

French-American
Foundation



Covering Immigration: An International Media Dialogue

November 13 - 15, 2009

Paris, France

Draft Agenda Dated October 29, 2009

Immigration evokes complex questions that encompass issues of national identity, human rights, and demographic shifts, all against a backdrop of vast economic change. This program seeks to raise awareness among media professionals of the characterization of immigrants and immigration in the press, bring international attention to reporting on immigration, and equip journalists with tools to produce balanced and insightful reportage on immigration issues.

Friday, November 13, 2009

14h15 – 15h15

Welcome

Opening Remarks:

Stéphane Fouks, Executive Co-Chairman, Euro RSCG

Keynote speaker:

Eric Besson, French Minister of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Mutually-Supportive Development (committed)

Participants will have an opportunity to pose questions.

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15h30 – 17h30 Session 1: How to Balance Journalistic Ideals and the Realities of Reporting

In an increasingly global and competitive news market, journalists have to get stories out quickly and face the challenge of making complicated issues accessible for a wide audience. They must sometimes make compromises, and a lack of detail or background in reporting is less a conscious choice than an indication that news organizations must do what they can with the resources they have.

Despite these pressures, the press has an enormous ability to steer the discussion on immigration policy—and with that a major responsibility to apply its discretion wisely as to what stories to cover and what information to present.

How does the reality of immigration in the United States and Europe differ from the reporting on the topic? What constitutes “ideal” coverage of immigration issues? How can journalists produce first-rate coverage while dealing with fewer, dwindling resources? How do journalists take into account the complexity of the issue when reporting on deadline? To what extent is a media outlet’s coverage demand-driven by the interest of the audience? Does the media cover immigration enough?

Moderator: **Ruben Navarrette**, Syndicated Columnist, San Diego Union-Tribune Editorial Board, Weekly Contributor, CNN.COM

North American Panelists:

Alan Jenkins, Executive Director, The Opportunity Agenda

Nina Bernstein, Immigration Reporter, The New York Times

European Panelists:

Frans Jennekens, Head of diversity, Netherlands Programmes Service (NPS), President of the Eurovision Intercultural and Diversity Group (EBU) (to be confirmed)

Ruadhán Mac Cormaic, Migration Correspondent, The Irish Times

There will be a 15-minute break during the session.

17h45 – 19h45 Session 2: Using Outside Research, Experts, and Advocacy Groups in Reporting

Immigration advocacy groups—both those who encourage open borders and those who advocate more tightly controlled immigration—publish studies, provide quotes, and publicize guests for interviews in an attempt to influence immigration coverage. A 2008 Brookings Institute report on Democracy in the New Media¹ noted that Congressional attempts at comprehensive immigration reform in the United States in

¹ http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2008/0925_immigration_dionne.aspx

2006 and 2007 were defeated in part because the media gave exposure to “new voices of advocacy,” including groups that advocate the restriction of immigration, such as NumbersUSA and the Federation for American Immigration Reform.

At the same time, facts and hard data are the backbone of news coverage, but accurate and pertinent statistical information can often be difficult to obtain. Statistics used improperly or selectively, or those taken from sources whose methodology is flawed, can provide a distorted image of immigration phenomena or can simply reinforce an audience’s preconceived notions about immigrant groups.

What role should advocacy groups play in producing balanced coverage? How should journalists use and responsibly vet the research produced by such groups? What do the words “non-partisan” and “expert” mean in the context of immigration coverage? What standards should reporters use to choose “experts” to add insight to their coverage? How do pro- and anti-immigration groups attempt to influence the media in the United States and Canada? How do they do so in Europe?

Moderator: **Roberto Suro**, Professor, USC Annenberg

North American Panelists:

Frank Sharry, Founder and Executive Director, America’s Voice

Tamar Jacoby, President and CEO of ImmigrationWorks USA

European Panelists:

Mike Jempson, Director, MediaWise

Jan Niessen, Director, Migration Policy Group

There will be a 15-minute break during the session.

19h45 – 21h30 Cocktail Reception

Saturday, November 14, 2009

8h30 – 10h30 Session 3: Immigration and Integration: Two Ways to Frame a Story

Immigration involves arrival in a destination country and the subsequent process of integrating into that society. Coverage can focus on issues associated with immigrants' arrival: border effectiveness, visa issues, and security concerns; as well as issues of integration: cultural acclimation, the experience of second- and third-generation communities, and access to education and employment.

How does the press treat these two sides of the migration narrative? What distinction should reporters draw between the two processes? How do the two complement each other? How does being cognizant of both processes make for better reporting and more dynamic stories? Does the U.S. press focus on border issues and the arrival of immigrants, while European coverage centers on cultural and economic integration for populations that have already arrived? How does Islam as part of the migrant experience in Europe affect media coverage? To what extent does a country's political discourse affect the focus of the press? Is there a side of the story that is missing as a result? Are recent immigrants and later generations of immigrants treated differently by the press?

Moderator: **Renée Kaplan**, Senior Producer of Newsmagazines and Talk Shows,
FRANCE 24

North American Panelists:

Ted Robbins, Southwest Correspondent, NPR

Susan Sachs, Correspondent, The Globe and Mail and The Christian Science Monitor; Journalism Professor, Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris

European Panelists:

Dr. Paul Scheffer, Professor of Urban Geographies at the University of Amsterdam

Akram Belkaïd, Journalist and Essayist, Le Monde Diplomatique

There will be a 15-minute break during the session.

11h00 – 17h00 Reporting Excursion

Participants will have the opportunity to do some on-the-ground exploration of communities in Paris and interact with immigrant communities, activist groups, local media, or local government officials, all while learning new strategies for interacting with and reporting on immigration issues.

17h30 – 18h30 Debriefing session for the reporting excursion

18h30 – 20h00 Dinner and Keynote presenter on Ethnic Media

Because of its unique relationship to immigrant communities, the ethnic press often uses different strategies than its mainstream counterpart in covering immigration issues. What is the current role of the ethnic media in covering immigration? How does the ethnic press use its close relationship to certain communities to enrich its coverage?

Sandy Close, Executive Editor and Director, New America Media

Claude Grunitzky, Founder, Trace Magazine and TV

Sunday, November 15, 2009

8h30 – 11h30 Session 4: A Framework for Better Coverage and Closing Remarks

The goal of this session is to distill the conclusions that participants have drawn from the discussions and make recommendations for moving forward to improve and enrich the media coverage of immigration.

Facilitators:

Mr. Luis Botello, Senior Program Director for Digital Media, International Center for Journalists (to be confirmed)

Dr. Frank-Dieter Freiling, Senior Vice President of International Affairs at ZDF-German Television

There will be a 15-minute break during the session

12h30 – 13h30 Closing Lunch