

Guidelines on reporting hate speech

#DEFYHATENOW



Practical Tips for Journalists

DW Akademie #Media-Dev
http://www.dw.com/en/reporting-hate-speech-practical-tips-for-journalists/a-19152896?maca=en-rss_en_akademie_me-diadev-15969-xml-mrss

From covering a rally to analysing Twitter feeds, part of a journalist's job is to report on what is said. But sometimes people say shocking things. How far should a journalist go when reporting on hate speech? As journalists, most of us have been confronted by hate speech at some time, whether it's a politician bawling racial slurs at an election rally, angry protesters singing derogatory songs about a neighbouring ethnic group, or a prominent religious leader denigrating other faiths on Facebook. The question is, how can we do our job of reporting the facts without being used as a mouthpiece to spread incendiary comments and stir up hate and possibly even violence?

Hate speech versus freedom of expression

During certain periods, such as election campaigns, media organisations play an important role in distributing political messages. Some journalists believe that by not reporting the actual words said by a politician (even if they are hateful), they aren't allowing that person the right to be heard. Although a person has a right to express themselves, this doesn't mean you are obligated to provide a platform to spread offensive and hateful comments about a particular group.

If I'm going to report, what should I keep in mind?

- Do you need to report verbatim exactly what was said? Think about reporting the fact that inflammatory comments were made without directly quoting the person.
- If you are at the event where the inflammatory messages are expressed, ask the person to justify why they made the remarks they did.
- Get critical reactions from those attending the event.
- Get critical reactions from influential figures and/or community heavyweights to underline that the hateful views aren't held by everyone.
- Add context to your report (as you should anyway as a good journalist). Is the person making these statements attempting to draw attention away from other problems? Is there an analyst you can ask to interpret the person's intentions for making such comments? Can you give some background to tensions between certain groups (such as a drought making water scarce)?
- If any of the comments claim to be based on facts, check the validity of those facts.
- Steer away from sensationalized language in your report.

This exercise responds to the need for training in conflict sensitive reporting.

Participants are taken through the checklist for sensitive reporting in the handout.



Guidelines on reporting hate speech



Practical Tips for Journalists

EXERCISE 1 Imagine you are a politician in a fictional town, and create an imaginary character & scenario.

- Write 1-2 paragraphs of a very outrageous statement, with content that could incite conflict.
- Next, think of yourself as a journalist who is reporting on this speech by the politician.
- Write a traditional verbatim report covering exactly what was said.
- Next, rewrite this same information, taking a more conflict sensitive approach.
- Finally, write the article reporting on the inflammatory speech in the best possible way.
- Alternatively use the provided example to complete part 2 and 3 of the exercise.

EXAMPLES (1) TRADITIONAL REPORTING (Not recommended)

National Party leader William Smith has called Iti people stinking worms who should go back and live in the holes they crept out of. Speaking during a campaign visit to Riverside Village, Smith also said Iti traders had taken jobs away from his people and the parasites should be crushed underfoot and their business burnt.

The leader said that if elected, he would make sure all jobs in the region would be reserved for the Atu people, and the Iti would have to surrender their businesses to the government. During his speech, he also promised to build a new school for the village. ...

(2) EXAMPLE I (better)

During a campaign visit to Riverside Village, National Party leader William Smith has insulted the Iti people by referring to them as worms. Union Party leader Gabriel Thyme said Smith's words were "racist" and "irresponsible." "His remarks bordered on genocide," Thyme added, referring to Smith's call for violence action against the Iti people. Thyme said his country prided itself on its diversity and people's ability to live together peacefully.

"Politicians should support unity rather than trying to tear it apart," he said. Villagers living in Riverside Village agreed. Shop keeper Cas Dou said she had many customers and friends in neighbouring Iti village.

Guidelines on reporting hate speech

#DEFYHATENOW



Practical Tips for Journalists

(3) EXAMPLE II (even better)

Atu in Riverside Village are furious after National Party leader William Smith used a campaign speech to insult the Iti people. "It is unbelievable that a politician in a peaceful country like ours could try to stir up racial tension before an election," village headman Augustine Sumo said. "We live alongside the Iti people in peace and that is not about to change."

Shop keeper Cas Dou said she had many customers and friends in neighbouring Iti village. She said she had attended the National Party rally because she wanted to know more about what Smith would do for the village if he was elected. "He didn't say anything about the bridge we need here," Dou said. Others in the village were shocked by Smith's comments that the Iti were "parasites that should be crushed underfoot". Smith also threatened violence against Iti traders in the region. Reacting to Smith's comments, national footballer Josiah Myers, who is an Iti, said the politician was trying to divert attention away from his party's failure to do anything for the people in Riverside Village during his current term as a politician.

- EXCERCISE 2. Select a newspaper article or story that contains dangerous or hate speech and rewrite it to reflect a more balanced, non-inflammatory perspective.