

5

Handouts & Exercises

Ethical Reporting & Citizen Journalism

#defyhatenow | 5 HANDOUTS & EXERCISES

ETHICAL REPORTING & CITIZEN JOURNALISM



PRACTICAL TIPS FOR JOURNALISTS

Imagine you are a politician in a fictional town, create an imaginary character and 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.

EXAMPLES:

VERBATIM REPORTING (Exactly what was said - 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. ...

EXAMPLE I (Rephrasing the content of the speech - 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.



A CHECKLIST FOR TOLERANCE

1/ When dealing with stories where political hate-speech is used it is vital not to sensationalise.

Ethical journalists will ask:

- It may be outrageous, but is it newsworthy?
- What is the intention of the speaker?
- What will be the impact of publication?
- Is there a danger of inflaming passions and incitement to violence?
- Is the speech fact-based and have the claims been tested?

2/ In gathering and editing controversial material, journalists should avoid a rush to publish. It is helpful to pause, even for a few moments, to reflect on the contents of the story:

- Have we avoided cliché and stereotypes?
- Have we asked all the relevant and necessary questions?
- Have we been sensitive to our audience?
- Have we been temperate in use of language?
- Do the pictures tell the story without resorting to violence and voyeurism?
- Have we used diverse sources and included the voices of relevant minorities?
- Does it meet standards set in editorial and ethical codes?

3/ One last look and moment of reflection is always useful before pushing the button to publish:

- Have we done good work?
- Are there any nagging doubts?
- And, finally, should I ask a colleague?