

Rochelle Stanfield: Thank you very much. I am overwhelmed to see practically every seat still occupied by people that look as if their eyes are still open. I thought I would really have the easiest job because I would just be able to say, as I do, I agree with everything that everybody just said. I wouldn't have to say anything else because there wouldn't be anyone left. But you are a very persistent and good group and I congratulate you all. I also thank the Eisenhower Foundation for inviting me.

Dr. Gutierrez, I was at Northwestern four years before you and let me say that they have made progress in those years because when I was taking urban reporting or whatever they called it then, they didn't have a beat called "race". They didn't have anything like that. So, progress had been made.

The reason that I wanted to bring up my being at Northwestern from 1958-63, was because that was a school, in those days, of middle class and upper middle class students whose heroes, nonetheless, were the heroes of "The Front Page" (a play by Ben Hecht). Unlike the current journalism students observed by a member of the first panel who just want to make music videos, we really wanted to do the nitty-gritty reporting. In those days it was not in any way an elite profession. People said to me, "Why are you going to journalism school? You could go and be a teacher." So that sort of tells you where journalism fell on the continuum in those days.

I think that one thing that changed journalism after I left school to make investigative reporting the goal of a lot of young people was the Watergate scandal and Woodward and Bernstein, who became huge heroes. I would imagine that maybe even some people in this room decided to become reporters, as a result of the attention that "Woodstein" got in the seventies. At that point, investigative reporting was the cool thing to do. From what others here are saying, I guess that is no longer the case.

For 23 years I was a staff correspondent at National Journal. When I went to National Journal people said, National Journal of what? Probably some people still say National Journal of what, but when I left in 1998, at least in the Washington area, it had become relatively well known. What National Journal did for most of the time I was there was to cover policy in-depth. And they let me cover race, demographics, civil rights, housing, urban affairs, all of those kinds of things and to cover the policy of it. In those days, to cover poverty, I went out to the public housing projects. I went out and first hand covered all those human dimensions of stories. I also covered the statistics, which of course at National Journal we used a lot of. In those days, if you wanted a statistic you had to call someone up to get the statistic. Often you went and actually talked to them face to face and you got a lot more context for the statistics. That helped me provide more background as well as the human angle.

By the time I left National Journal, it had gone the way of so many other news organizations and it was no longer all that interested in covering some of the dull boring policy stories that I used to write but was much more interested in the hard-core politics, which would sell magazines.

I guess that way of doing things has worked for the magazine, but I think it's too bad. They did not give anybody my beat after I left. I guess they parceled it out to some interns.

Anyway, I have compiled all sorts of statistics that other people have already mentioned so I don't need to belabor them. Just a brief review: Like other aspects of American society, the issues of poverty, inequality and race have become more and more complicated, convoluted, and nuanced since the 1960s. Instead of two nations, two societies, one black, one white, there are multiple nations of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation.

Similarly, the media have fragmented and proliferated. There are the traditional media that are divided more and more into segmented, targeted kinds of media. The new media, the alternative media, the niche media, and the ethnic media. Meanwhile, traditional media coverage has gotten shorter, simpler, and shallower. Complex thoughts often are reduced to sound bites.

The statements that I have just made are all grossly oversimplified, as is this one. To reverse the media decline we need to figure out how to tell an intricate, multi-faceted story that people really don't want to hear in a way that they will understand it, absorb it, and perhaps act on it.

Members of previous panels have said that there haven't been any stories about major trends in race, inequality, or poverty recently. This [holding up inch-thick compilation of clippings] isn't all news stories, but it's mostly news stories from newspapers, old-fashioned clippings, just from October, [2006]. So, people are writing not just about crime but people actually about these issues. But I think one of the problems is that the writers are not connecting the dots. There is no time, there is no length of story to, in many cases, provide in-depth analysis and a broader policy perspective along with the punchy personality-based story.

On that point, I want to compliment the Washington Post on the series of Being a Black Man because there they were able to take a very human thing-- each story is real people doing things--but they also give statistics, they also give background. They have really managed to provide a lot of context in the course of a very human story. That's something that is not done very often. It needs to be done a lot more.

One of the biggest things that's happening to the media today is the emergence of the new media. We've already talked about bloggers. I think that there are also huge possibilities for citizen journalists to use this technology. But there are also even bigger opportunities for professional journalists to use technology in many new innovative and in-depth ways. Just getting data, getting access to things can be done in minutes, seconds. There is a whole new generation of young people out there figuring out ways of communicating in new and very exciting ways. I think that the traditional media have to glom onto those developments and use them in the professional way that we've all been trained to do.

As to recommendations, just two: one relates to training and recruiting. We need to train journalism students to dig behind the surface, to see the bigger picture, to have the background, to be more analytical, to provide context. And we have to recruit young people from the working class, as other people have said, and then support them through what can be a lengthy process until they actually can finance themselves.

The other recommendation would be on the use of technology and the new media. Journalism needs to grasp it and to use it for the purpose of telling the story about poverty, race and inequality in a more nuanced and broader way.

I'll just end by rephrasing the Talmud, maybe there is no good answer, but that does not exempt any of us from looking for one. Thank you.