

"The Newspaper's Challenge: Bringing People Together"

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THANK YOU FOR THAT KIND INTRODUCTION.

I CAN'T TELL YOU WHAT AN HONOUR AND PRIVILEGE
IT IS FOR ME TO BE HERE TODAY.

AND I WANT TO BEGIN BY PAYING SPECIAL TRIBUTE
TO ALLAN THOMPSON, NOW A PROFESSOR OF
JOURNALISM AT CARLETON UNIVERSITY IN CANADA,
WHO HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROGRAM OF
BRINGING CANADIAN JOURNALISTS TO LECTURE AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF RWANDA.

ALLAN USED TO WORK FOR ME AS A REPORTER AT
THE TORONTO STAR. HE WAS IN THE OTTAWA
BUREAU. I WAS THE PUBLISHER. BUT I SAW AND
CHATTED WITH HIM OFTEN. I HAVE THE GREATEST
RESPECT FOR HIM.

HE IS A FIRST-RATE, DEDICATED JOURNALIST WHO
CARES DEEPLY ABOUT HIS CRAFT.
INDEED I WOULD SAY IT IS THAT SAME PASSION THAT
HAS LED TO THE CREATION OF THIS UNIQUE
PROGRAM.

AND IT WAS ALLAN WHO BECAME SO FEROCIOUSLY
INTERESTED IN RWANDA AND MORE THAN ANY
OTHER CANADIAN JOURNALIST, COVERED THE STORY
OF THIS COUNTRY IN THE 90S.

THAT EXPERIENCE HAS NOT LEFT HIM.

AND IT IS BECAUSE OF HIM - AND MY FRIEND CHARLEY GORDON - WHO WAS ONE OF MY FIRST CITY EDITORS, THAT I AM HERE TODAY. SO THANK YOU BOTH.

AND I ALSO WANT TO PAY TRIBUTE TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE BROUGHT THIS PROGRAM TO LIFE AND MADE IT POSSIBLE.

WHEN I RECEIVED YOUR INVITATION TO SPEAK, I TRIED TO THINK HOW MY EXPERIENCE AS PUBLISHER OF CANADA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER MIGHT RELATE TO YOU.

I SPOKE WITH ALLAN.

AND WE BOTH AGREED, I SHOULD TALK ABOUT THE CHALLENGE OF A LARGE METROPOLITAN NEWSPAPER IN BRINGING ITS PEOPLE, ITS READERS TOGETHER.

FOR ME THIS SHOULD BE A CRITICAL ROLE FOR ANY SERIOUS NEWSPAPER.

I OFTEN HARKIN BACK TO THE WORDS OF THOMAS JEFFERSON THE GREAT AMERICAN PATRIOT. "WERE IT LEFT TO ME TO DECIDE WHETHER WE SHOULD HAVE A GOVERNMENT WITHOUT NEWSPAPERS, OR NEWSPAPERS WITHOUT A GOVERNMENT, I SHOULD PREFER THE LATTER." IN THE CITY I COME FROM, WE HAVE ONE OF THE MOST DIVERSE POPULATIONS IN THE WORLD. SO BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER, HAVING THEM UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER, BY DEFINITION, MUST BE ONE OF OUR BIGGEST IF NOT THE BIGGEST STORY TO GET TOLD EVERY DAY.

INDEED, IF WE DO NOT TELL IT, IN MY VIEW, WE WOULD NOT BE DOING OUR JOB.

HOW WE HAVE DONE IT IS OPEN TO BOTH SCRUTINY AND CRITICISM.

BUT BY TELLING YOU WHAT WE HAVE DONE, PERHAPS THERE ARE LESSONS TO LEARN - OR TRAPS TO AVOID.

FIRST, LET ME TELL YOU A LITTLE ABOUT THE CITY I CALL HOME - TORONTO.

AS I MENTIONED, IT IS ONE OF THE MOST ETHNICALLY DIVERSE AND MULTICULTURAL CITIES IN THE WORLD. INDEED THE UNITED NATIONS RANKS TORONTO SECOND, BEHIND MIAMI, IN ITS LIST OF WORLD CITIES WITH THE LARGEST PERCENTAGE OF FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION.

WE LIKE TO THINK OF OURSELVES AS A MULTIRACIAL MOSAIC.

ALMOST 43 PER CENT OF TORONTO'S POPULATION OF ROUGHLY FIVE MILLION COMES FROM A VISIBLE MINORITY - THAT IS, THEIR SKIN COLOUR IS OTHER THAN WHITE.

THAT NUMBER SHOULD PASS THE 50 PER CENT LINE SHORTLY.

THE LARGEST SINGLE GROUPS TRACE THEIR ROOTS FROM BRITAIN, IRELAND, ITALY AND CHINA. BUT THERE ARE ALSO SIGNIFICANT POPULATIONS OF PORTUGUESE, JAMAICANS, CROATIANS, EAST INDIANS, SRI LANKANS, LATIN AMERICANS. THE LIST GOES ON.

SOME OF THESE GROUPS CLUSTER IN SPECIFIC NEIGHBOURHOODS.

SO, FOR EXAMPLE, WE HAVE AREAS SUCH AS KOREATOWN, CHINATOWN, LITTLE JAMAICA, LITTLE

INDIA, PORTUGAL VILLAGE AND CORSO ITALIA.
MORE THAN 160 LANGUAGES ARE SPOKEN IN
TORONTO.

WHILE THE PREDOMINANT LANGUAGE, BY FAR, IS
ENGLISH, THE CENSUS REVEALS OTHER LANGUAGE
GROUPS IN SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS.

IN DESCENDING ORDER THEY ARE: CHINESE,
ITALIAN, PORTUGUESE, PUNJABI, SPANISH, POLISH,
TAGALOG (PHILIPPINES) TAMIL, URDU, AND GREEK.
YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED TO KNOW THAT FRENCH,
WHICH IS THE OTHER OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF
CANADA ALONG WITH ENGLISH, IS SPOKEN BY ONLY
1.4 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION.

THE CITY'S DIVERSITY IS ALSO REFLECTED IN
RELIGIOUS PRACTICE.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM IS THE LARGEST FAITH
ACCOUNTING FOR ALMOST ONE THIRD OF THE
POPULATION. NEXT IS THE ANGLICAN CHURCH
WITH 21%, OTHER CHRISTIAN FAITHS WITH 9%,
MUSLIM 6.7%, HINDU 4.8%, JEWISH 4.2% AND SIKH 1%.
ALMOST 19% HAVE NO RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION.
AND HOW IS THIS DIVERSITY REFLECTED IN
TORONTO'S MEDIA SCENE?

AT LAST COUNT THERE ARE 57 SEPARATE ETHNIC
NEWSPAPERS CATERING TO ONE GROUP OR
ANOTHER.

WE HAVE TWO SO-CALLED ETHNIC TV STATIONS THAT
BROADCAST IN VARIOUS LANGUAGES.

THERE ARE FOUR DAILY CHINESE-SPEAKING
NEWSPAPERS, ONE OF WHICH MY COMPANY OWNS.
WE HAVE TWO FREE TRANSIT NEWSPAPERS AND
FOUR PAID ENGLISH-SPEAKING NEWSPAPERS, OF
WHICH THE TORONTO STAR IS THE LARGEST IN THE

CITY - AND IN THE COUNTRY.

AND OVER THE PAST THREE DECADES, THE STAR HAS MADE IT ITS GOAL TO BE THE PRIMARY VOICE IN COVERING THIS STORY OF DIVERSITY.

IN MANY RESPECTS, I FEEL TORONTO IS A WORLD LEADER IN CREATING THE VOCABULARY FOR A DIVERSE SOCIETY LIVING IN RELATIVE HARMONY. I CALL IT THE DIALOGUE ON DIVERSITY.

IT MAY SURPRISE YOU BUT HERE ARE SOME OF THE STORIES OVER THE PAST 25 YEARS THAT HAVE EMERGED IN OUR CITY THAT HAVE FORMED PART OF THAT DIALOGUE.

SHOULD OUR MOUNTIES - THE BELOVED RCMP – BE ABLE TO WEAR A TURBAN WHILE ON THE JOB? OR SHOULD THEY BE ABLE TO CARRY THEIR CEREMONIAL DAGGER OR KIRPAN?

SHOULD LANGUAGES SUCH AS ITALIAN OR PORTUGUESE HAVE THE SAME STATUS AS ENGLISH OR FRENCH IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

SHOULD WE BAN PERFORMANCES OF THE 1920'S MUSICAL "SHOWBOAT" BECAUSE SOME MEMBERS OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY IN TORONTO FEEL IT IS RACIST IN TONE?

SHOULD WE ALLOW A WHITE ANTHROPOLOGIST TO PUT ON AN EXHIBIT CALLED "OUT OF AFRICA" AT THE ROYAL MUSEUM OF ONTARIO OR SHOULD WE INSIST SUCH AN EXHIBIT BE MOUNTED BY AN AFRICAN?

SHOULD WE GET ANGRY AT POLICE TREATMENT OF BLACK MALES, ESPECIALLY WHEN SEVERAL MALES GET SHOT IN QUESTIONABLE CIRCUMSTANCES?

SHOULD WE ALLOW THE SINGING OF TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS CAROLS AT PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

SHOULD WE ALLOW THE KEEPING OF STATISTICS ON THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RACE AND CRIME?

SHOULD WE ALLOW A CHRISTMAS TREE TO BE PUT ON IN A PUBLIC COURTHOUSE AT CHRISTMASTIME?

SHOULD WE GET UPSET THAT MINORITIES DO NOT RECEIVE EQUITABLE TREATMENT IN HIRING, PROMOTION AND REPRESENTATION?

AND FINALLY, SHOULD WE GET UPSET ABOUT COMPLAINTS THAT OUR POLICE FORCE ROUTINELY TREATS MUSLIMS DIFFERENT BECAUSE OF 9/11?

THIS LIST IS BY NO MEANS EXHAUSTIVE. YET IT REVEALS THE DEPTH AND BREADTH OF THE DIALOGUE ON DIVERSITY THAT HAS UNFOLDED IN TORONTO OVER THE PAST QUARTER CENTURY. SOME OF THE ISSUES YOU MAY FIND TRIVIAL. OTHERS YOU MAY SEE AS MORE SERIOUS. YET ON EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEM, OUR COMMUNITY GOT INVOLVED IN AN EMOTIONAL, OFTEN RANCOROUS DEBATE.

IN THIS DEBATE, THE TORONTO STAR PLAYED A PROMINENT ROLE. WHICH WE DEFINED IN THREE WAYS:

FIRST, GIVE WIDE PROMINENCE TO THE ISSUE, SECOND, MAKE SURE BOTH SIDES OF THE DEBATE GET AN AIRING AND

THIRD, TAKE A STAND OURSELVES.

IN MANY RESPECTS, I WOULD SAY WE WOULD
WALLOW IN THE DEBATE.

BUT I WOULD ARGUE THIS IS A GOOD THING.
WE WOULD TRY ON DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW,
DIFFERENT SOLUTIONS, THRASH THEM
ABOUT - AND ULTIMATELY COME UP WITH AN
ANSWER OR A COMPROMISE ON HOW WE WOULD
MOVE FORWARD.

FROM EACH OF THESE TRIBULATIONS, IT WAS
ALWAYS MY SENSE THAT WE LEARNED SOMETHING –
EVEN THOUGH THE EMOTIONAL SCARS WERE
SOMETIMES DEEP.

AND THE TORONTO STAR HAS ALWAYS BEEN AT THE
MIDDLE OF IT.

ULTIMATELY, I WOULD ARGUE THAT EACH OF THESE
DEBATES, LIKE BRICKS, HAVE LAID THE FOUNDATION
FOR A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW DIVERSE
PEOPLES LIVE IN HARMONY TOGETHER.
MORE AND MORE, IT HAS MEANT THAT
TORONTONIANS HAVE BEGUN TO EMBRACE
WHAT NOTED CANADIAN PHILOSOPHER CHARLES
TAYLOR HAS CALLED THE POLITICS OF DIGNITY.
THIS IS NO SMALL FEAT - AND WHAT HAS MADE
TORONTO RENOWNED.

AND A CRITICAL PART OF THIS PROCESS, IN MY VIEW,
HAS BEEN TORONTO'S MEDIA.

THEY HAVE TO VARYING DEGREES ACTED AS
MIRROR, FACILITATOR, CAJOLER, CRITIC AND
PROVOCATEUR.

NOT ALWAYS HELPFUL AND NOT ALWAYS SENSITIVE.
NONETHELESS A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF THE
DIALOGUE.

IN MY VIEW, A MAJOR NEWSPAPER SUCH AS THE STAR MUST PLAY SEVERAL ROLES AS IT PARTICIPATES IN THE DIALOGUE IN DIVERSITY.

FIRST, IT MUST BE BOLD.

SECOND, IT MUST BE REPRESENTATIVE.

FINALLY, IT MUST BE SENSITIVE AND RESPONSIBLE. LET ME SPEAK BRIEFLY ABOUT EACH ONE OF THEM. FIRST, BE BOLD.

THIS MAY BE CONTRARY TO WHAT MANY OF YOU THINK. BUT MY EXPERIENCE IS THAT THE MEDIA IN GENERAL HAVE NOT BEEN BOLD ENOUGH IN COVERING THE ONGOING STORY OF DIVERSITY. I'LL BE FIRST TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT OFTENTIMES IT'S NOT AN EASY STORY TO GET AT.

BUT ULTIMATELY THAT IS NO EXCUSE.

IN TORONTO, FOR EXAMPLE, MORE THAN ONE HALF OF THE CITY'S POPULATION ARE IMMIGRANTS. AND WHEN YOU THINK OF IT, THAT IS QUITE AN EXTRAORDINARY FIGURE.

WHAT THAT MEANS IS MANY READERS ARE INTERESTED IN STORIES ON IMMIGRATION, FAMILY REUNIFICATION, RACE RELATIONS, WORKPLACE HIRING PRACTICES, INTEGRATION AND RECOGNITION OF EDUCATIONAL CREDENTIALS.

YET CERTAINLY IN MOST OF TORONTO'S NEWSPAPERS, THE EMPHASIS HAS BEEN ELSEWHERE.

BUT IN MY VIEW EDITORS MUST BE BOLD TO MAKE SURE THESE KIND OF STORIES GET COVERED. AND PERSEVERANCE GOES A LONG WAY IN GETTING AT THEM.

LET ME GIVE YOU ONE PRACTICAL EXAMPLE OF THE DEBATE THAT WENT ON AT THE STAR IN HOW TO COVER VARIOUS ETHNIC COMMUNITIES.

WE USED TO FEEL THAT IN ORDER TO REPORT ON SAY THE CHINESE OR SRI LANKAN COMMUNITY, WE HAD TO HAVE A CHINESE OR SRI LANKAN REPORTER TO DO IT.

WE NO LONGER FEEL THAT WAY. AFTER SOME SOBERING EXPERIENCE, WE CAME TO A DIFFERENT CONCLUSION; ANY GOOD REPORTER SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET AT A STORY IN A PARTICULAR COMMUNITY, ASSUMING LANGUAGE PROBLEMS CAN BE RESOLVED.

AND THESE STORIES SHOULDN'T BE CRAFTED OR PRESENTED TO CATER TO ONLY THE COMMUNITY INVOLVED. RATHER THEY SHOULD BE WRITTEN AND PRESENTED AS SLICES OF LIFE IN EVERYONE'S COMMUNITY AND THEREFORE OF INTEREST TO ALL. AND THEY SHOULD BE PLAYED AND DISPLAYED AS STORIES FOR ALL. CERTAINLY I FEEL THIS LATTER APPROACH HAS WORKED FAR BETTER IN THAT IT BROADENS THE DIALOGUE ON DIVERSITY. BOLDNESS COMES MOST OFTEN INTO PLAY WHEN IT RELATES TO THE MOST DIFFICULT STORIES. AND THOSE OFTEN INVOLVED RACE RELATIONS IN TORONTO.

LET ME CITE TWO EXPERIENCES THAT I THINK WORKED WELL FOR THE TORONTO STAR. FIRST IS THE ISSUE OF YOUNG BLACK MALES AND POLICE, WHICH I MENTIONED BEFORE. BACK IN THE EARLY 90S, THIS ISSUE HIT A PARTICULAR HIGH. THERE WERE FAR TOO MANY INCIDENTS OF YOUNG BLACK MALES BEING STOPPED BY POLICE,

BEING HASSLED AND FRISKED UNNECESSARILY.

HOW DO WE GET AT THIS STORY? HOW DO WE MAKE IT MEANINGFUL TO ALL OUR READERS? THE EDITORS THRASHED AROUND THE CHALLENGE AND ONE CAME UP WITH THE INSPIRED IDEA TO DO AN ENTIRE SECTION OF THE PAPER ENTITLED "YOUNG BLACK MALES."

THE SECTION WAS COMPOSED SOLELY OF PROFILES OF YOUNG TORONTO BLACK MALES, WHO TOLD THEIR STORIES IN BLUNT, DIRECT WORDS. NO MINCING ABOUT. IT MADE FOR RIVETING READING. AND THE EFFECT WAS DRAMATIC AND IMMEDIATE – AND ADDED TO THE DIALOGUE ON DIVERSITY. THE SECOND CASE INVOLVED THE PRACTICES OF RACIAL PROFILING AND POLICE. THIS IS THE PHENOMENON WHEN PEOPLE ARE DETAINED, SCRUTINIZED OR HASSLED SIMPLY BECAUSE OF THE COLOUR OF THEIR SKIN OR THEIR PERCEIVED RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND.

TODAY IN TORONTO, MANY MUSLIMS FEEL THE VICTIM OF RACIAL PROFILING SINCE THE EVENTS OF 9/11 IN NEW YORK.

IN TORONTO THERE HAS BEEN STUDY AFTER STUDY THAT HAS RAISED THIS ISSUE AS A MATTER OF LEGITIMATE CONCERN, PARTICULARLY FOR ALL BLACK AFRICAN COMMUNITIES.

AGAIN, OUR EDITORS ASKED THE QUESTION: HOW DO WE REALLY GET AT THIS STORY AND MAKE IT MEANINGFUL TO OUR READERS?

THIS TIME IT WAS ONE PARTICULAR INVESTIGATIVE REPORTER WHO CAME UP WITH THE INSPIRED IDEA OF ANALYZING THE POLICE FORCE'S OWN DATA ON ARRESTS TO SEE IF THERE WERE ANY PATTERNS.

IT TOOK A LOT OF TIME, A LOT OF APPEALS TO COURTS AND A LOT OF HARD ANALYTICAL WORK. WE

DIDN'T KNOW IN ADVANCE WHAT THE RESULTS WOULD BE. BUT WE FELT THE ISSUE WAS WORTH THE INVESTMENT OF TIME AND RESOURCES - SEVERAL HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS, I MIGHT ADD.

THEN THE RESULTS CAME IN. THERE WAS A WORRISOME PATTERN WHICH HINTED STRONGLY AT RACIAL PROFILING.

SHOULD WE RUN THE STORY? SHOULD WE OFFEND THE AUTHORITIES, PARTICULARLY THE POLICE? DARE WE BE BOLD?

WE DID. AND THE AFTERSHOCKS FROM THIS SERIES ARE STILL REVERBERATING THROUGH THE STREETS OF TORONTO. THE POLICE ULTIMATELY SUED US FOR LIBEL, BUT THE CASE WAS THROWN OUT OF THE COURTS. AND THE STAR WON THE NATION'S HIGHEST PRIZE FOR PUBLIC SERVICE JOURNALISM FOR THE SERIES.

BEFORE I LEAVE BOLDNESS, THERE IS ANOTHER PART OF THIS SERIES WORTH MENTIONING. IN THIS CASE, IT WAS A PROMINENT MEMBER OF THE CANADIAN JAMAICAN COMMUNITY WHO DECIDED TO BE BOLD.

MUCH HAS BEEN SAID IN TORONTO ABOUT THE CITY HAVING A BLACK CRIME PROBLEM. SUCH A BROAD, ILL-DEFINED GENERALIZATION NOT ONLY HAS LITTLE MEANING, IT IS ALSO OFFENSIVE TO SOME COMMUNITIES.

YET THE STAR DATA DID APPEAR TO SHOW A DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF JAMAICAN CANADIANS ARRESTED FOR CERTAIN OFFENCES. TO SAY THIS WAS EXPLOSIVE INFORMATION WAS TO STATE THE OBVIOUS. AND THIS IS EXACTLY THE KIND OF INFORMATION THAT USUALLY SENDS COMMUNITY

REPRESENTATIVES SCURRYING TO THE HILLS
PLEADING "NO COMMENT."

NOT VALERIE STEELE, THEN PRESIDENT OF THE
JAMAICAN CANADIAN ASSOCIATION.
SHE TOOK THE PROVERBIAL BULL BY THE HORN AND
SPOKE IN NO-NONSENSE TERMS ABOUT THE
PROBLEM.

"IF THESE STATISTICS ARE TRUE," SHE SAID, "WE IN
THE COMMUNITY HAVE TO LOOK AT THESE AND
SAY: WAIT A MINUTE. WHAT'S GOING ON?"
LATER SHE ADDED: "WE HAVE TO LOOK IN THE
MIRROR TOO." AND SHE WENT ON TO GIVE A
SENSITIVE AND REALISTIC ASSESSMENT OF THE
POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS HER
COMMUNITY FACES.

A LESSON IN BOLDNESS OTHERS COULD WELL
STUDY. BUT THIS WAS ANOTHER COG IN THE
DIALOGUE ON DIVERSITY.

THE SECOND ROLE I SAID THE MEDIA MUST DO IS: BE
REPRESENTATIVE.

THIS MEANS MAKING SURE THE NEWSROOMS
REFLECT THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE.

YOU WON'T MEET TOO MANY PUBLISHERS IN CANADA
WHO WOULD ARGUE WITH THE BASIC PROPOSITION
THAT THEIR NEWSROOMS SHOULD REFLECT
SOCIETY.

NOT ONLY IS IT THE RIGHT THING TO DO. IT MAKES
GOOD BUSINESS SENSE.

FOR IF A CITY'S DIVERSE COMMUNITIES DO NOT SEE
THEMSELVES REFLECTED IN THE MEDIA, THEY WILL
ULTIMATELY TURN AWAY FROM THEM OR SIMPLY
IGNORE THEM.

AND IF THESE COMMUNITIES ARE ALIENATED FROM THE MEDIA, I WOULD ARGUE THEIR SENSE OF INCLUSION WILL BE LESS. AND IF THAT HAPPENS, THE CIVIL SOCIETY WILL BE LESS HEALTHY AND OUR DEMOCRACY LESS HEALTHY.

TO DATE, HOWEVER, IN TORONTO AND CANADA, THE RECORD ON HIRING VISIBLE MINORITIES HAS BEEN SPOTTY - AT BEST.

WHILE THERE ARE NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS - AND HERE THE TORONTO STAR HAS DONE BETTER - THE LOFTY WORDS OF INCLUSION DON'T REFLECT THE REALITY OF HIRING.

IN THIS REGARD, CANADIAN MEDIA OUTLETS ARE FAR BEHIND THEIR COUNTERPARTS IN THE UNITED STATES.

AMERICANS HAVE BEEN ON THE BANDWAGON OF MINORITY HIRING FOR YEARS. THE INSPIRATION OFTEN QUOTED IS NOTED BLACK AFRICAN AMERICAN JOURNALIST CHARLES MAYNARD, AFTER WHOM AN INSTITUTE HAS BEEN SET UP.

IT WAS MAYNARD WHO ONCE FAMOUSLY SAID: "THIS COUNTRY CANNOT BE THE COUNTRY WE WANT TO BE IF THE STORY IS TOLD BY ONLY ONE GROUP OF CITIZENS."

AMEN TO THAT.

ECHOING THE SAME SENTIMENT IS THE FREEDOM FORUM IN THE U.S. THAT WAS ESTABLISHED BY THE GANNETT FOUNDATION - GANNETT BEING THE LARGEST NEWSPAPER CHAIN IN THE UNITED STATES. THE FREEDOM FORUM IS OFTEN VIEWED AS A RIGHT WING ORGANIZATION. YET IT HAS PUT DIVERSITY IN HIRING ON THE SAME FOOTING AS FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.

ITS CHARTER NOW STATES: "OUR INTEREST STEMS FROM THE BELIEF THAT THE FUTURE OF NEWSPAPERS AS A MASS MEDIUM DEPENDS ON HAVING NEWSROOMS THAT REFLECT THE FULL DIVERSITY OF THE COMMUNITY."

IN THE U.S., GOALS AND TARGETS HAVE BEEN SET ON MINORITY HIRING.

AND WHEN THE GOALS ARE NOT MET, THE INDUSTRY IS OPEN AND CANDID ABOUT IT.

I WISH I COULD SAY THE SAME ABOUT CANADA - BUT I CAN'T.

BUT I CAN ASSURE YOU AT THE STAR WE HAVE MADE THIS A PRIORITY.

THE THIRD AND FINAL ROLE I WANT TO TALK ABOUT IS BEING RESPONSIBLE AND SENSITIVE. SOME MAY WELL ASK; HOW CAN YOU BE BOTH BOLD AND SENSITIVE?

I WOULD REPLY: YOU HAVE TO BE. IN MY VIEW, THE TWO ARE NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE CONCEPTS.

SENSITIVITY, WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF DIVERSITY, MOST OFTEN REVOLVES AROUND THE USE OF LANGUAGE.

AND AS I MENTIONED BEFORE, I FEEL MY CITY OF TORONTO IS IN THE VANGUARD OF CITIES AROUND THE WORLD CREATING THE VOCABULARY FOR A DIVERSE SOCIETY LIVING TOGETHER. WE ALL KNOW WORDS HAVE MEANING. THEY CAN HURT, THEY CAN STING. THEY CAN LEAD TO STEREOTYPING.

WHAT IS INNOCUOUS TO ONE, IS INFLAMMATORY TO

ANOTHER. AND I WOULD ARGUE IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR MEDIA TO GET THESE ISSUES RIGHT.

TAKE, FOR EXAMPLE, THE USE OF THE WORD "FUNDAMENTALIST" WHEN COMBINED WITH MUSLIMS - A PRACTICE SEEN ALL TOO OFTEN ACROSS NORTH AMERICA THESE DAYS.

SO WHAT IS THE UNDERLYING MESSAGE WHEN THE PHRASE MUSLIM FUNDAMENTALIST IS USED? IS IT THOSE ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISTS WHO BELIEVE DEEPLY IN THEIR FAITH?

OR IS IT THOSE ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISTS WHO LOOT, KILL AND BOMB IN THE NAME OF THEIR RELIGION?

I THINK TO MOST OBSERVERS SUCH A PHRASE DOES EVOKE AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE IN THE WAKE OF 9/11. AND IT ISN'T A FLATTERING ONE.

INDEED MANY MUSLIM GROUPS HAVE ARGUED THE CARELESS USE OF THIS PHRASE HAS LED TO AN UNFAIR STEREOTYPING OF THOSE LAW-ABIDING MUSLIMS WHO ARE FUNDAMENTALISTS BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE IN THE FUNDAMENTALS OF ISLAM. INDEED THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT IN THE UNITED STATES - A PROTESTANT MOVEMENT THAT DEVELOPED PARTLY IN OPPOSITION TO THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION - USED TO BE KNOWN AS CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISTS.

THEY NOW INSIST ON NOT HAVING THAT TERM USED. RATHER THEY WANT TO BE KNOWN AS "EVANGELICALS" AND THE MEDIA HAS ACCEPTED THAT.

BUT THE MUSLIMS - AT LEAST IN TORONTO - HAVEN'T BEEN QUITE SO FORTUNATE.

THEY HAVE BECOME SO CONCERNED ABOUT THE MISUSE OF LANGUAGE THAT THEY SET UP AN ANNUAL MUSLIM MEDIA WATCH TO GRADE AND MONITOR CANADA'S NEWSPAPERS ON THEIR PORTRAYAL OF MUSLIMS.

IF ANYTHING, THIS GROUP HAS AT LEAST BROUGHT TO PUBLIC ATTENTION THE ISSUE OF STEREOTYPING AND OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE.

WHATEVER ONE MAY THINK OF THIS GROUP'S ANALYTICAL METHODS, ONE CANNOT HELP BUT CONCLUDE THAT IT PROVIDES ANOTHER USEFUL INPUT ON THE DIALOGUE ON DIVERSITY. AND I CAN TELL YOU I HAVE MET WITH THIS GROUP OFTEN.

PHOTOS TOO CAN BE A PROBLEM.

ONE OF THE LAST DIVERSITY ISSUES I DEALT WITH AS PUBLISHER CONCERNED A WIRE SERVICE PHOTO OF THE HINDU GODDESS DURGA THAT RAN IN OUR RELIGION PAGES.

EACH FALL, STATUES OF DURGA ARE WORSHIPPED FOR NINE DAYS AT PRAYER FESTIVALS, AND IMMERSSED IN WATER.

THE IDOL SHOWN IN THE TORONTO STAR PHOTO WAS UNCLOTHED, WHICH DREW A VEHEMENT REACTION FROM SOME HINDUS. THEY CALLED THE PHOTO AT LEAST DISRESPECTFUL, IF NOT BLASPHEMOUS. CERTAINLY NO EDITOR AT MY NEWSPAPER UNDERSTOOD THAT THE IDOL WOULD NEVER APPEAR UNCLOTHED.

A SEARCH ACROSS NORTH AMERICA FOUND NO OTHER CITY WHERE OBJECTIONS WERE RAISED. SO OUR FIRST JOURNALISTIC RESPONSE WAS TO HOLD FIRM AND NOT ISSUE ANY APOLOGY - IN

OTHER WORDS DO NOTHING.

YET HUNDREDS OF E-MAILS, SEVERAL DEMONSTRATIONS OUTSIDE THE DOORS OF OUR PAPER, AND A SERIES OF ANGRY DELEGATIONS LATER, I FINALLY MET WITH THE GROUP. ONE COULD NOT HELP BUT BE MOVED BY THE INTENSITY OF THEIR REACTION, THEIR FEELINGS THAT AN INSENSITIVE INJUSTICE HAD BEEN PERPETRATED BY AN ALL POWERFUL AND UNKNOWING, IGNORANT INSTITUTION.

A SIMPLE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT WE HAD OFFENDED SOME ALONG WITH RUNNING A PHOTO OF A FULLY-CLOTHED DURGA RESOLVED THE ISSUE. IN RETROSPECT, IT SEEMS A CLASSIC CASE OF RESPECT AND SENSITIVITY. NO JOURNALISTIC PRINCIPLE I KNOW OF WAS BROKEN BY LISTENING AND THEN ACKNOWLEDGING FEELINGS MIGHT BE HURT.

TO SOME, THESE INCIDENTS MIGHT SEEM LIKE SMALL STUFF.

BUT IT'S BASIC STUFF.

AND I WOULD ARGUE THE BIG PICTURE ONLY BECOMES CLEAR IF YOU GET THE SMALL STUFF RIGHT.

IT'S ALL PART OF THAT ONGOING DIALOGUE. IT REMAINS ONE OF NEWSPAPERS' BIGGEST CHALLENGES - BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER. SO ONE FINAL THOUGHT FOR ALL OF YOU.

I WOULD SAY THAT EVERY PERSON IN THIS ROOM HAS A STAKE IN HIS/HER COMMUNITY AND COUNTRY. I THINK EVERYONE HERE PROBABLY APPRECIATES ONLY TOO WELL HOW THE MEDIA CAN AFFECT AND INFLUENCE SOCIETY.

SO I WOULD SAY YOU OWE IT TO YOURSELF TO
FIGURE OUT WHAT ROLE YOU CAN PLAY, AS
JOURNALISTS, IN THIS PROCESS.

I DON'T FOR ONE SECOND UNDERESTIMATE THE
CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES.

BUT NOR DO I UNDERESTIMATE WHAT WE CAN DO
COLLECTIVELY.

AS NAPOLEON PUT IT: "FOUR TOUGH NEWSPAPERS
ARE MORE TO BE FEARED THAN A THOUSAND
BAYONETS."

THANK YOU.