

# THE POWER SHIFT SUMMIT REPORT



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## OVERVIEW

Recent revelations about sexual harassment and misconduct launched a national outcry about pervasive problems in the media, film, manufacturing, technology, arts and other industries. The stories sparked a national conversation known as the “Me Too” movement, which has drawn needed attention to the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace.

On Jan. 9, 2018, the Newseum held the Power Shift Summit with participation from more than 130 newsroom leaders, editors, reporters, educators and advocates. The summit was convened to generate a solutions-based discussion about what newsrooms and media organizations are doing now to deal with emerging cases of sexual misconduct, and what systemic changes are needed for the future.

Results of the summit are summarized in this report, which identifies seven key Power Shift Principles, or lessons learned about workplace imbalances that are used to protect the powerful and intimidate and silence others, especially young women. The report also identifies critical steps to repair systemic failures that have allowed sexual misconduct and discrimination to thrive, along with tactics to create sustainable change.

As a result of the summit, the Freedom Forum Institute, the programs partner of the Newseum, is creating the Power Shift Project, a major new initiative on behalf of women in the news industry. The project’s goal is workplace integrity, defined as eliminating sexual harassment and producing opportunity, especially for those who have historically been underrepresented in media’s most powerful roles. For more information, visit <http://www.freedomforuminstitute.org/powershiftproject>.

Jill Geisler, the Bill Plante Chair in Leadership and Media Integrity at Loyola University Chicago, will help guide the Power Shift Project as the newly appointed Freedom Forum Institute Fellow in Women’s Leadership.

Power Shift Project initiatives will include a series of live broadcasts from the Newseum in which experts will provide training and tools to various audiences on key issues related to harassment and discrimination. The project will also launch the Power Shift Playbook newsletter as a resource and tip sheet about emerging news and solutions in the field, as well as the Power Shift Podcast for in-depth interviews with newsroom leaders, educators and others who are on the front lines of the movement for change. Power Shift experts and presentations will also be available for journalism industry conferences, programs and symposiums.

The project also will include a #PowerShiftPledge challenge for journalists, newsroom managers and senior leadership, asking them individually or as a company to “support a workplace where all are free from harassment and empowered to succeed.” The pledge stands for workplace integrity, where strong reporting and training systems combine to eliminate sexual harassment and workplace misconduct, with a goal of encouraging and supporting opportunity for all.

The Power Shift Project will work strategically with other organizations dedicated to issues of equality, diversity and inclusiveness — for women, for people of color and for others marginalized or facing bias in our society.

That core belief in gender equity and fair treatment for all is woven into the ethics, programs and the missions of the Newseum, Freedom Forum Institute and the Freedom Forum.

The Al Neuharth Free Spirit and Journalism Conference at the Newseum that continues in founder Al Neuharth's name has brought to Washington, D.C., hundreds of high school students who are aspiring reporters, editors, anchors and documentary filmmakers, who each year meet with some of the media industry's best and brightest.

The Chips Quinn Scholars program — now entering its 27th year — trains and mentors college-age women and men who are helping make journalism more inclusive, more diverse and more relevant to the changing nature of the audiences.

Power Shift training and research will be added as a core part of upcoming Free Spirit and Chips Quinn Scholars programs to create a cadre of young, emerging workers with the knowledge and tools to empower true diversity in the workplace, which creates better journalism, healthier businesses and a stronger democracy.

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# THE POWER SHIFT SUMMIT

## CONVERSATION LEADERS

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- **CARRIE BUDOFF BROWN**, editor, Politico [@cbudoffbrown](#)
- **ALFREDO CARBAJAL**, editor of *Al Día* at *The Dallas Morning News* and president, ASNE [@CarbajalNews](#)
- **INGRID CIPRIAN-MATTHEWS**, executive vice president, CBS News
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- **JOANNE LIPMAN**, former editor in chief of *USA TODAY* and author of "That's What She Said: What Men Need to Know (and Women Need to Tell Them) About Working Together" [@joannelipman](#)
- **LOREN MAYOR**, chief operating officer, NPR
- **CAROLYN RYAN**, assistant managing editor, *The New York Times* [@carolynryan](#)
- **LARA SETRAKIAN**, CEO of News Deeply and co-founder of Press Forward [@Lara](#)
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- **CATHY TROST**, executive director and senior vice president, Freedom Forum Institute
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## PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED REPRESENTATIVES OF:

### NEWS ORGANIZATIONS

The Associated Press, *The Atlantic*, Bloomberg, BuzzFeed, Capitol Communicator, CNN, Columbia Journalism Review, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, Current, ESPN, E.W. Scripps Company, Gannett, Gatehouse Media, Gizmodo Group, The Guardian, Jezebel, KIRO radio, the McClatchy Company, NBC Universal, News Deeply, *The New York Times*, NPR, PBS, PBS NewsHour, Politico, Reveal, Slate, Storyful, Swaay Media, Tronc, TYT Network, *USA TODAY*, *The Wall Street Journal*, WAMU, *The Washington Post*, *Washingtonian*, WRAL-TV, Vice News, and Vox Media

### ADVOCACY GROUPS AND NONPROFIT FOUNDATIONS

ACES: The Society for Editing, the Advancement Project, the American Press Institute, the American Society of News Editors, the Asian American Journalists Association, the Committee to Protect Journalists, the Democracy Fund, the Ford Foundation, the International Center for Journalists, the International Women's Media Foundation, the Maynard Institute, the National Association of Black Journalists, the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, NLGJA – The Association of LGBTQ Journalists, the National Women's Law Center, Online News Association, Poynter Institute, Press Forward, the Radio Television Digital News Association, Reporters Without Borders, the Society of American Business Editors and Writers, the Society of Professional Journalists and the Women's Media Center

**EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS** American University, Arizona State University, Howard University, Loyola University Chicago, Missouri School of Journalism, Morgan State University, Syracuse University, Towson University, Washington and Lee University

### INDEPENDENT PRODUCERS, BLOGGERS AND WRITER

Journal-isms, Lantigua Williams & Co., mylove4writing.com

### U.S. GOVERNMENT

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

### LAW FIRMS

Katz, Marshall & Banks

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Summit organizer: Cathy Trost, executive director and senior vice president, Freedom Forum Institute

Executive Producer: John Maynard, senior director of programs, Freedom Forum Institute

Special thanks to Jill Geisler, Loyola University Chicago's Bill Plante Chair in Leadership and Media Integrity, for her expert work guiding the summit conversation and for her strategic insights and expertise; and to Alicia Shepard, media writer and former NPR ombudsman, for her significant research, audience outreach and logistical support.

This report was written by Patty Rhule, senior director of exhibit development, Newseum, and Susan Garland, independent writer. Graphic design by Lauren Biagini.

# KEY FINDINGS

## POWER SHIFT PRINCIPLES

- Workplace sexual misconduct is a real and urgent problem, masked by silence and enabled by systems.
- Sexual misconduct and workplace discrimination are inextricably linked.
- Sexual misconduct thrives where an imbalance of power is used to protect some and to intimidate and silence others, especially young women.
- Incivility and bullying are gateways to harassment and misconduct.
- The workplace failures that allow sexual misconduct to thrive must be remedied through strong harassment reporting and training systems combined with women's leadership, advancement and empowerment, supported by men and women at all levels of organizations.
- Results must be measured, sustained and transparent.
- True diversity and workplace integrity create better journalism, healthier businesses and a stronger democracy.

## POWER SHIFT SOLUTIONS

Key solutions to the workplace misconduct crisis that were identified at the Power Shift Summit are repairing systemic failures and creating sustained change.

### **Systemic failures must be repaired by:**

- Encouraging employees to report misconduct without fear of retaliation.
- Training executives, managers and employees to create civil, harassment-free workplaces.
- Recognizing and reducing the vulnerability of the least powerful.
- Creating hiring, evaluation and promotion processes free of apparent and inherent bias.

### **Sustained change can be created through accountability and transparency in organizations, including:**

- Providing clarity about the adjudication of complaints and concerns.
- Creating and sharing metrics on workplace demographics, recruiting and retention.
- Evaluating managers and staff not only for the quality of their journalism, but also for their contributions to workplace integrity.

## DISCUSSION

**Jan Neuharth**, chair and chief executive officer of the Freedom Forum, and trustee of the Newseum and Freedom Forum Institute, launched the Power Shift Summit with a pledge to seek real solutions to sexual misconduct in the workplace.

“Issues of equality, diversity and inclusiveness for women and people of color or those who have been marginalized have been part of the Newseum’s mission from the start,” she said. The goal of the summit is to help the news media build a culture in which “sexual harassment, misconduct and discrimination are never tolerated, protected or ignored.”

The discussion quickly turned to candid conversations about how news organizations had handled sexual misconduct in the past, and what they must do to improve organizational systems to insure safe workplaces. “We all sit here as failures,” said **Jill Geisler**, Loyola University Chicago’s Bill Plante Chair in Leadership and Media Integrity, who guided the day’s discussion. “This happened on our watch.” The focus ahead must be on “preventive medicine,” she said, and not just responding to a crisis.

### RECURRING THEMES OF THE SUMMIT INCLUDED:

- Sexual harassment is just one facet of a larger issue of sex and race discrimination in the workplace.
- Newsroom culture that protects “superstar” talent at all costs creates an environment that enables sexual harassment to flourish.
- High turnover among women who are fleeing poor treatment, often by powerful men, is costing news organizations a rich pool of talent.
- News organizations need to be more transparent about what harassment is, their policies regarding it and the actions they are taking against employees who have been accused of misbehavior. In-person anti-harassment training for all levels of the company must include clear examples of inappropriate behavior.

- Organizations need to create human resources systems that protect employees as well as employers. They also need to create an environment in which employees feel confident they can bring their concerns forward without fear of reprisal.
- Newsrooms need to gather and make public data on their newsroom demographics.
- Young women and interns are prime targets for harassment. They need to be mentored, supported and instructed on how to deal with inappropriate behavior.
- Employee peer support groups can be instrumental in helping colleagues deal with uncomfortable behaviors and help them initiate the formal complaint process.
- Companies need to address the larger issue of workplace bullying, which is often an entry point for sexual harassment.
- Diverse newsrooms and a welcoming environment are critical to the economic survival of the industry as the demographics of news consumers change.



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This happened on our watch.”

*Jill Geisler, Loyola University Chicago*

## ASSESSING WHERE WE ARE NOW

Newsroom culture that protects powerful men at the expense of women, lacks diversity and discourages open conversation about the abuse of power plays a major role in the sexual misconduct scandals that have exposed problems at many news organizations, including ABC News, CBS News, Fox News, NBC News, National Public Radio, *The New York Times* and Vice Media.

“It’s really about power,” said **Sarah Glover**, president of the National Association of Black Journalists. “Power often leads to issues of discrimination at large. It’s not just a straight white female issue. It affects people of color.”

NPR Chief Operating Officer **Loren Mayor** agreed that sexual harassment is “the tip of the iceberg” that illuminates broader issues in an organization. “It was like the spark that lit up this whole powder keg,” she said. “It opened up all of these broader issues about power dynamics, about inequalities in the organization, racial issues — it brought everything to the surface.”

“Everything from power disparities to having superstars to isolated workplaces to homogenous workplaces to younger workers, those are all big risk factors right now,” said **Sharon Masling**, chief of staff to Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Commissioner Chai Feldblum.

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*Sharon Masling, EEOC*

“It’s really about power.”

**Sarah Glover**, National Association of Black Journalists



Young employees are often at higher risk. “There is sometimes a predatory nature of this kind of predatory culture in which young women feel they have to acquiesce to do certain things, even while they are still students, to get an interview, to get an internship and even to get a conversation with someone,” said **Sherri Williams**, assistant professor of American University’s School of Communication.

### THE HIGH COST OF HARASSMENT

**Elisa Lees Muñoz**, executive director of the International Women’s Media Foundation, noted that sexual harassment is not an isolated occurrence, and that freelancers and temporary workers, who are “at the bottom of the food chain,” must be protected. A survey by the IWMF in 2014 found that more than 40 percent of women reported they had experienced sexual harassment.

Young women, minorities and interns are particularly vulnerable to harassment by powerful men. “There is a value ratio that is applied to women versus men,” said **Juleyka Lantigua-Williams**, an independent producer. “How many women can we discard, abuse, bring in, rotate for the sake of keeping this one very valuable forward-facing man? We have to do away with that value ratio. You’re discouraging a lot of really hard-working, really brilliant women ... who have



been brought into a situation that was untenable because of factors including the existence of a very prominent male.”

Employees and audiences are both angry in the wake of these scandals, said **Madhulika Sikka**, a media consultant and public editor at PBS, which fired anchor Charlie Rose and suspended Tavis Smiley over accusations against them. Viewers “are really invested in that front-facing talent. They think those people are their friends, they welcome them into their homes every day. ... They can’t quite believe these stories.”

Protecting star talent while ignoring the complaints of the less powerful, who often leave their jobs because of harassment, is costing the news industry a rich talent pool of women, said **Lara Setrakian**, CEO of News Deeply and co-founder of Press Forward, a group of women journalists whose experiences with sexual harassment and assault sparked a mission to work for change. She said none of the women in the group who told their stories publicly continue to work for mainstream news organizations, and that they assumed they were “finished” in the industry. “What that meant clearly is that we were afraid of our own industry,” she said.

Setrakian went public in 2017 with accusations that Mark Halperin sexually harassed her in 2006 when he was political director of ABC News and she was an entry-level reporter. More than a dozen women have accused Halperin of sexual harassment or assault. Halperin has denied any assaults but admitted “my behavior was wrong.” Setrakian said she had little recourse for seeking help. “Go to management? He was management,” she said.

Ridding newsrooms of sexual misconduct and discrimination could have bottom-line benefits. “Someone said to me recently that when they see a conference room where there are five white men gathered together to plan coverage, that would be seen as perfectly normal,” said PBS’s Sikka. “If you have five Chinese American women, people would say they are plotting a revolution. There is a whole audience out there you might be able to reach if you open your eyes to looking at the world in a multiplicity of ways.”

**Raju Narisetti**, chief executive officer of the Gizmodo Media Group, echoed that thought: “We ought to be the go-to media company for a much more diverse audience, and if my newsroom does not reflect that diversity, there’s no way I’m going to capture that audience.”

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## LACK OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Startup companies often don't invest in human resources during their chaotic early days. But Vox editor-in-chief **Lauren Williams** said that as Vox has grown from a “scrappy startup” in 2011 to an established media company, it has developed guidelines that are “actively, proactively protecting” employees.

At established news organizations, budget cuts often reduce human resources staffing. NPR's Loren Mayor said the decision to put more resources into content at the expense of support personnel led to overworked human resources staffers who were not seen as “trusted connectors” at the organization. NPR has been dealing with angry employees in the aftermath of the departures of former news executives Michael Oreskes and David Sweeney in November 2017 after they were accused of sexual harassment.

Moderator Jill Geisler said that human resources departments are often seen as serving divided loyalties: protecting both the well-being of the organization as well as its employees. **Traci Schweikert**, vice president of human resources at Politico, said she is pained when she hears about people who believe that their organization's HR departments are “not there for them.”

“Our job is to make the workplace the best it can be,” she said. “If something is not right, we have to engage in conversation, and it's our job to push until we feel that an organization is in the right place.”

“How hard should it be to explain to the culture that this is how we should behave together?”

*Loren Mayor, NPR*

## NO PLAYBOOK FOR HANDLING CASES

Some participants at the summit said there is no playbook for dealing with sexual misconduct in newsrooms as managers grapple with the nuances of individual cases. “Someone asked the other day: Is there a difference between felonies and misdemeanors?” said **Carolyn Ryan**, assistant managing editor of *The New York Times*, where reporter Glenn Thrush was removed from the White House beat and given the longest suspension on record for a *Times* employee after four women accused him of unwanted kissing and touching. Ryan said 10 *New York Times*' staffers of different ages, races and genders were involved in the decision to suspend rather than fire Thrush. Ryan said that the young staffers drawn to the *Times* for its mission “have really challenged us to live up to our values.”

A common thread of discussion was the need for basic respect and civility in newsroom cultures. Coming up with standards of behavior “is really easy,” said NPR's Mayor. “Everything I need to know I learned in kindergarten. We say please and thank you and treat everybody with respect and use inside voices and we use our words and we keep our hands in our laps. How hard should it be to explain to the culture that this is how we should behave together?”

Office romances can raise questions, too. The culture that led to lasting relationships and marriages at NPR years ago “is probably not acceptable today,” said Mayor. Geisler warned about rules that forbid office relationships: “Be careful. Nepotism rules used to exclude women. It used to be the woman you are married to cannot be part of the organization. We have to be careful about instituting practices that have consequences we did not anticipate.”



## THE WORKPLACE POWER DYNAMIC

**Addie Zinone** of Press Forward talked about the impact of power imbalances in the workplace. She has called her brief relationship with former NBC News “Today” show anchor Matt Lauer in 2000 when she was a production assistant “an abuse of power” initiated by the powerful anchor. She said even seemingly consensual relationships between a senior male staffer and a junior-level employee can be non-consensual. “I didn’t say no. I felt so overwhelmed in that situation,” she said. She suggested that companies should create programs that would “elaborate on what consent means in that power dynamic.”

**Laura McGann**, editorial director of Vox.com, questioned whether consent should be under debate. “I don’t see this uprising of 22-year-old women saying, ‘I want the right to sleep with my boss or to make out with him at the office party.’ Overwhelmingly, more powerful men are putting women in a bad position. How about if you are a manager, you can’t date anybody, you can’t touch anybody, you can’t come on to anybody?”

## GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Some older women who broke barriers in male-dominated newsrooms have different levels of tolerance about inappropriate behavior than younger women. “The intergenerational conversation that clearly must be had by women is something that I think is probably a surprise to people,” said **Ingrid Ciprian-Matthews**, executive vice president, CBS News.

**Barbara Cochran**, a former broadcast news executive who teaches at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, recalled being one of just a few women in a newsroom of mostly men. “I’m part of the group that might sometimes say, ‘Oh, shrug it off, toughen up, all of these things are not equal,’” Cochran said. But, in her role as a journalism professor, where about 70 percent of students are women, she notices that attitudes have changed. “This new generation is very different, much tougher, much more willing to speak up.”

## MORE EXPERT VOICES

“What this really is, is part of the fabric of America. Almost every woman I know from middle school on has had some experience minor or major... This is a major problem that has gone on for decades. The only way to tackle it is to treat it as a major issue.”

— **Jackie Jones**, assistant dean for programs and chair of the Department of Multimedia Journalism, Morgan State University

“We have been so consumed with saving the business and finding a path to monetization that we’ve put [diversity and inclusion] on our list of things to do. Until we understand that having a diverse and inclusive organization is the road to economic success, we will never make progress. It can’t just be women talking to women. It’s got to be partnering with the men as well to make a difference.”

— **Julia Wallace**, Frank Russell chair, Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Arizona State University

“In the inter-sectionality of race, class and gender, the more things you have that remove you from what is hetero-normative white male power, the less likely you are able to speak or be heard. It’s not just a gender issue, it’s a power issue.”

— **Farai Chideya**, program officer, creativity and free expression, Ford Foundation

“I know so many young women and they all have this wonderful attitude of ‘I can do anything, I can be anything, I know where I’m going.’ We’ve given them the attitude, but I don’t think we’ve given them the skills to back that up. I don’t think they have any better response to the problem than I did when I was in newsrooms.”

— **Jane Elizabeth**, director, Accountability Journalism Program, American Press Institute

“A lot of people had a lot of questions about what this is. ‘Is this OK, is this just creepy or is it actual harassment?’ It’s one thing when you have someone walking around, swinging their bathrobes open. It’s pretty clear, that’s harassment.”

— **Loren Mayor**, chief operating officer, NPR

## CHANGING THE SYSTEMS

In the wake of high-profile harassment incidents, media organizations are examining their newsroom cultures and the organizational systems that have enabled sexual misconduct and other inappropriate behavior to thrive.

Conference participants said that companies need to revamp anti-harassment training and develop policies that clearly describe unsuitable behavior and the actions employers will take against abusers. Several news organization leaders said they are implementing plans to help employees, particularly younger ones, feel more comfortable in reporting harassing behavior.

As they investigated harassment accusations in their newsrooms, executives said they realized that sexual misconduct was just part of the broader issue of inequality in their organizations. Many conference participants noted that promoting women and persons of color into decision-making positions could help reduce hostile and unequal treatment of women and minorities.

“The most vulnerable — however you define that term — it could be through being a minority, through being a woman, through being young, through being economically disempowered — if they are systematically and structurally given a voice in news meetings or somehow within the organization, these problems, we wouldn’t all be sitting here today,” said **Shannon Van Sant**, a member of the Press Forward group and a freelance journalist. “They would have been brought into the open and they never would have been allowed. But it’s very easy to allow them when the only people who have a voice are the most powerful.”

### LISTENING TOURS AND SUPPORT GROUPS

Loren Mayor, chief operating officer of NPR, said that the company began “listening sessions” following harassment allegations against top executives Michael Oreskes and David Sweeney. Mayor said she met with small groups of NPR employees multiple times a day for six weeks, asking them to tell her “what’s wrong, what’s not working, and if you are in a place to talk about it, what can we do to make things better? I heard a lot.”

Based on what she heard about inequality in the newsroom, Mayor said NPR will be “trying to bring more voices into the decision-making process” so that executives will hear from employees from “different tiers” about issues that are troubling them. She also indicated that the company would boost the budget of its human resources department.

Mayor said some employees decided to form a peer support group to be a “trusted place” where people could go to discuss questionable behaviors they were encountering. Staffers were sometimes concerned they would be considered “troublemakers” if they went to HR. The group will be cataloguing complaints and will be “an on-ramp onto the formal process,” she said.

Like Mayor, Ingrid Ciprian-Matthews, executive vice president at CBS News, said a corporate anti-harassment policy is not enough. “It wasn’t about the policies,” she said. “We had to address the employees in a way that was more personal.”

### OUTSIDE EXPERTS AND IN-PERSON TRAINING

Ciprian-Matthews said CBS hired an outside expert to conduct sexual harassment training for employees in Washington and New York and plans sessions in other locations. The trainer engaged employees by providing examples of harassment that newsroom personnel would recognize. “It has been a huge success,” she said. “It added the element of personal interactive conversations ... and what you had the responsibility to do as a manager and as an employee.”

Moderator Jill Geisler said there is a perception that “compliance training is to protect the employer from being sued rather than to protect the employee from being hurt.”

Ciprian-Matthews said the “magic is with in-person training. It’s real, it’s today, it cites instances that are familiar to people in newsrooms.” She dismissed online training as “not as relatable.”

Like NPR and CBS, *The New York Times* embarked on a company-wide conversation about sexual misconduct in

“Every woman should know what is legal and what is harassment and what to do in the moment.”

*Emily Miller, Press Forward*

the aftermath of reporter Glenn Thrush’s suspension. *Times* managers conducted question-and-answer sessions with groups of 100 employees at a time, said Carolyn Ryan, the *Times*’ assistant managing editor. “We are trying to talk with employees more openly about what they should expect if there is a problem in the workplace,” she said.

NPR, CBS and the *Times* organized these freewheeling, workplace-wide discussions in response to high-visibility incidents. But newsrooms can run similar forums to gauge employees’ concerns and to set clear guidelines on acceptable behavior as a matter of course. “I think what’s important is not caring about this [only] in a crisis,” said Geisler. “We have to do preventive medicine.”

**Sharon Toomer**, executive director of the National Association of Black Journalists, said that it is unlikely that organizations will make the kind of “transformative” change that is needed without outside help. “There is a tendency to protect your own system and your own individuals,” she said. One way to make a major change is to hire experts in the field of organizational change and transformation.



Alfredo Carbajal, president of the American Society of News Editors, said newspapers need to change the focus of their training. Currently, managers look at issues related to “the craft,” such as missing deadlines, he said. “We have not put a lot of attention on how you handle ... harassment” and how to become more inclusive, said Carbajal, managing editor of *Al Día* in Dallas. He noted that women hold just 33% of managerial positions in newsrooms across the country.

### IDENTIFYING WHAT’S ACCEPTABLE AND WHAT’S ILLEGAL

Companies need to set clear definitions about appropriate behavior. **Emily Miller** of Press Forward said young women are not made aware that sexual harassment is against the law. “Every woman should know what is legal and what is harassment and what to do in the moment. The goal is never again to have someone say #MeToo.”

Setting clear guidelines is relatively easy. A thornier problem for news managers, in this #MeToo environment, is determining appropriate punishment for transgressors. When the *Times* decided to suspend rather than fire Thrush, Ryan said the response was split between those who felt he should be fired and others who said they were pleased that the *Times* “recognized the nuance” of misconduct. She said that Executive Editor Dean Baquet believes that the *Times* draws lines for all kinds of behavior, such as ethical behavior and journalism performance. When it comes to sexual misconduct, she said, “The industry more broadly is having a difficult time figuring out where those lines are.”

“We are trying to talk with employees more openly about what they should expect if there is a problem in the workplace.”

*Carolyn Ryan, The New York Times*

But **Kainaz Amaria**, visuals editor at Vox, said that the lack of transparency about the disparity in punishments for the accused men sends the message that “there is a spectrum of tolerance ... we are going to tolerate some types of behavior and not others.”

News managers argued that they also need to protect individuals who come to them privately. In response to *Washington Post* reporter Farhi’s objection that the *Times* had not released its internal report on the Thrush case, Ryan said that employees who spoke with management “had no expectation that they [the interviews] could be made public.”

CBS News’ Ciprian-Matthews agreed that managers need to maintain confidentiality to witnesses who came forward with accusations of misconduct. “When that confidentiality is broken, you are setting the tone. And all those potential employees who may have thought, ‘I may come forward,’ may think twice about that. We have to weigh everybody’s rights here.”

Ryan indicated that other news organizations will be looking at the way the *Times* handled the Thrush case. “It feels we are under a microscope, that we are under scrutiny no matter what we do,” she said. “We thought it would be helpful if we did draw some of those lines.”

Investigators of sexual harassment charges often can build a better case if the target has confided in friends or family members at the time of the abuse, said Politico’s Traci Schweikert. “We tend to downplay it when it happens to us, or we forget the details or we try to make an excuse,” she said. A person who is backing off from making a complaint needs a friend “who can remember you in the moment and remember that two days later, you still felt awful.”

The push for accountability should not focus only on the men who did the harassing, but also on executives who ignored the mistreatment. Participants noted that many high-profile men involved in recent harassment cases had been protected by leaders in their own organizations. **Indira Lakshmanan**, the Newmark Chair in Journalism Ethics at the Poynter Institute, said she has spoken with people in many newsrooms who told her that management knew for years about abusive behavior by some high-level people. Managers would say, she said, “That is just x being x and you just have to deal with it.’ That I think is the real problem: What can be done to hold executives accountable?”

## PROMOTING AN ATMOSPHERE OF RESPECT

News organizations that are addressing sexual harassment also need to look at the larger problem of workplace bullying, several conference participants said. Sexual misconduct and racial harassment often occur in workplaces that tolerate bullying by men with power. “If you want to stop harassment, you need to look at rude and uncivil behavior in the workplace,” said Sharon Masling, chief of staff to Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Commissioner Chai Feldblum. “Incivility is the gateway drug to harassment.” Masling said that one-third of discrimination charges at the EEOC include a harassment charge.

Masling recommended that employers conduct “respectful workforce” training, which would focus on promoting acceptable workplace conduct. The training includes coaching an employee “with problematic behavior,” she said. The EEOC has two new harassment prevention training programs, Leading for Respect for supervisors and Respect in the Workplace for employees. Masling also recommended that companies include in their harassment training ways to allow “bystanders” who witness harassing behavior to come forward without fear of retaliation.

Managers and employees should stop using disparaging language to describe colleagues. Demeaning language can make it more difficult for women to be perceived as having value in an organization, some participants said.

“Incivility is the gateway drug to harassment.”

*Sharon Masling, EEOC*

## A NEED FOR TRUE DIVERSITY

Many said that companies can create an environment that discourages harassment by hiring more women and minorities for top newsroom positions. They also said companies should provide a clear pathway for promotions and offer family-friendly benefits. Research shows that having more women in management and key positions reduces incidents of harassment.

A commitment to diversity needs to be real, and it needs to start at the top. **Julia Wallace**, the Frank Russell Chair at Arizona State University's Cronkite School of Journalism, was a founding editor of *USA TODAY*. "Diversity was preached every day and it was part of the culture," she said. "The head of the company at that point, Al Neuharth, believed in the importance of diversity and inclusion and all those issues in a way that I fear many leaders of our organizations don't today."

Participants noted that news organizations need to gather and release data on their newsroom demographics. The data should include the gender and ethnic makeup of editorial employees at all levels, from reporters and production assistants to television "talent" and news executives. This kind of transparency could become a tool for social change, prodding news executives to move toward more diverse workplaces and to promote women and people of color to decision-making positions.

**Julie Burton**, president of the Women's Media Center, noted that a 2017 center report found that the share of women anchors, field reporters and correspondents fell to 25.2% in 2016, from 32% in 2015. "It is past time for women and people of color to have roles that reflect their power and their numbers in the population," Burton said. "People will not speak up if they are a token. They don't feel comfortable."



Managers need to start "developing a pipeline for leadership" for young female and minority employees.

*Michelle Ye Hee Lee, Asian American Journalists Association*



For news organizations with diverse workforces, taking a demographic inventory and releasing the data also could have a positive impact on the bottom line, said **Raju Narisetti**, the chief executive officer of the Gizmodo Media Group. In October, the media company released its second report on the diversity of its global staff, which showed that 55% of its editorial executive and leadership positions were female, and 45% were black, Hispanic, Asian and other ethnic groups. Gizmodo Media Group is the publisher of online news organizations, including Jezebel and Deadspin.

Narisetti said he released the numbers "because it makes perfect business sense." A diverse news staff can report on stories that reflect the many viewpoints and experiences of a diverse audience, attracting more readers and viewers, he said. "Our business model is that we are trying to reach a very young, much more diverse America," he said, noting that a majority of younger Americans, ages 18-34, will be non-white by 2018. "If my newsroom doesn't reflect that diversity, there is no way in hell I am going to capture that audience."

"It is past time for women and people of color to have roles that reflect their power and their numbers in the population."

*Julie Burton, Women's Media Center*

PBS's Madhulika Sikka said organizations need to learn from their diverse staffs. "If you are one of very few or the only one, you are lauded as someone who counts in the diversity hire but then what happens is you are expected to conform to the culture that's already there as opposed to bringing what you bring to the table and helping change that culture. That's where I think work needs to be done."

Some newsrooms are leading the way. Politico editor **Carrie Budoff Brown** said that half of the news organization's leadership — those assigning and editing stories — are women. Brown, who was at Politico at its launch in 2007, was the first on the staff to have a baby. She was given five months of paid leave, and, upon her return, her editors made sure she could be home by 6 p.m. so she could put her baby to bed, she said. Now, as editor, she encourages new fathers to take three months off under the news organization's paid parental leave policy. "Flexibility is the single reason I am still there," she said.

As the top editorial manager, Brown now has the power to hire. "I hire people who are good people and treat people well," she said. "It's not just me, but there's a multiplier effect that radiates." She added: "If you are a bully, you are not welcome here. Nobody wants to be around assholes."

When she was editor-in-chief of *USA TODAY*, **Joanne Lipman** said, women held three of the top four editorial positions. It often took some action on her part to make sure that women sought promotions. When there were openings for higher-level jobs, she said, "Women who were overqualified were sitting on their hands." She would then approach these women and discuss their goals for their future, said Lipman, author of "That's What She Said: What Men Need to Know (and Women Need to Tell Them) About Working Together."

Managers need to start "developing a pipeline for leadership" for young female and minority employees, said **Michelle Ye Hee Lee**, senior vice president of the Asian American Journalists Association, adding employers should also make sure employees have the resources and leadership they need throughout their careers. "We know that developing criteria for development happens through a career, and the earlier it happens, the better," said Lee.

Young women were the prime targets for abuse in many of the recent sexual harassment cases uncovered in newsrooms. For that reason, several participants said, companies should design programs that would protect them from reprisals if they report abuse in the workplace and that would teach them skills to fend off unwanted advances. Programs also would make it clear to both the youngest employees and those in higher positions that it is difficult to claim that a relationship is consensual when there is a large power imbalance.

Emily Miller, who said she was assaulted by Halperin when she was a producer at ABC, told the conference, "I want more than anything that every woman who starts her career at 22 should understand what is legal, what is not legal and what to say in the moment." She said she remained silent for years because "I thought I was the only one. I thought I had done something wrong. It didn't occur to me to go to HR."



## MORE EXPERT VOICES

“One of the things I worry about with my graduate students, who are primarily female, is they are not going to these big organizations with their first jobs, they are going to small newsrooms around the country. We are not having conversations the way I think we need to do with them about how to protect themselves in those environments.”

— **Lynne Adrine**, director of the D.C. Graduate Program in Broadcast and Digital Journalism, S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University

“For some women, [being sexually harassed] was the end of their journalism careers. It was not a place where they felt it was a safe environment anymore.”

— **Amy Brittain**, reporter, *The Washington Post*

“Clearly these were problems that followed from one place to another. We are holding a lot of people accountable on how they hire people, but we don’t seem to have the same accountability when we are hiring leadership.”

— **Teri Hayt**, executive director, American Society of News Editors

“Bullying behavior is what puts a lot of pressure on people to be quiet, to remain quiet and to not talk about things they care about, which includes harassment. We have all been in meetings where people are made to feel stupid, that ideas are not listened to. Those patterns lead to the silence.”

— **Susanne Reber**, executive editor of Reveal from The Center for Investigative Reporting

## REPORTING THE SEXUAL HARASSMENT STORY

Without the power of the press, and the courageous people who told their stories to reporters, this time of cultural reckoning might never have happened, at least not with the same velocity and intensity, said Cathy Trost, Newseum senior vice president and a journalist for more than 25 years.

Reporters who broke some of the biggest stories about sexual harassment and misconduct spoke at the summit about the challenges they faced in covering the story. Women who were harassed are often reluctant to come forward with such personal information, fearful of retribution and the potential effect on their careers. At the same time, anonymous sources need to be carefully vetted because of the impact an accusation of harassment can have against an individual.

“Once any news organization reports that anyone is a sexual harasser, you have destroyed this person,” said *Washington Post* media reporter **Paul Farhi**, who broke the story about Michael Oreskes, formerly NPR’s top news executive, who resigned after being accused of sexually harassing women employees. “They will never work in media again, they may never work again. You’re really sticking your neck out, and you better be right.”

### GETTING SOURCES ON THE RECORD

**Lara Setrakian**, CEO of News Deeply, discussed her difficult decision to go public last year with accusations of harassment by political analyst Mark Halperin while both worked at ABC in 2006. She had been approached by CNN senior media reporter Oliver Darcy to tell her story. “I was very concerned about my family and they had forbidden me from sharing my name publicly,” she said. After “a lot of soul-searching about what we do for a living,” Setrakian decided to go public. As journalists, she said, “We ask people to do this, to come out with their names, to be honest. How dare we not do this for the greater good and for the greater good of our profession.”

Darcy and Farhi had both been pursuing the Halperin story. Darcy had only anonymous sources for his story, but CNN decided to go with it after Halperin announced he was taking a leave from his job based on what unnamed women were telling Darcy. “That was news,” Darcy said. Farhi came out with his story the next day with an on-the-record story from one woman.

Though convincing sources to go on the record is difficult and sensitive work, Farhi said, “In my experience, none of these anonymous accusations are ever wrong. They always check out one way or the other. There’s someone who the person spoke with, there’s some HR paper trail. So once you hear about one of these, you know you’re on to something.” But he worries that there could be a time when a sexual harassment story based on an anonymous source will be wrong, with bad consequences.

*Washington Post* investigative reporter **Amy Brittain**, who worked with freelancer Irin Carmon to break the story about veteran broadcast journalist Charlie Rose’s pattern of sexual harassment, said they met in person with Rose’s accusers and cultivated one long-distance source via sometimes daily phone calls. “We had eight women and originally none of them were willing to go on record. It was absolutely essential to have people on the record. The story had to be bulletproof in order for us to go forward with it.” Carmon had first heard the allegations against Rose in 2010 while she worked at the online publication Jezebel.

“We should dispense with the naïve notion that just having a woman in power solves the problem.”

**Juleyka Lantigua-Williams**,  
*independent producer*



Even in the aftermath of the shocking accusations against film producer Harvey Weinstein, revealed by *The New York Times* and *The New Yorker*, Brittain said deciding to go on the record was difficult for women. “It was gut-wrenching to hear these women as they debated the merits of whether to stay anonymous or go on the record.” She said that she did not rush their decision “just because there was competition.”

After she saw Darcy’s CNN story, **Ella McManus** of Press Forward came forward about her own unwanted physical encounter with Halperin when she was a college student, because, she said, “There are so many young women who are afraid because of retaliation. These women need to know there is a voice for them.” Press Forward is a group of women journalists fighting to stop sexual harassment in the media industry.

## HOLDING MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTABLE

The accountability of management and news executives will be a next step in the story, Brittain said, although one that is harder to pursue.

The offenders are known entities, said Sharon Toomer, executive director of the National Association of Black Journalists. “They have been enabled, they have been protected, they have been promoted, they have been coddled. What this says to me is that people who are most responsible, people in leadership, have decided this is what they are going to allow. To me, that’s a sickly culture.”

“Media companies are no better than any other companies about transparency.”

— *Paul Farhi, The Washington Post*

It is not just powerful men who enable such behavior, but high-powered women who surround the accused as well. “We should dispense with the naïve notion that just having a woman in power solves the problem,” said freelance producer Juleyka Lantigua-Williams.

Charlie Rose’s producer of 20 years issued a statement saying she was sorry she had failed the women on his staff who were harassed, but declined to be interviewed, Brittain said. Some of the women who complained about Rose’s behavior said the producer dismissed them with “that’s just Charlie being Charlie.”

Farhi said NPR had received two complaints about Oreskes while he worked there and “NPR basically shrugged.” The climate is different now, he said. Now, “you address it immediately, up to and including firing the person,” Farhi said.

PBS’s Madhulika Sikka said the firings of prominent broadcasters are a challenge for news organizations that pride themselves on investigating other industries. “We are not great about doing that about ourselves.”

“Media companies are no better than any other companies about transparency,” said Farhi, who challenged *The New York Times*’ Carolyn Ryan about management’s failure to release a lengthy internal report about former White House reporter Glenn Thrush. “The only thing that’s different is they are bigger hypocrites about their lack of transparency.”

If there is a harassment story about *The Post*, said Farhi, “We would probably rather break the news than have someone break it for us.” Two days after the summit, Farhi reported that *Post* reporter Joel Achenbach had been suspended for 90 days for “inappropriate workplace conduct” with women.

## RESOURCES ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT, DIVERSITY AND MENTORING

EEOC Report on Harassment

<https://www1.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/release/10-4-17.cfm?renderforprint=1>

National Women's Law Center

<https://nwlc.org/>

Journalism and Women Symposium Mentoring Program

<http://www.jaws.org/mentoring-program/>

Online News Association: Journalism Mentorship Collaboration

<https://journalists.org/programs/journalism-mentorship-collaborative/>

Press Forward

<http://www.thepressforward.org/>

RTDNA: Anchor Leadership Program

[https://www.rtdna.org/article/anchor\\_leadership\\_takes\\_off\\_camera\\_skills](https://www.rtdna.org/article/anchor_leadership_takes_off_camera_skills)

Society of Professional Journalists: resources for combating sexual harassment in the newsroom

<https://www.spj.org/harassment.asp>

American Press Institute

<https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/>

United Public Strategies

<http://www.upstrategies.org/>

Women's Media Center

<https://www.womensmediacenter.com/>

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