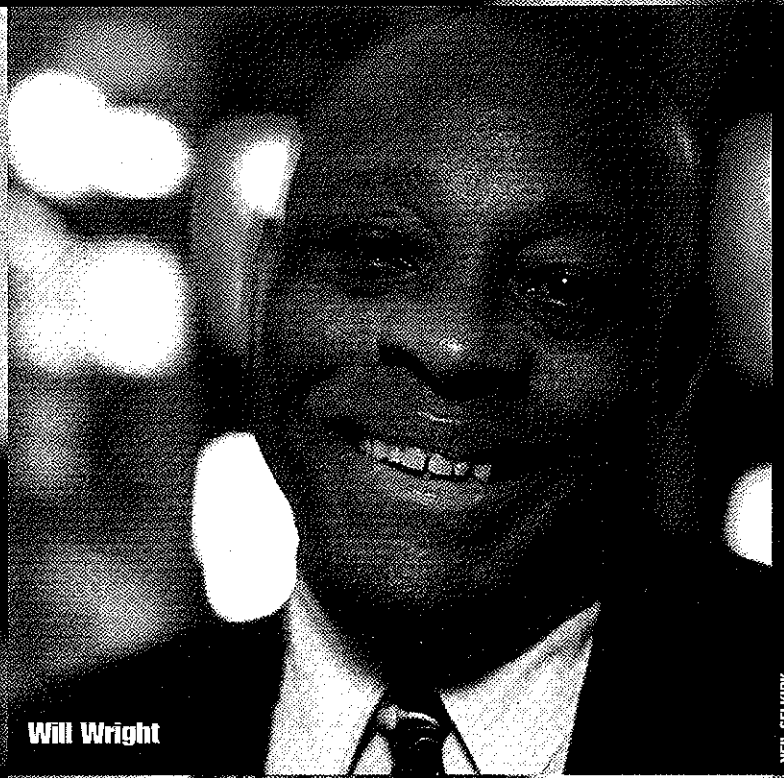
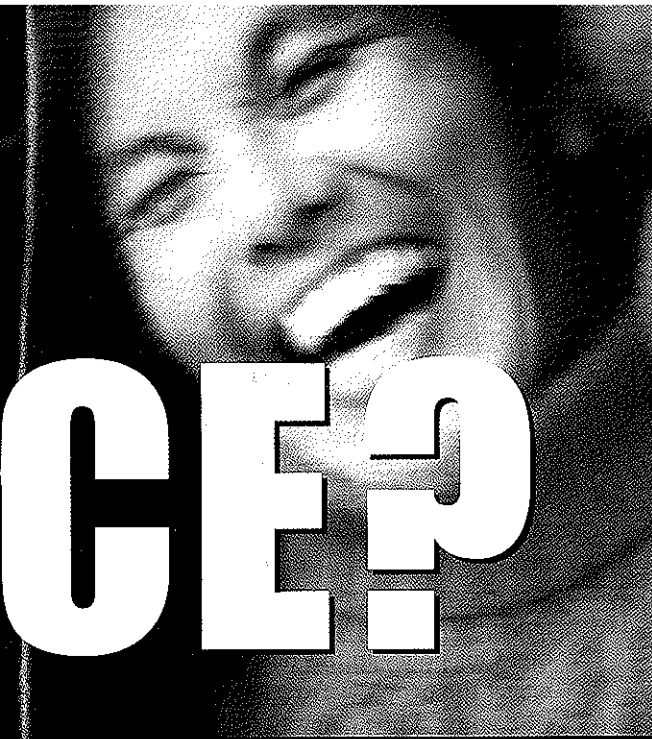


ABOUT FA



NEIL SELKIRK





BY BOB PAPPER AND MICHAEL GERHARD

CEE?

The number of women and minorities in radio and television news is up, but FCC rules on minority representation may be on the way out. How will the recent court case affect the face of local news?

"By all accounts, I should not have succeeded in this business. I started off as a product of the quintessential broken home. My mother went back to college at night; my father left me when I was three years old. My family was on welfare. I lived in housing projects that were infested by vermin and gangs. I'm a product of the New York City school system in a segregated community of Brooklyn. So this is the track that normally leads to a dead end. However, there were programs that helped me. One was called Project Double Discovery; one was called Upward Bound. Somewhere along the line, there was... realization that some people need help to be able to succeed, and I think it's very sad that some of us say, 'Well, we don't need any help in this area.' Yes, we do. I'm proof of it."

—Will Wright, news director, WWOR-TV, Secaucus, NJ

At the same time that the RTNDA/Ball State University Survey finds the best overall numbers of women and minorities in radio and television news, the set of Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines that led the industry down that path appears to be on its way out. ■ In April, a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals in the District of Columbia set aside the Federal Communications Commission's rules on minority representation in radio and television, and while it did not throw out the guidelines pertaining to women, the Court made clear that it would do so if asked. (The Court did not throw out the rules against discrimination.)

The FCC has appealed that ruling, asking for the full U.S. Court of Appeals to reconsider the case. That appeal means that the FCC guidelines remain in effect—at least for now. ■ Overall, this year's survey found stable percentages of women and minorities in television news (down just a hair from a year ago), but the survey also found significant gains in women and minority news directors in television news, and across-the-board gains for women and minorities in radio news. For the first time, minority TV news directors edged into double figures with 10 percent of the total, and women TV news directors shot up to 23 percent. ■ If the EEO guidelines disappear, what will the face of radio and TV news look like? Depends whom you ask.



**Corporations and Local Stations:
We'll Continue Current Practices**

Mimi Feller, senior vice president for public affairs and government relations at Gannett Broadcasting, says Gannett will "absolutely not" change its showcase policy on hiring and promotion. Gannett's extensive media holdings include 21 television stations. "We already exceed the FCC guidelines on hiring," says Feller, "and we're not going to change our hiring practices at all because of this recent decision. Our hiring practices are such because we think it's good business, and that's how we want to do it."

The same holds for Jacor Com-

munications, owner of 201 radio stations and one television station. Jay Meyers, acting general manager at six Jacor radio stations in Dayton, OH, says the company "has always had a policy of recruitment of women and minorities that is above the minimum. And right after the decision was out, our CEO, Randy Michaels, as part of our normal monthly general manager conference call, reminded everybody that we've always had a policy that exceeded what the government required and that the recent ruling would not lead to any change in company policy."

"I see zero impact here," says news director Joe Kirik at WPBN-TV in

Traverse City/Cadillac, MI. "I don't see that it's going to make any difference at all. It's station policy; it's company policy."

Other news directors said they were personally committed to diversity in the newsroom—with or without the government's guidelines.

"For us, nothing will change," says Mike Stutz, news director at WJXT-TV in Jacksonville, FL. "When I hire in the news department, I think a diverse newsroom is good, and we want to represent our viewers as closely as we can. Our policy in this newsroom is to reflect the people we're serving."

Randy Lube, news director at KOLN-TV in Lincoln, NE, agrees. "We're of the opinion that you have to have a diverse newsroom, and that's important. You have to have all different sets of opinions, and if you're structuring your newsroom in a proper way, you're going to make sure that you have a diversity of opinion."

Jerry Hart, general manager at WTBC-AM in Tuscaloosa, AL, says the court of appeals ruling was really a "non-event" for him. "We're small, we only employ five people. I wouldn't anticipate that this would make any difference in how we operate. I still think that we're going to make sure we're equitable with everybody. So I don't anticipate any changes whatsoever in how we do business."

"There's not much of an impact here," says Tom Ackerman, news director at KXMB-TV in Bismarck, ND. Ackerman says there are few minorities in the Bismarck area, and he can't remember having any working full time at his station in his eight years there. The station did have a Native American (the largest minority group in the area) working part time, but he went to another station in town for a full-time job. "It's hard to find minorities with experience," says Ackerman. He says he "looks for a balance of men and women on the air," although right now, Ackerman himself is the only male reporter at the station.

"Viewers are not stupid," says Ellen Miller, news director at KOVR-TV in

About the Survey

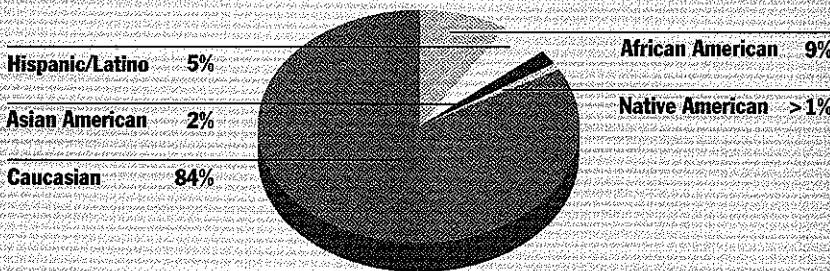
The RTNDA/Ball State University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 1997 among all 1,254 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 865 radio stations. Valid responses came from 722 television stations (57.6 percent) and 334 radio stations (38.6 percent).

Broadcast News Work Force

Television



Radio



Overall, minorities in television news slid from 21 percent in last year's survey to 20 percent this year. Minorities in radio news rose by 4 percent from last year's survey, with African Americans and Hispanic/Latino each picking up 2 percent from the year before. Asian Americans rose slightly and Native Americans slipped slightly.

Sacramento, CA. "They know if you're sidestepping your commitment to them. I'm not serving a court. I'm serving the people here. We have an active recruitment effort. We actively seek out talent and people with potential and help them grow. And I have diversity not just on the air; I also have it on my assignment desk and the ranks of my writers and my producers. This is diversity through the organization."

Jim LeMay, vice president of news at WJLA-TV in Washington, says diversity is a key part of survival in a near-infinite channel universe. "I believe every TV station should make a published statement that says it doesn't matter what the FCC does—we have a commitment to the community to be diverse. It's not about making rules. My belief is that if you're not a reflection of your community, you're in trouble. The rules don't make any difference, you're going to go into the toilet anyway. You're not going to have any viewers. They're going to say, 'They just don't seem to be like us. They don't reflect our views, so we're gone.'"

"I believe that every newsroom should be a microcosm of society," says WWOR's news director, Will Wright. "And how can it be a microcosm of society if it's all white? Or all Black? Or all Hispanic? Or all Asian? Or all American Indian? It can't be all of one thing. It has to represent the environment in which we are broadcasting. And if we're saying that doesn't matter, as broadcasters, I think we're totally on the wrong track."

Women in Local Radio News

	News Staff with Women	Women News Directors	Women % in Work Force	Average No. of Women
All Radio	39%	28%	31%	0.7
Major Market	54	29	36	2.1
Large Market	56	39	33	0.8
Medium Market	37	23	28	0.5
Small Market	20	28	21	0.3

The percentage of women news directors rose to 28 percent from 23 percent last year, although the percentage of women in the work force remained unchanged.

Women in Local Television News

	News Staff with Women	Women News Directors	Women % in Work Force	Average No. of Women
All Television	99%	23%	35%	11.7
Network Affiliates	99	23	36	12.3
Independents	96	27	30	7.3
ADI 1-25	100	16	34	19.7
ADI 26-50	100	33	32	18.0
ADI 51-100	98	24	35	13.1
ADI 101-150	100	13	39	9.1
ADI 151+	98	36	36	6.1
Staff 51+	100	22	22	28.2
Staff 31-50	100	19	19	14.5
Staff 21-30	100	13	13	9.5
Staff 11-20	100	27	27	6.4
Staff 1-10	93	45	41	2.2

The total percentage of women in TV news slipped slightly from last year (37 percent), but the percentage of women news directors rose dramatically from 14 percent last year to 23 percent in this survey. Note, however, that women are far more likely to be news directors in the smallest markets (36 percent) and the smallest news departments (45 percent).

Minorities in Broadcast and Print

The American Society of Newspaper Editors doesn't track women in newspapers, and it doesn't track minorities the same way the RTNDA/Ball State University Survey does, but some comparisons can be made. ASNE reports that minorities in daily newspaper newsrooms "inched up" to 11.5 percent in 1998 (from 11.4 percent the year before)—compared to 20 percent in television newsrooms. About 58 percent of daily newspapers employ minority newsroom professionals—compared to 86 percent for television news. ASNE reports that 9 percent of "supervisors" are minorities (compared to 8.9 percent last year). That's a fairly broad category in newspapers (including, for instance, librarians), and we have no comparable figures for the most recent year. In the 1996 Survey, 9.3 percent of the top four TV news positions were held by minorities, and that figure is likely to be higher today.

Twenty years ago, ASNE "challenged newspapers to achieve diversity in their newsrooms equivalent to the U.S. minority population by the year 2000 or sooner." (ASNE cites current minority population estimates at 26 percent.) ASNE is now debating a new goal that "representation of journalists of color should reach at least 20 percent industry-wide by 2010."

Broadcast News Directors

Television

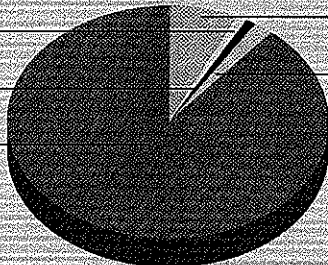
Hispanic/Latino	5%
Asian American	1%
Caucasian	90%



African American	3%
Native American	1%

Radio

Hispanic/Latino	1%
Asian American	1%
Caucasian	89%



African American	7%
Native American	2%

Minority news directors rose by 2 percent in television and 3 percent in radio news compared to a year ago. In both cases, almost all of the gain went to African Americans (up by 2 percent in television and 3 percent in radio). In radio, Hispanic/Latino slid slightly from 2 percent to 1 percent while Native Americans rose from 1 percent to 2 percent.

Minorities: We Need the Guidelines' Protection

Interestingly, while almost all the white news directors we spoke with expected no change with the disappearance of the FCC guidelines, every minority news director we spoke with felt just the opposite.

Phil Alvidrez is news director at KTVK-TV in Phoenix, AZ. "What I believe will happen is the same as all of history up until the time broadcasters were required to [follow the EEO guidelines]. I'd love to believe that we are somehow more enlightened, but I don't....Not for a second. All you have to do is look at newspapers. Those of us who make our living in it know that television has one of the shortest memories under the sun. We can't remember the story we did Monday by Wednesday. I don't know why any of us would ever try to delude ourselves into believing that we've learned our lesson."

Wright says the whole thing saddens him. "I look around and I see things like the lack of affirmative action, church bombings, the rise of trash television; things which seem to be so anathema to the forward motion of our society. It hurts me personally."

"I just think that most people are most comfortable with their own," says Barbara Hamm, executive director of news and information programming at WTKR-TV in Norfolk, VA, "and that's what they're going to go back to. And that's what frightens me."

"I sometimes am guilty of hiring someone I know can do the job and is available right now without much regard to their background at all," says Alvidrez. "And if you're not really working to achieve a better balance in your newsroom, I don't believe you'll get there. And I think what passes for diversity in a lot of newspaper newsrooms is shameful."

"I don't know" whether we'll slide

backwards, says KOVR's Ellen Miller. "Over the last 20 years, a lot of women and minorities have become the core of our business. And at this point I think that [women and minorities] have changed the face of our business, and we probably see it a whole different way than the people who ran the business 20 years ago. If we are part of the infrastructure of this business we call broadcast journalism, why would we go back to the old way of doing it? But that's not to say that everybody shares this."

No Comment: Many Are Ill At Ease with This Issue

Several television news directors said their general managers or their corporations told them not to comment on the record about possible changes in hiring procedures pending company evaluation of future policies. And nearly two dozen radio station general managers either refused to speak on the issue or did not return repeated phone calls requesting comment.

Bill Harrison, president and general manager at KLAK-FM in Durant, OK, says it's too early to go on the record with how the appeals court ruling might change things. "No effect right now, although I am waiting to get some sort of guidance from my FCC attorney to see if indeed that will stay and how it will impact me. I'm waiting for guidance from my counsel before I proceed to change anything."

Brad Hood, station manager at WNCT-AM in Greenville, NC, says he's looking forward to the possibility of the EEO guidelines being eliminated. "EEO is a pain in the butt," according to Hood. He says the change will "probably" make it easier for him to hire whomever he wants. "Yes, it may weigh [on whom I hire], but I don't say, 'Yes, it will affect who gets hired,' but it may carry some weight."

Steve Bookshester, associate general counsel for the National Association of Broadcasters, says the NAB "intends to continue—if not enhance—our efforts to encourage outreach and a diverse work force." But he clearly thinks the

EEO guidelines are on the way out: "Speaking for myself, I think the civil rights groups that are saying, 'Gosh, if this disappears they'll backslide like crazy,' sort of make the argument for people who say this is a quota system. Because if it weren't, then why would it make any difference?"

But news director Will Wright thinks it will make a big difference. "When you talk about affirmative action in our business, what we're saying is not to go out and hire people just because you need to meet a quota. You go out and make an extra effort and look for potential, because society is not fair in the respect of race and gender and to a large degree in respect of your socioeconomic status."

Behind the Scenes: How Do Women and Minorities Fare?

One reason some expect the on-air staff to remain diverse is because that's the key thing the audience sees. What happens behind the scenes is less clear, although it shouldn't be, according to Jim LeMay: "We tend to measure too much that the anchors on the air [are] the most important. 'Look, they have an African-American female. Isn't that great.' That's important, but it ain't the most important thing. The most important thing is who's making the decisions. If it's a bunch of middle-aged white guys, we're in trouble. It doesn't matter who we put in front of the camera because they're (anchors) going to do what we tell them because they don't want to lose their jobs."

Stutz says that in Jacksonville, his commitment to diversity includes the people who are on the air and the people behind the scenes and in management.

"I think at any station with a significant minority population," says Kirik, "it's just common sense that your staff needs to reflect the look of your community. That's a no-brainer."

Hamm is unconvinced. "People are saying, 'Now we don't have to do all the paperwork. We're going to do the right thing, now. And we're still going to consider these people.' Give me a

Minorities in Local Radio News

	News Staff with Minorities	Minority News Directors	Minority % in Work Force	Average No. of Minorities
All Radio	18%	11%	16%	0.4
Major Market	43	20	26	1.5
Large Market	30	17	13	0.3
Medium Market	11	6	8	0.1
Small Market	5	7	5	0.1

The percentage of minority news directors rose from 8 percent last year to 11 percent this year—mostly due to an increase in the percentage of minority major market news directors—up from 15 percent to 20 percent. Minority work force also rose significantly—from 12 percent last year to 16 percent this year.

Minorities in Local Television News

	News Staff with Minorities	Minority News Directors	Minority % in Work Force	Average No. of Minorities
All Television	86%	10%	20%	5.8
Network Affiliates	87	4	18	5.4
Independents	80	42	40	8.8
ADI 1-25	100	37	30	15.1
ADI 26-50	95	5	18	8.5
ADI 51-100	86	8	21	6.9
ADI 101-150	83	2	14	3.4
ADI 151+	78	2	13	2.0
Staff 51+	97	13	22	14.7
Staff 31-50	98	7	21	8.3
Staff 21-30	89	4	14	3.6
Staff 11-20	81	6	18	2.9
Staff 1-10	57	18	30	1.7

The total minority work force has hovered in the 20 percent range for the last three years (19 percent two years ago and 21 percent last year). For the first time, the percentage of minority news directors has moved into double digits—up from 8 percent last year to 10 percent this year. All the gain went to African Americans, and all of the gain (overall) came with independent stations. Minority news directors at network affiliates remained at 4 percent, but minority news directors at independent stations rose from 34 percent last year to 42 percent in the latest survey. Note that minority news directors are most likely to be found in the largest markets—but at the smallest stations.

break.... We had to have a law to get our foot in the door in the beginning, and people are still complaining about the paperwork."

"I don't think we should need a law that tells us who should get served in a restaurant. But it turns out that they do," says WWOR's Wright.

"I tend to think at most television stations—and I have nothing to back

this up on, other than I believe it's the case at our television station—that news departments probably do a better job [at diversity] than the rest of the company because we pay more attention to it," says Alvidrez. "But I don't know how diverse most television station sales staffs are."

"If nobody's holding your feet to the fire, you're not going to go out of

your way to find minority candidates," says Hamm. "You hear people complaining now of how difficult it is to find minority candidates for producer, executive producer, news director positions...and it's going to be easier to just wipe your hands and not worry about it. And that's frightening."

"I am one of these people who has received this type of help," says Wright.

"It wasn't because I was black, alone, it was because I had the potential. And society had failed me somewhere along the way, but yet I was willing to do the work to make up for my inadequacies. And I wasn't asking for a handout, all I was asking for was a chance to be productive. All I was asking for was equal footing in a society that is supposed to hold promise for all people."

"This diversity thing is, I think, one

of the most important things we have going for us," says LeMay, speaking about his staff in Cleveland when he was news director at WEWS-TV before his recent move to Washington. "Absolute most important. Fifty-one percent of my staff are women and minorities. But the issue of diversity is not about color but about ideas and cultures as much as it is about race. I have a producer who's a Hassidic Jew. She's a great contributor to our process because her cultural difference adds to what we do. But I also have a young lady who is Arabic. Many of the stores here are run by Arabs, and she brings us that perspective. And 33 percent of my population is Catholic. I better damn well have somebody on the staff who understands Catholicism. It's a third of my audience."

"I'd love to be wrong," says Alvidrez. "I'd love to live in a country where those who say people ought to be hired simply on their own merit and the best person ought to get the job, and everywhere you went into would have a wonderfully diverse workforce. I just don't believe history gives us any promises or confidences that that's going to happen. And if anything I see a swing back in a lot of people's attitudes toward race, and that's discouraging."

"The pendulum's swung," says Alvidrez, "and that's sad because it takes a lifetime to reverse this kind of thing. There's been a tremendous amount of progress in the almost 25 years, and I would hate to see us go back to the days when that wasn't the case. I remember working in newsrooms where there were very few minorities and there were no women. That's not a place I want to be." ■

Bob Papper is professor of telecommunications at Ball State University and has worked extensively in radio and TV news. Michael Gerhard, Ph.D., is associate professor of telecommunications at Ball State and has extensive industry and research experience. This research was supported by the Department of Telecommunications at Ball State University and the Radio-Television News Directors Association.

For More Information

Newsroom Diversity Campaign
RTNDF program promotes cultural and gender diversity in America's newsrooms and specifically seeks to promote and increase the participation of women and minorities in newsroom management and production positions. Contact Colony Brown, senior project director, for more information. Phone (202) 467-5217 e-mail colonyb@rtndf.org

Training Seminar
Learn key management skills at RTNDF's next News Management Training Seminar for Minority and Women News Professionals, September 26-28 in San Antonio. Contact Michelle Thibodeau for an application. Phone (202) 467-5206; e-mail michellet@rtndf.org. Only 30 participants will be accepted.

Federal Communications Commission

Go to the commission's site to learn more about the latest ruling. www.fcc.gov

American Women in Radio and Television (AWRT)

Phone: (703) 506-3290
Fax: (703) 506-3266
E-mail: tdickerson@ambnet.org

Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA)

Phone: (415) 346-2051
Fax: (415) 346-6343
E-mail: national@aja.org

Association for Women in Communications (AWC)

Phone: (410) 544-7442
Fax: (410) 544-4640
E-mail: womcom@aol.com

Foundation for Minority Interests in Media

Phone: (212) 456-1992
Fax: (212) 456-1997

International Women's Media Foundation

Phone: (202) 496-1992
Fax: (202) 496-1977
E-mail: iwmf@aol.com

National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ)

Phone: (301) 405-8500
Fax: (301) 405-8555
E-mail: nabj@jmail.umd.edu

National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ)

Phone: (202) 662-7145
Fax: (202) 662-7144
E-mail: rpetro@nahj.org

National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association

Phone: (202) 588-9888
Fax: (202) 588-1818
E-mail: nlga@aol.com

Native American Journalists Association (NAJA)

Phone: (612) 874-8833
Fax: (612) 874-9007
E-mail: najanut@aol.com