper newsrooms in general in 2003 (ASNE).
- ◆ The representation of journalists of color is

even lower at the top leadership positions in Washington bureaus. Of the 36 daily newspapers and newspaper groups that have multiple-person news operations covering Washington, only three have non-white bureau chiefs — Gannett News Service, the Chicago Tribune and The Detroit News.

- ◆ Most of the nation's largest daily newspapers have substantially lower percentages of journalists of color in Washington than in their home newsrooms.
- ◆ Some Washington bureaus representing large newspaper chains, including Knight Ridder,



White reporters surround President Truman on a campaign trip Oct. 16, 1948. (Photo courtesy of Truman Presidential Museum & Library).

Gannett News Service and Newhouse News Service, have the most diverse newsrooms in Washington. But other chain bureaus, including Scripps Howard, Hearst, Copley, McClatchy and Belo, have either few or no journalists of color covering Washington.



More than 55 years later, it looks like little has changed in the Washington press corps as reporters interview Secretary of State Colin Powell on May 26, 2004. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs).

- ◆ Few of the journalists of color in Washington newspaper bureaus believe the capital press corps does a good job in covering race-related issues. Only 13 percent say the coverage is good and none believe it is excellent or even very good.
- ◆ Nearly one-third of the journalists responding to the questionnaire believe

coverage of race-related issues in Washington has declined in just the past few years, and more than 70 percent believe journalists outside the Beltway do a better job on those stories than the Washington press corps.

- ◆ More than four in every five respondents believe racial diversity in Washington bureaus would impact coverage, and nearly half say that impact would be significant. Yet nearly half also believe they personally have little or no influence over coverage of race-related stories coming out of their own bureaus.
- ◆ More than nine in 10 of the journalists of color believe the Washington press corps is at least somewhat out of touch with its audiences back

home, and most of them believe the lack of diversity in the Washington bureaus contributes to that.

- ◆ Most say they were never recruited for a Washington position.
- ◆ More than four in five believe a mentor is at least somewhat important for a Washington journalist, but fewer than one in six reports having a mentor.
- ◆ Fewer than one in five journalists of color in Washington say they are “very satisfied” with their jobs, compared with 60 percent of journalists of color surveyed nationwide who in 1999 said they “very much” liked their jobs.

# Committee Recommendations

Compiled by Mei-Ling Hopgood  
*Advisory Committee Chairwoman*

The same Washington Press corps that has questioned President Bush's commitment to minority issues and criticized the dearth of minorities on John Kerry's campaign staff is itself startlingly monochromatic. Go to any news conference at the White House, Pentagon or Capitol Hill and the lack of journalists of color is readily visible. Behind the scenes, where decisions are made about what is news and how to cover it, the exclusion of people of color in Washington bureau management is even more acute. However, the numbers were never officially known.

Until now.

UNITY and the University of Maryland found that less than 10.5 percent of the correspondents and editors representing daily newspapers in the nation's capital are journalists of color. We suspect if a full accounting of news services, magazines and broadcast companies was conducted, that percentage would be even lower.

The abysmal lack of diversity in these high-profile journalism jobs is unacceptable. While UNITY recog-

nizes some of the real challenges involved — such as long incumbency in Washington, shrinking staffs and a weak pipeline of candidates — too often media organizations have used these excuses not to challenge and change the status quo.

Media organizations must commit, from the top down, to diversity at all staff levels. The results of this study vividly illustrate how companies that have put a premium on diversity, such as Knight Ridder and Gannett, get results. We know Washington editors recognize the importance of the issue: Some refused to cooperate because it would embarrass them and their bosses.

Ultimately, it is the obligation of the news media to fairly represent their communities if they are to produce credible, fair and honest journalism. As our nation's demographics change rapidly, it is becoming a matter of survival for the companies. Soon, people of color will be a majority.

These are our readers. This is our audience. This is our economic future.

And this is simply good journalism.

Like the communities from which they come, journalists of color bring different and necessary perspectives to

their work. These voices must be heard in the dialogue on the challenges and issues this nation faces as its population continues to evolve. Even leaders and political parties say they recognize this, and often proclaim they want to attract "minority" voters and candidates.

They know their livelihood is at stake. Ours is, too.

Those who are questioning the leaders of this country must reflect its citizenry. The Fourth Estate — which takes so much pride in pointing out the ills of society, holding the powerful responsible and offering advice and solutions — must practice what it preaches.

Matt Kelley, an investigative reporter for the Associated Press and leader with the Native American Journalists Association, said: "As journalists our fundamental instincts are to hold institutions accountable when their rhetoric does not match their actions. This is such a case."

No more lip service. Things must change.

The advisory board to this project makes these recommendations:

1. Put a premium on diversity. Washington bureaus need to establish a

long-term goal and commitment to increasing minority representation on their staffs. This may not be a specific numerical goal since those are often attacked as quotas. But if editors and bosses set the goal, they can come up with creative strategies to accomplish it, such as giving managers financial incentives to diversify their staffs.

2. Be open to scrutiny. Media companies should publicly disclose their ethnic/racial makeup in all departments, including their Washington bureaus. Too many corporations featured in this report did not willingly release their statistics. Making this known to the public is automatically an incentive to hire more responsibly, and the company can be held accountable more readily by its readers and audience. UNITY and its member organizations should survey Washington bureaus of news services, magazines and broadcast companies, and comparable statehouse bureaus, to get a full picture of the challenge ahead.

3. Establish sound hiring standards and enforce them, and guarantee that there will be candidates of color for EVERY newsroom position, especially the highest-profile jobs like those in Washington and state capital bureaus.

4. Break the incestuous hiring cycle in Washington. The same people doing the same stories are being rehired for the same beats in different newsrooms. Reach out beyond the Beltway for tal-

ented journalists who might bring a new perspective to old beats.

5. Fill the pipeline. Appoint more minorities to cover local and state politics back home. Politics is the pipeline to Washington, and unless more journalists of color are covering state legislatures and city councils, the situation in Washington will never change. Given the continued importance of military affairs and national security, newspapers need to give more journalists of color a shot at coverage of security, terrorism and war. Experience there can lead to work covering the Pentagon and other national security agencies. Many journalists of color are on the cops beat back home. Newspapers need to make sure these reporters start developing sources within the local FBI, DEA, ATF and U.S. Attorneys' offices. This would obviously lead to better local coverage and, more importantly, prepare the reporters to cover the Justice Department here in Washington. Likewise, papers could start moving more journalists of color into beats like environment, science, medicine and health, and food and agriculture, with an eye to having those reporters work on stories that emanate out of Washington but have local impact. Groom more talent to be editors and managers in your newsrooms.

6. Provide opportunity. One astonishing finding of this study was that only one-third of these top journalists

plan to end their careers in journalism. Employers need to support and clearly identify advancement opportunities for mid-career journalists and invest in their continued development.

7. Develop mentoring programs. Our survey found that even though most of the journalists surveyed said a mentor was important to their careers, few had them. Creative ideas include dedicating an internship or stints for visiting reporters or editors.

8. Journalists of color need to actively seek counsel of editors about what they must do to pursue a job in Washington. Professional organizations, ranging from the UNITY member groups to Washington media groups such as the White House Correspondents Association, should find opportunities to offer or promote training and offer guidance to journalists who have an interest in covering national politics and government.

"This isn't that hard," said Steven Holmes, a New York Times assistant news editor who is African American. "It all comes down to the fact that newspapers have to work on career development for everybody, but keeping in mind a goal of boosting the number of journalists of color in Washington and devising career development strategies that accomplish that goal."

It can be done. We need to do it now.

# Reaction from UNITY Leaders

The following are comments from the leaders of UNITY: Journalists of Color, Inc. and the four national organizations that comprise UNITY — the Asian American Journalists Association, the National Association of Black Journalists, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and the Native American Journalists Association.

## **UNITY President Ernest R. Sotomayor**

“There is no justification for any media company to staff its bureau in Washington, D.C., without people of color. It’s dishonest journalism because it’s a willful decision made to deliberately exclude diverse staff, and that means the media company is satisfied with providing its readers or audience a skewed view of the news.

“This is the seat of the most powerful government in the world, in one of the most diverse nations in the world, but the press corps doesn’t come even close to reflecting what America looks

like. And the implications go far beyond Washington, because when we’ve had conflicts like the wars in the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq, many of the correspondents who were sent overseas came from that same Washington press corps. So, we’ve seen coverage from a press corps that again fails to reflect the diversity of the nation.

“Any company that is serious about diversity in its Washington bureau can bring about change only if it wants to. It’ll mean committing to hiring, putting people of color in the pipeline in

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— Ernest R. Sotomayor, UNITY President

their state capital bureaus so they can prepare for moves to Washington, putting more people of color on the national reporting staffs and, frankly, giving people of color the same opportunity as so many other white people who didn’t have any previous

Washington experience, and yet got posted to there.”

## **AAJA President Mae Cheng**

“AAJA is disappointed to know that there are so few journalists of Asian descent working in Washington bureaus, covering some of the most important news that makes it in mainstream newspapers on a daily basis. This first-of-a-kind study shows that while the number of Asian Americans in newsrooms is slowly creeping up in recent years, we still are not getting some of the most desirable jobs at

newspapers. We need to start focusing not just on ensuring that Asian Americans are a presence in newsrooms. It is clear from this study that we

also need to start ensuring that Asian Americans are involved in working on more of the important stories that are covered daily.”

## **NABJ President Herbert Lowe**

“The numbers generated by this sur-



vey quantify what black journalists have always known — that we don't get to cover some of the most coveted beats in our profession, the ones that involve coverage of the most pressing issues affecting our country overall and our communities.

“These results are particularly striking during a presidential campaign in which journalists are flying across the country covering President Bush and Senator Kerry.

“Twenty years ago, several black journalists covered the Rev. Jesse Jackson's momentous run for the White House. Today, when a news agency asks for a black journalist covering the campaign, it's much too hard — harder than it should be — to find one.

“Almost every aspiring journalist graduating from college wants the same thing — to cover the biggest stories, the ones that build careers and lead to lasting legacies. It has long been clear to me, and I'm glad this survey bears this out, that more black journalists should be covering City Hall, as that often leads to covering the statehouse, which often leads to covering the White House. We also need to have more black journalists leading these D.C. bureaus — just as we need more of them leading our newsrooms overall.”

**NAJA President Patty Talahongva**

“The findings are dismal. The lack

of cooperation is ironic because these same journalism organizations ask, even demand, information on a daily basis and often quote the Freedom of Information Act.

“When the tables are turned they seem to have a different attitude. Isn't it also interesting to know that you can get exact numbers on the racial breakdown of U.S. troops from the Pentagon?

“While NAJA has members working in the D.C. area, only one member covers the government on a daily basis. As far as we know he's the lone Native American on the government beat. Yet, as sovereign nations, tribal people have a direct interest in what happens in Congress and in federal agencies. More importantly, decisions that are made in regard to Native peoples affects every single American. So where are the Native journalists when it comes to covering politics, government and policy?

“Finally, there seems to be a blatant double standard when it comes to issuing press passes for journalists. A few years ago, the White House turned down an NAJA member seeking credentials and access to White House briefings because he worked for a newspaper owned by a tribe. It is one of just three national Native newspapers. Yet, Xinhua wire service from China is credentialed and it is owned by the Chinese government. Isn't it

interesting that our own government will extend an invitation to a foreign government employee/journalist but deny that same offer to an American journalist/citizen?

“With all the talk about how much diversity matters you would think the numbers would be greater. Apparently, we are all just dreaming, but living in a journalistic nightmare.

“Publishers and editors and corporations need to wake up.”

**NAHJ President Juan Gonzalez**

“The lack of diversity in the Washington press corps, which reports on the most important issues from the nation's seat of power, demonstrates how much further we have to go in reaching racial and ethnic equality in the media industry,” said Juan Gonzalez, president of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and columnist with the New York Daily News. “It's disingenuous for the news media to take the government and its leadership to task every day on a broad range of issues, but then continue excluding people of color from the press corps, especially Latinos, already the nation's largest minority group.

“We call on industry leaders, who have the power to make swift reforms, to summon the will and commit to firm, measurable goals that will bring about rapid change, both in print and in broadcasting.”

# Census Findings

## The Census

The census, conducted in the early part of 2004, looked at full-time reporters, correspondents, columnists, editors and bureau chiefs who cover Washington for U.S. daily newspapers. Excluded from the census were photographers, graphic artists, editorial assistants, foreign correspondents who report to Washington bureaus and Washington-based editors whose primary function is directing foreign coverage. Bureau chiefs contacted via e-mail and telephone were asked to provide a staff list that included names, positions, race and gender. All were told that individuals' names would not be published.

Some newspapers and newspaper groups, including The New York Times, Hearst newspapers and The Washington Times, refused to provide the information requested. In those cases, the data was obtained through newsroom sources who provided the information on the condition of anonymity.

In the end, data was obtained for 100 percent of the Washington news bureaus of the nation's daily newspapers and newspaper groups.

## By Race

The research found 60 of the 574 reporters, columnists and editors assigned to the nation's capital are journalists of color — 10.45 percent. That percentage is less than the 12.47 percent of the reporters, editors and supervisors of color in daily newspaper newsrooms throughout the country, as reported by the most recent American Society of Newspaper Editors' census.

The representation of journalists of color was even lower when examining

leadership positions. Only three of the capital's 36 newspaper bureau chiefs (or their equivalents) were people of color — Caesar Andrews of Gannett News Service, Vickie Walton-James of the Chicago Tribune and Alison Bethel of The Detroit News. That's 8.3 percent.

Within racial categories, the census found 14 Latino journalists in the Washington bureaus, and none were editors. That is 2.4 percent of the Washington journalists, compared with 3.9 percent Latinos in daily newspaper

RACIAL BREAKDOWNS IN WASHINGTON BUREAUS OF U.S. DAILY NEWSPAPERS

RACE	REPORTERS AND EDITORS IN WASHINGTON BUREAUS *	PERCENTAGE OF REPORTS AND EDITORS IN WASHINGTON BUREAUS *	PERCENTAGE OF REPORTERS AND EDITORS IN NEWSROOMS OVERALL **	PERCENTAGE IN U.S. POPULATION ***
Asian	11	1.9 %	2.6 %	3.6 %
Black	35	6.1 %	5.4 %	12.3 %
Hispanic	14	2.4 %	3.9 %	12.5 %
Native American	0	0.0 %	0.6 %	0.9 %
White	514	89.5 %	87.5 %	69.1 %

\* Washington bureau diversity data from the UNITY-Maryland study.

\*\* 2004 newsroom diversity statistics from the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

\*\*\* 2000 U.S. population figures from the U.S. Census Bureau.

newsrooms nationwide. Across the United States, Latinos made up 12.5 percent of the population in 2000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

African Americans made up the largest group of non-white journalists in Washington bureaus. The UNITY-Maryland census found 35 African-American journalists, including 10 editors. That percentage, 6.1 percent, is slightly higher than 5.4 percent ASNE reported as the average for African-American reporters, editors and supervisors nationwide. African Americans made up 12.3 percent of the U.S. population in the 2000 Census.

There were 11 Asian-American journalists found in the census, 1.9 percent of the total, compared with 2.6 percent in newsrooms nationally. Two of the 11 were editors. The Asian-American population in the United States was 3.6 percent in 2000.

None of the 574 Washington journalists was Native American. In daily newspaper newsrooms nationwide, Native Americans represent 0.6 percent of the population. In the U.S. population overall, the figure was 0.9 percent.

### By Individual Newspaper

Eighteen bureaus representing a single newspaper had at least one journalist of color, but nearly all had proportionately fewer journalists of color in Washington than in their home newsrooms. USA Today, which reported

17.2 percent journalists of color in the most recent ASNE survey, had only one non-white journalist covering Washington out of a staff of 26 reporters and editors (3.8 percent). The Los Angeles Times, which according to a Knight Foundation study by Bill Dedman and Stephen K. Doig has a non-white population in its circulation area of 60 percent and nearly 20 percent journalists of color paper-wide,

has a Washington bureau that is 91 percent white (four out of 43).

The Washington Post, which has 43.2 percent people of color in its circulation area and 22.6 percent newsroom-wide, also has less than 10 percent journalists of color covering Washington (four out of 46). The Dallas Morning News, which according to the Dedman-Doig study has a 40.9 percent non-white population in

DIVERSITY IN WASHINGTON PRESS CORPS —  
TOP 10 U.S. DAILIES BY CIRCULATION

NEWSPAPER (BY CIRCULATION)	PERCENTAGE OF NON-WHITE REPORTERS AND EDITORS IN WASHINGTON BUREAU *	PERCENTAGE OF NON-WHITE REPORTERS AND EDITORS OVERALL AT NEWSPAPER **	NON-WHITE POPULATION IN NEWSPAPER'S CIRCULATION AREA ***
USA Today	3.8 %	17.2 %	30.9 %
Wall Street Journal	12.8 %	16.2 %	30.9 %
New York Times	12.7 %	16.7%	30.9 %
Los Angeles Times	9.3 %	19.6 %	60.0 %
Washington Post	8.7 %	22.6 %	43.2 %
(N.Y.) Daily News	0.0 %	18.5 %	65.0 %
Chicago Tribune	17.6 %	16.2 %	28.5 %
New York Post	0.0 %	Did not report	40.3 %
Newsday	15.4 %	24.9 %	33.9 %
Houston Chronicle	12.5 %	20.2 %	51.2 %

\* Washington bureau diversity data from the UNITY-Maryland census.

\*\* 2004 newsroom diversity statistics from the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

\*\*\* Non-white population in the newspapers' circulation area from 2004 study by Bill Dedman and Stephen K. Doig for the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation (U.S. minority population figures are used for national newspapers - USA Today, Wall Street Journal and New York Times).

its circulation area and 20.9 percent journalists of color overall, has an 11-person Washington bureau that is all white.

The most diverse newsroom of the single-newspaper Washington bureaus was The Boston Globe, which had two journalists of color out of 11 reporters and editors. At 18.2 percent, diversity in the Globe's Washington bureau was higher than the demographics of its circulation area (17.4 percent) and nearly the same as its newsroom population (19.2 percent).

### By Washington Bureaus Representing a Newspaper Chain

The most representative Washington bureaus were those operated by large newspaper chains. Knight Ridder's Washington bureau had 29.2 percent people of color, followed by Gannett News Service at 28.1 percent and Newhouse News Service at 25 percent. But other chains had among the least diverse newsrooms in Washington. Scripps Howard and Copley had no journalists of color covering Washington while Cox and McClatchy had just one each. (Note: Regional reporters who are based in a chain bureau but who report directly to the home newspaper are included in the overall census, but not as part of the chain's Washington bureau).

DIVERSITY IN WASHINGTON PRESS CORPS — BY NEWSPAPER BUREAU

NEWSPAPER BUREAU *	REPORTERS AND EDITORS IN WASHINGTON **	NON-WHITE REPORTERS AND EDITORS IN WASHINGTON **	PERCENTAGE OF NON-WHITE REPORTERS AND EDITORS IN WASHINGTON
Knight Ridder	24	7	29.2 %
Gannett News Service	32	9	28.1 %
Newhouse News Service	16	4	25.0 %
Boston Globe	11	2	18.2 %
Chicago Tribune	17	3	17.6 %
Newsday	13	2	15.4 %
Wall Street Journal	39	5	12.8 %
New York Times	63	8	12.7 %
L.A. Times	43	4	9.3 %
Baltimore Sun	11	1	9.1 %
Washington Post	46	4	8.7 %
Cox	13	1	7.7 %
McClatchy	13	1	7.7 %
USA Today	26	1	3.8 %
Washington Times	27	1	3.7 %
Copley	10	0	0 %
Dallas Morning News	11	0	0 %
Scripps Howard	19	0	0 %

\* Regional correspondents who are based in a bureau but who report directly to the home newspaper are included in the overall census, but are not counted as part of the larger bureau.

\*\* Reporters, correspondents, columnists and editors assigned to cover Washington for daily U.S. newspapers.

Photographers, graphic artists, support staff and foreign editors and others who are based in Washington but whose primary function is not in the coverage of Washington are not included.

### By Corporate Ownership Group

Knight Ridder-owned newspapers had cumulatively the highest percentage of journalists of color in Washington, at 23.7 percent. Gannett newspapers were second at 16.9 percent. The leadership in diversity by those two newspapers in Washington is reflected nationally in the Dedman-Doig study, which found that Gannett had the nation's highest "Newsroom Diversity Index" and Knight Ridder was No. 2 (the diversity index compares the non-white population in a newspaper's circulation area to its newsroom). Some of the smaller ownership groups had among the least diverse newsrooms around town. Scripps Howard, Belo and Copley did not have any journalists of color in the Washington press corps. Hearst and McClatchy had just one each.

DIVERSITY IN WASHINGTON NEWSPAPER PRESS CORPS — BY OWNERSHIP

CORPORATION	REPORTERS AND EDITORS IN WASHINGTON *	NON-WHITE REPORTERS AND EDITORS IN WASHINGTON *	PERCENTAGE OF NON-WHITE REPORTERS AND EDITORS IN WASHINGTON
Knight Ridder	38	9	23.7 %
Gannett	65	11	16.9 %
New York Times	75	10	13.3 %
Dow Jones	39	5	12.8 %
Tribune	94	11	11.7 %
Newhouse	35	4	11.4 %
Cox	18	2	11.1 %
Washington Post	46	4	8.7 %
McClatchy	13	1	7.7 %
Hearst	22	1	4.5 %
News World Communications	27	1	3.7 %
Belo	13	0	0 %
Copley	10	0	0 %
Scripps Howard	19	0	0 %

\* Reporters, correspondents, columnists and editors assigned to cover Washington for daily U.S. newspapers owned by the corporation. Photographers, graphic artists, support staff and foreign editors and others who are based in Washington but whose primary function is not in the coverage of Washington are not included.

# Survey Findings

## The Survey

A 75-question survey instrument was created under the guidance of the project's Advisory Committee, drawing in part on the past work of Dr. Lawrence T. McGill's "Newsroom Diversity: Meeting the Challenge" and "The American Journalist in the 21st Century" by Dr. David Weaver and his colleagues at Indiana University. The questionnaire was distributed via e-mail during spring 2004 to the 60 Washington correspondents, reporters, columnists, editors and bureau chiefs who were identified as journalists of color in the census portion of the project. Thirty-nine of the 60 journalists responded to the questionnaire — a 65 percent response rate.

## Washington Coverage of Race-Related Issues

Few of the respondents thought the Washington press corps does a good job in covering race-related issues. Only 13 percent said the coverage was "good," while 79 percent characterized it as "fair" and 8 percent as "poor." None said they thought the coverage was "excellent" or even "very good." The journalists gave their own

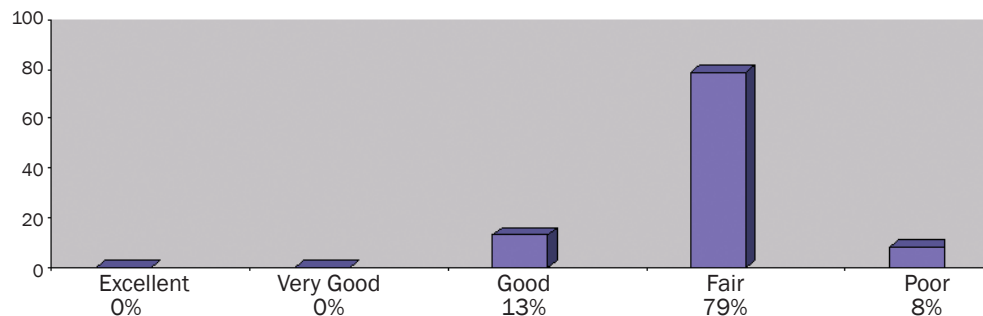
Washington news bureaus similar grades — more called their bureaus' coverage excellent and very good (3 percent and 5 percent respectively), but more also called it "poor" (18 percent).

Some of the journalists of color also thought Washington coverage of race-related issues had declined in just the past few years. Nearly one-third said the coverage had declined somewhat and another 5 percent said the decline was significant, while 46 percent said it was unchanged and 16 percent said it was somewhat improved (none said it was significantly improved). For their own bureaus, more said they thought the coverage had improved somewhat (26 percent), but more also said they

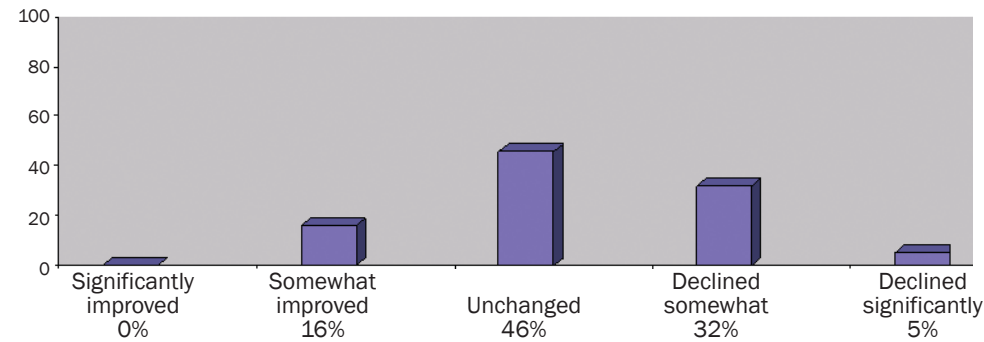
thought the coverage had declined significantly (12 percent).

The Washington reporters and editors felt that journalists outside the Beltway do a better job in coverage of race-related stories than the Washington press corps. More than 70 percent said they felt Washington bureau coverage of those stories was inferior to coverage outside of Washington, and only 11 percent believed the Washington coverage was somewhat better (none felt it was significantly better). The same journalists gave their own Washington bureaus only slightly better grades. Half of the respondents said their Washington bureaus do a worse job of covering

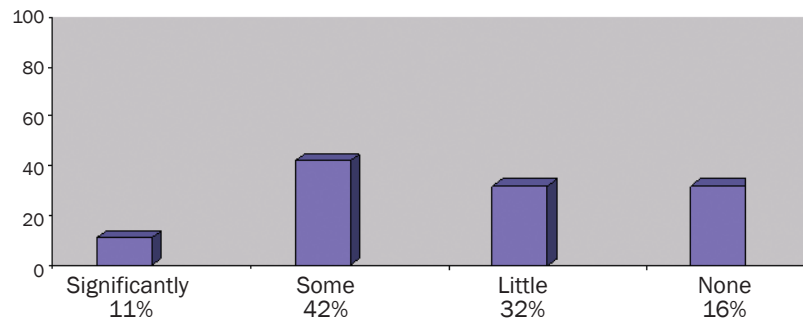
JOURNALISTS RATE WASHINGTON PRESS CORPS' COVERAGE OF RACE-RELATED ISSUES



JOURNALISTS GRADE WASHINGTON PRESS CORPS' CHANGE IN COVERAGE OF RACE-RELATED ISSUES OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS



AMOUNT OF INFLUENCE JOURNALISTS FEEL THEY HAVE OVER COVERAGE OF RACE-RELATED STORIES IN THEIR NEWS BUREAUS



race-related issues compared with their news organization overall while nearly one in five felt the coverage was somewhat better.

### Impact of Diversity in the Washington Press Corps

More than four in five respondents said an increase in racial diversity of the Washington press corps would have at

least some impact on coverage, and nearly half said that impact would be significant. Nearly four in five also felt that their race helps in their own coverage of race-related issues. And nine in 10 said they felt journalists' race has at least some impact on their Washington coverage. Yet nearly half also said that they believe they personally have little or no influence over the coverage of

race-related stories in their own bureaus, and only 11 percent said they felt they had significant influence.

More than 90 percent said they felt the Washington press corps was at least somewhat out of touch with its audiences back home (34 percent said significantly), and more than three in four felt that the press corps' lack of diversity contributed to that.

The journalists of color also said they are much more likely to seek out minority voices for stories that are not race-related than their white colleagues. Nearly three in four said they at least occasionally look for minority voices in such stories, while the same numbers believe their white colleagues seldom or never seek out such sources. More than half also said their Washington bureau colleagues look to them at least occasionally for expertise on race-related stories.

### Professional Advancement and Development

The majority of the journalists of color said they were never recruited or groomed for a Washington position, while just 17 percent said they were strongly recruited.

Nearly three-fourths of the respondents said race helped at least somewhat in their ascension to the Washington bureau, but many also said their white colleagues think race played a much larger role. Eleven percent

characterized their race as “strongly” helping their promotion to Washington. But 44 percent said they believed their white colleagues thought that race strongly helped in the ascension of the journalists of color.

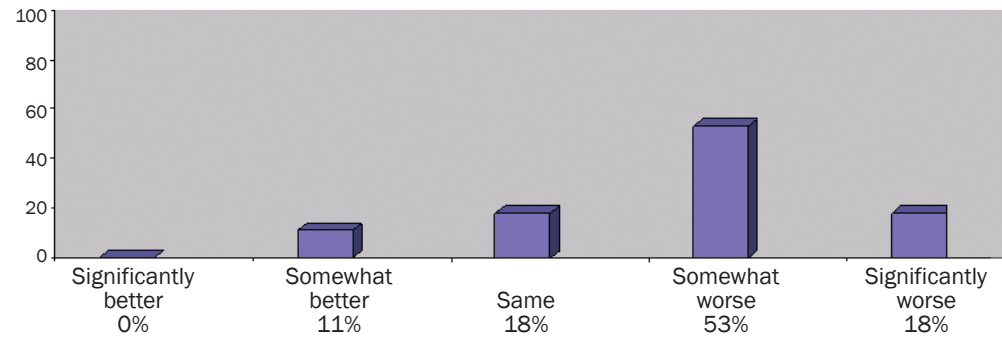
The survey found that 84 percent of the journalists believed a mentor was at least somewhat important for a Washington journalist (30 percent said it was very important while 3 percent said it had no importance). But only 15 percent said they have a mentor in the Washington press corps.

Eight in 10 of the Washington reporters and editors said they had been working journalists for more than 10 years (nearly one-third had been in journalism more than 20 years). More than three-fourths reported first becoming interested in journalism in high school or before, and nearly six in 10 worked on their high school newspapers. Nearly seven in 10 worked on their college papers, and the same number held a newspaper internship before entering the field.

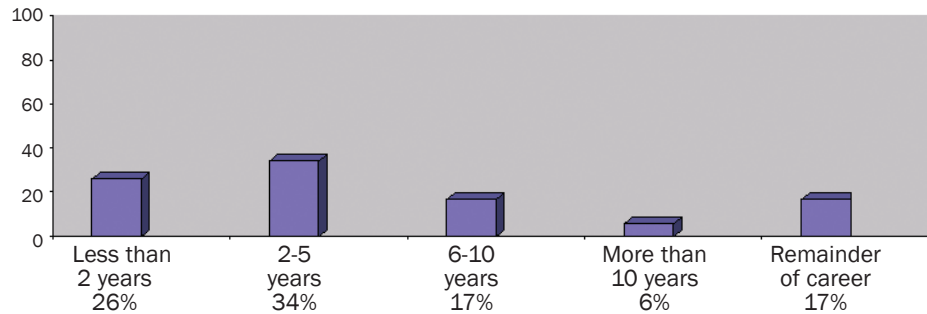
### Job Satisfaction

In a survey of newspaper journalists nationwide in 1999 conducted by Dr. Lawrence T. McGill of the Freedom Forum, more than 60 percent of the journalists of color reported that they “very much” liked their current jobs. A 2002 study of journalists around the country by Dr. David Weaver and his

JOURNALISTS RATE WASHINGTON PRESS CORPS’ COVERAGE OF RACE-RELATED ISSUES COMPARED TO OTHER U.S. NEWS ORGANIZATIONS ON THE SAME ISSUES



HOW LONG WASHINGTON JOURNALISTS WANT TO REMAIN THERE



colleagues at Indiana University’s School of Journalism found 33.3 percent were “very satisfied” with their jobs. But in the UNITY-Maryland survey of Washington journalists of color, just 18 percent said they were “very satisfied” with their current jobs. About one-fourth of the Washington journalists said they were at least somewhat

dissatisfied with their jobs. Fifty-six percent described themselves as “fairly satisfied.”

Nearly every respondent said that, if they had it to do again, they would still come to Washington. Yet six in 10 said they want to leave the Washington press corps within five years, while only 17 percent said they plan to stay for the



remainder of their careers. Nearly six in 10 want to be in a newsroom outside of Washington within the next five years while 13 percent want to be in a profession outside of journalism in the same time frame.

Just more than one-third said they planned on finishing their professional careers as journalists, while 46 percent said they were unsure and 18 percent said they would not. Yet 79 percent said if they had it to do over again, they would have selected journalism as a career.

### **General Background**

More than half of the respondents were under 40 years old while only 13 percent were 50 or over. The majority (57 percent) grew up in the suburbs while 41 percent were raised in cities. Nearly two-thirds described their families growing up as middle or upper-middle class while 36 percent said they were from lower or lower-middle class beginnings.

Eighty-six percent attended public high schools and 62 percent graduated from a public college or university. More than half (56 percent) majored in journalism, while more than one-quarter

(28 percent) studied English and 13 percent majored in political science/government. More than one-third hold advanced degrees.

More than one-fourth reported earning more than \$100,000 annually from their newspaper jobs, and 51 percent said they made between \$75,000 and \$100,000. Only 23 percent reported making \$75,000 or less a year, and none made less than \$50,000 a year.

Nearly three in four respondents reported membership in at least one of the professional organizations representing journalists of color — National Association of Black Journalists (41 percent), Asian American Journalists Association (21 percent), National Association of Hispanic Journalists (15 percent) and South Asian Journalists Association (10 percent). Other memberships included Investigative Reporters and Editors (18 percent), the National Press Club (18 percent) and the Society of Professional Journalists (10 percent).

# Breakdown of Questionnaire Results

The following questions are designed to examine your thoughts and experiences on Washington coverage as it relates to race-related issues.

Q1. How would you rate the Washington press corps' coverage of race-related issues?

Excellent — 0%  
Very good — 0%  
Good — 13%  
Fair — 79%  
Poor — 8%

Q2. How would you rate your Washington news bureau's coverage of race-related issues?

Excellent — 3%  
Very good — 5%  
Good — 11%  
Fair — 63%  
Poor — 18%

Q3. How has the Washington press corps' coverage of race-related issues changed in the past few years?

Significantly improved — 0%  
Somewhat improved — 16%  
Unchanged — 46%  
Declined somewhat — 32%  
Declined significantly — 5%

Q4. How has your Washington news bureau's coverage of race-related issues changed in the past few years?

Significantly improved — 0%  
Somewhat improved — 26%  
Unchanged — 43%  
Declined somewhat — 17%  
Declined significantly — 12%

Q5. What effect would an increase in the racial diversity of the Washington press corps — to the point where the diversity of the press corps mirrored the diversity of the nation — have on coverage of race-related issues?

Significant — 49%  
Some — 35%  
Little — 14%  
None — 3%

Q6. What impact does the race of a journalist have on her/his coverage of our nation's government?

Significant impact — 22%  
Some impact — 68%  
Little impact — 8%  
No impact — 3%

Q7. What impact does your race have on your coverage of Washington?

Significant impact — 16%  
Some impact — 63%  
Little impact — 16%  
No impact — 5%

Q8. How often do you believe your white colleagues in the Washington press corps seek out minority voices for their stories that are not race-related?

Regularly — 0%  
Occasionally — 26%  
Seldom — 63%  
Never — 11%

Q9. How often do your white colleagues in your Washington bureau seek out minority voices for their stories that are not race-related?

Regularly — 3%  
Occasionally — 36%  
Seldom — 50%  
Never — 11%

Q10. How often do you seek out minority voices for stories that are not race-related?

- Regularly — 24%
- Occasionally — 50%
- Seldom — 8%
- Never — 3%
- Not applicable — 16%

Q11. How often do your Washington bureau colleagues look to you for expertise on race-related stories?

- Regularly — 13%
- Occasionally — 39%
- Seldom — 34%
- Never — 13%

Q12. How much of a responsibility do you feel in suggesting stories relating to race?

- Significant — 23%
- Some — 69%
- Little — 8%
- None — 0%

Q13. How much influence do you have over the coverage of race-related stories in your news bureau?

- Significant — 11%
- Some — 42%
- Little — 32%
- None — 16%

Q14. How effectively do you as a current member of the Washington press corps cover issues of race?

- Very effectively — 5%
- Somewhat effectively — 37%
- Not very effectively — 13%
- Not at all effectively — 16%
- Not applicable — 29%

Q15. What impact does your race have on your ability to cover race-related issues?

- Strongly helps — 34%
- Somewhat helps — 45%
- No impact — 21%
- Somewhat hurt — 0%
- Strongly hurts — 0%

Q16. What impact does your race have on your ability to successfully affect your news organization's coverage of race-related issues?

- Strongly helps — 11%
- Somewhat helps — 74%
- No impact — 16%
- Somewhat hurts — 0%
- Strongly hurts — 0%

Q17. How does your Washington bureau's coverage of race-related issues compare to your news organization's overall coverage of race issues?

- Significantly better — 0%
- Somewhat better — 19%
- Same — 31%
- Somewhat worse — 47%
- Significantly worse — 3%

Q18. How does the Washington press corps' coverage of race-related issues compare to the coverage of race issues by U.S. news organizations in general?

- Significantly better — 0%
- Somewhat better — 11%
- Same — 18%
- Somewhat worse — 53%
- Significantly worse — 18%

Q19. Describe the level of interest among your readers in Washington news.

- Significant — 46%
- Some — 46%
- Little — 8%
- None — 0%

Q20. Describe the level of interest among your readers in Washington news that is race related.

- Significant — 6%
- Some — 76%
- Little — 12%
- None — 6%

Q21. To what extent, if any, do you believe the Washington press corps is out of touch with its audiences back home?

- Significantly — 34%
- Somewhat — 57%
- Little — 9%
- Not at all — 0%

Q22. If you believe the Washington press corps is on some level out of touch with its audiences back home, do you believe lack of diversity in the press corps contributes to that?

- Significantly — 11%
- Somewhat — 65%
- Little — 19%
- Not at all — 5%
- Not applicable — 0%

In this section, we want to focus on your career, your Washington news bureau and your news organization.

Q23. How difficult is it for any journalist in your news organization — regardless of race — to ascend to the Washington bureau?

- Very difficult — 34%
- Somewhat difficult — 66%
- Not very difficult — 0%
- Not at all difficult — 0%

Q24. How difficult is it for a journalist of color in your news organization to ascend to the Washington bureau?

- Very difficult — 45%
- Somewhat difficult — 50%
- Not very difficult — 3%
- Not at all difficult — 3%

Q25. Describe the impact your race had on your ascension to Washington.

- Strongly helped — 11%
- Helped somewhat — 62%
- No impact — 19%
- Hurt somewhat — 8%
- Strongly hurt — 0%

Q26. Describe the impact your white colleagues in the Washington press corps believe your race had on your ascension to Washington.

- Strongly helped — 44%
- Helped somewhat — 42%
- No impact — 14%
- Hurt somewhat — 0%
- Strongly hurt — 0%

Q27. Before joining your current Washington news bureau, you were:

- In the Washington bureau of another news organization — 33%
- In a foreign or non-Washington national bureau of another news organization — 0%
- In a foreign or non-Washington national bureau of your current news organization — 3%
- In the local newsroom of another news organization — 15%
- In the local newsroom of your current news organization — 41%
- In another journalism position — 8%
- Not in journalism full-time — 0%

Q28. Before coming to Washington, what was your newsroom position?

- Editor — 26%
- Reporter — 71%
- Other — 3%
- Not applicable — 0%

Q29. Before coming to Washington, to what area/desk were you assigned?

- Business — 11%
- City Hall or other local government — 11%
- Features — 5%
- Foreign — 5%
- Metro/State — 42%
- National — 8%
- Sports — 0%
- Statehouse — 3%
- Other — 13%
- Not applicable — 3%

Q30. Before coming to the Washington bureau, were you recruited or groomed for a Washington position?

- Strongly — 17%
- Somewhat — 22%
- Very little — 6%
- Not at all — 56%

Q31. If you checked one of the first three options in the previous question, then tell us how long were you recruited/groomed before joining the Washington bureau?

- Less than 6 months — 24%
- 6-12 months — 6%
- 1-2 years — 6%
- 2-5 years — 3%
- More than 5 years — 3%
- Not applicable — 59%

Q32. Do you have a journalistic mentor in the Washington press corps?

- Yes — 15%
- No — 85%

Q33. If you answered “yes” to the question above, is that person:

- A minority journalist of your same race — 5%
- A minority journalist of a different race — 0%
- A white journalist — 8%
- Not applicable — 87%

Q34. How important is it for a Washington journalist to have a mentor?

- Very important — 30%
- Somewhat important — 54%
- Not very important — 14%
- Not at all important — 3%

Q35. Do you feel being a journalist of color helps or hurts your ability to have a mentor?

- Strongly helps — 0%
- Helps somewhat — 0%
- No impact — 72%
- Somewhat hurts — 23%
- Strongly hurts — 5%

Q36. What impact does your race have on your ability to continue to move upward in your news organization?

- Strongly helps — 6%
- Somewhat helps — 47%
- No impact — 28%
- Somewhat hurts — 19%
- Strongly hurts — 0%

Q37. What impact does your race have on your ability to interact and build relationships with your newsroom colleagues?

- Strongly helps — 0%
- Somewhat helps — 3%
- No impact — 74%
- Somewhat hurts — 24%
- Strongly hurts — 0%

Q38. What impact does your race have on your ability to develop news sources?

- Strongly helps — 0%
- Somewhat helps — 21%
- No impact — 54%
- Somewhat hurts — 10%
- Strongly hurts — 5%
- Not applicable — 10%

Q39. How much freedom do you usually have in selecting the stories you work on?

- Almost complete freedom — 18%
- A great deal of freedom — 50%
- Some freedom — 32%
- None at all — 0%

Q40. How much freedom do your white colleagues in the Washington press corps have in selecting the stories they work on?

- Almost complete freedom — 3%
- A great deal of freedom — 50%
- Some freedom — 47%
- None at all — 0%

Q41. How much freedom do you usually have in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized?

- Almost complete freedom — 8%
- A great deal of freedom — 54%
- Some freedom — 38%
- None at all — 0%

Q42. How much freedom do your white colleagues in the Washington press corps have in deciding which aspects of a story should be emphasized?

- Almost complete freedom — 0%
- A great deal of freedom — 39%
- Some freedom — 61%
- None at all — 0%

Q43. How would you describe your news organization's commitment to coverage of race-related news in Washington?

- Excellent — 3%
- Very good — 8%
- Good — 22%
- Fair — 50%
- Poor — 17%

Q44. How would you describe your news organization's commitment to coverage of race-related news in general?

- Excellent — 3%
- Very good — 16%
- Good — 38%
- Fair — 38%
- Poor — 5%

The next set of questions relate to your job satisfaction and your future in journalism:

Q45. Overall, how satisfied are you with your present Washington job?

- Very satisfied — 18%
- Fairly satisfied — 56%
- Somewhat dissatisfied — 23%
- Very dissatisfied — 3%

Q46. Overall, how satisfied were you with your last non-Washington journalism job?

- Very satisfied — 26%
- Fairly satisfied — 39%
- Somewhat dissatisfied — 32%
- Very dissatisfied — 3%

Q47. Including your current job, how many different news organizations have you worked for as a journalist (not including internships)?

- 1 — 5%
- 2 — 16%
- 3 — 26%
- 4 — 34%
- 5 or more — 18%

Q48. How many years have you worked as a journalist (not including internships)?

- Less than 2 years — 0%
- 2-5 years — 3%
- 6-10 years — 18%
- 11-20 years — 49%
- 21-30 years — 26%
- More than 30 years — 5%

Q49. How many years have you worked for your current news organization?

- Less than 2 years — 13%
- 2-5 years — 38%
- 6-10 years — 26%
- 11-20 years — 13%
- 21-30 years — 10%
- More than 30 years - 0%

Q50. How many years have you worked in your current Washington bureau?

- Less than 2 years — 21%
- 2-5 years — 39%
- 6-10 years — 29%
- 11-20 years — 11%
- 21-30 years — 0%
- More than 30 years — 0%

Q51. How long do you want to remain part of the Washington press corps?

- Less than 2 years — 26%
- 2-5 years — 34%
- 6-10 years — 17%
- More than 10 years - 6%
- Remainder of career — 17%

Q52. If you had it to do over again, would you choose journalism as a career?

- Yes — 79%
- No — 10%
- Don't know — 10%

Q53. Do you plan on finishing your professional career as a journalist?

- Yes — 36%
- No — 18%
- Don't know — 46%

Q54. Where would you most like to be working in five years?

- In your current Washington bureau — 16%
- In the Washington bureau of another news organization — 9%
- In the home newsroom of your current news organization — 9%
- In the home newsroom of a different news organization — 19%
- In a foreign or non-Washington national bureau of another news organization — 13%
- In a foreign or non-Washington national bureau of your current news organization — 16%
- In another journalism position — 6%
- In a non-journalism profession — 13%

Q55. If you had it to do over again, would you come to the Washington bureau?

- Yes — 97%
- No — 0%
- Don't know — 3%

Q56. How many years were you a full-time journalist (not including internships) before you came to a Washington news bureau?

- Less than 2 years — 5%
- 2-5 years — 13%
- 6-10 years — 39%
- 11-20 years — 39%
- More than 20 years — 3%

The following questions explore your educational experiences and how you entered journalism.

Q57. When did you first become interested in journalism?

- Middle school or earlier — 10%
- Middle school/junior high school — 21%
- High school — 46%
- College — 18%
- After college — 5%

Q58. Did you work as a journalist on your high school newspaper?

- Yes — 59%
- No — 41%

Q59. What kind of school was your high school?

- Private — 14%
- Public — 86%

Q60. Did you work as a journalist on your college newspaper?

- Yes — 69%
- No — 31%

Q61. Did you take an internship at a newspaper before entering journalism as a profession?

- Yes — 69%
- No — 31%

Q62. What best describes the college where you received your undergraduate degree?

- Public — 62%
- Private, non-Ivy League — 28%
- Ivy League — 10%
- Not applicable — 0%

Q63. What was your major as an undergraduate?

- English — 28%
- Government/political science/public policy — 13%
- History — 0%
- Journalism — 56%
- Mass communication/communications — 5%
- Sciences — 5%
- Other — 8%
- Not Applicable — 0%

Q64. Do you hold any of the following graduate degrees?

- MA — 23%
- MJ — 0%
- PhD — 0%
- JD — 3%
- MBA — 0%
- MD — 0%
- Other — 10%

Q65. If you went to graduate school, what did you study?  
 English — 9%  
 Government/political science/public policy — 9%  
 History — 4%  
 Journalism — 17%  
 Mass communication/communications — 0%  
 Sciences — 0%  
 Other — 17%  
 Not Applicable — 43%

Finally, we would like to know a little bit about you so we can see how different types of people feel about the issues we have been examining.

Q66. What is your gender?  
 Female — 49%  
 Male — 51%

Q67. What is your race or ethnicity (multiracial respondents should check all appropriate boxes)?  
 Asian American or South Asian — 23%  
 Black or African American — 59%  
 Hispanic or Latino — 18%  
 Native American — 0%  
 White — 0%

Q68. What is your age?  
 Under 30 — 5%  
 30-39 — 46%  
 40-49 — 36%  
 50-59 — 13%  
 60 and over — 0%

Q69. How would you describe the area where you lived growing up?  
 Rural — 3%  
 Suburban — 57%  
 Urban — 41%

Q70. How would you describe your socio-economic background growing up?  
 Lower — 15%  
 Lower middle — 21%  
 Middle — 49%  
 Upper middle — 15%  
 Upper — 0%

Q71. What is your personal yearly income from your full-time journalism job today?  
 Under \$40,000 — 0%  
 \$40,000 to \$50,000 — 0%  
 \$50,001 to \$75,000 — 23%  
 \$75,001 to \$100,000 — 51%  
 \$100,001 or more — 26%

Q72. Which category best describes your job?  
 Reporter — 77%  
 Columnist — 3%  
 Copy editor — 0%  
 Bureau chief — 5%  
 Assignment editor — 13%  
 Other editor — 3%  
 Photographer or artist — 0%

Q73. About what percentage of the people you see socially are connected in some way with journalism or the communications field?  
 0-10 percent — 15%  
 11-25 percent — 23%  
 26-50 percent — 28%  
 51-75 percent — 23%  
 76-90 percent — 10%  
 More than 90 percent — 0%

Q74. About what percentage of the people you see socially are connected in some way with the issues you write about or edit?  
 0-10 percent — 67%  
 11-25 percent — 18%  
 26-50 percent — 13%  
 51-75 percent — 3%  
 76-90 percent — 0%  
 More than 90 percent — 0%

Q75. Please check the professional journalism organizations to which you currently have a membership.  
 AAJA — 21%  
 IRE — 18%  
 NPC — 18%  
 NABJ — 41%  
 NAHJ — 15%  
 NAJA — 0%  
 NLGJA — 0%  
 SAJA — 10%  
 SPJ — 10%  
 Other (please write in) — 15%



UNITY: Journalists of Color, Inc. is a strategic alliance of journalists of color acting as a force for positive change to advance their presence, growth and leadership in the fast-changing global news industry. This alliance includes the Asian American Journalists Association, National Association of Black Journalists, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and the Native American Journalists Association.

The Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland in College Park, Md., prepares students for careers in print, broadcast and online journalism at the undergraduate and graduate levels. It is home to the national headquarters of NABJ and American Journalism Review.

Back cover: Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg talk with press pool reporters and photographers outside the West Wing on the North Grounds of the White House following a meeting with President Bush March 19, 2003.  
White House photo by Paul Morse

