Program Committee and Mem Com joint meeting

August 26, 2015

Present: Rachel Kennison (Rethinking Schools), Sharon Kyle (LA Prog), Aarti (Care2), Linda (GWW), Antoinette (FSTV), Andrew Steltzer (Making Contact), Manolia Charlotin (TMC), Paul Koberstein (Cascadian Times), Maya (Truthout), Lisa (Making Contact)

**The agenda of the member committee meeting is:**
How do we include more Black/Latino/Ethnic publications in our membership?

1. Outreach. What outlets should we actively engage? Let's make a list!

2. Bigger Picture.  Is our definition of Independent preventing us from bringing on members that otherwise would fit a TMC profile? i.e. mission-driven, progressive, journalism orgs?

3. Next Steps.

**The agenda of the program committee is:**

1. Review Logistics (Jo Ellen)

2. Propose ideas for pre-conference workshop focus (we usually do an all-day workshop as the first day of the conference, but we could also change this)

3. Propose keynoters (the kind of speakers who would excite members about coming to the conference)

Minutes

Jo Ellen sets Frame

1. #TMCinColor—Manolia developed this program to track, amplify and promote reporters of color who are attached to TMC members. We are doing this now on social media, and are going to produce a newsletter around it.

Sharon: why are we taking this approach?

Manolia: We are following the Black Lives Movement. I realized I wanted to follow this work on a larger scale. Some of the reporters are reporters of color. I also wanted to attack the diversity gap to showcase and highlight the stories from these colleagues help us show that these reporters cover a wide range of issues.

Sharon: Are we explaining why we are taking this approach? Some people didn’t understand why the slogan is “Black” Lives Matter, not “All” Lives Matter.

Jo Ellen: The newsletter will explain this to some extent, and once it gets going, Manolia and I can write an essay.

Manolia: If we actually think Black voices matter, we need to just go ahead and amplify then. Acting matters. Let these voices do the speaking.

Sharon: If you wrote that down and posted it somewhere, that would add more depth and be helpful.

Linda: Yes, let’s communicate that it’s a strategy.

2. Jo Ellen. There is a big question, which is can we really have equitable coverage if we are not reaching audiences of color? Can we hire more reporters of color if we don’t have a mission to reach audiences of color? This is a theoretical/ strategic practice that I’d like to take up at the Feb meeting, and also a practical question about whether we should try to bring on outlets that reach communities of color.

Linda: This is a longer discussion. We need to let the people who work in ethnic and community media define what being in independent media means to them. Many of these media are not progressive, and when they look at independent media they see white media.

Sharon: This is really a series of discussions.

Jo Ellen: yes. I’m talking about whether we should make this the focus for our conference.

Linda: We used the same theme for Pocantico—how do we sustain independent journalism into the future and the conclusion was, we have to pay more attention to the audience and that should become central to everything we think about. Changing our mindset vis a vis audiences is fundamental to the question of sustainability. That question would bring in all the other questions.

Sharon: I like the idea of changing the mindset. When I hear the term “ethnic” and it’s not used as a broad description of everyone ethnic except white, it makes me feel that I’m not a part of that discussion. So when we talk about changing our point of view, and look at language. We could discuss that at the conference.

Maya: When you first brought up the idea at the conference, my question was, what is this? Racial justice—are we talking about the role of the independent media and how that interacts with ethnic and Black media? What is the focus?

If the focus is, how do we make independent media so that it is more inclusive or more consistent with our mission of racial justice, that is less appealing to a larger group of people than the other ideas we are bringing up. A lot of people who work for us aren’t concerned about what we call ourselves.

Andrew: I agree with Maya. There is more than one question floating around. Is it more important to have the Media Consortium have more member groups that are more colorful, or is it more important that we and the organizations we already have become more diverse? These are two different questions. And a lot depends on who is going to be there. If there are mostly white outlets sitting around talking about diversity, that is not useful. What is new now, that will enable us to do what we haven’t done before?

Linda: If you tie in the discussions of race and diversity, with the ongoing discussions of sustainability—we need to reach a wider audience and figure out how to do that. This is not just a matter of social justice, it’s also a business concern. Our main priority should be on becoming more inclusive if we want to survive.

Lisa: Our words matter, but our actions speak louder. A lot of the issues are internal to our organizations. How can the Media Consortium promote this transformation? A lot of the style guides put out by Race Forward challenge us to walk the talk.

Jo Ellen: So this is what I have heard. We should focus the conference on this large question of inclusivity, but it is critical that we ask the right question and have the right people in the room in order to ensure that this discussion leads to concrete solutions.

Jo Ellen: Now what about membership? The question before us is whether there are outlets that identify as independent/progressive and that reach primarily communities of color, but are not on our radar? Do they exist, and should we work to recruit them?

Paul: More important to have them as part of our conversation than to have them become members.

Andrew: I defer to Jo Ellen because you do the recruitment. What’s in it for them? If we provide value, then we should approach them.

Jo ellen: Are there people/ outlets I am missing?

Manolia: We can start to map out who our members reach, and what those folks read. There are Latinos reading In these Times but what else do those same people read? Who else are my readers reading, and how can we partner up with them?

Let’s also be clearer about how we define progressive or independent. There may be outlets run by people majority of color that may serve a community and that would fall under our mission. Like Black Agenda Reports, Latino Rebels, etc.

Andrew: We’ve done reader surveys. You can also look at who reposts stories. For example, our stories get reposted on Native American sites.

Manolia: We could talk to our reporters and editors of color to see who else they read or are producing content for.

Jo Ellen: OK, so the sense is that some of these outlets exist and that we should work harder to locate them and recruit them. I will need some Mem Com help on this.

Jo Ellen: For the Program Committee, I’d like us to meet again in 2 weeks or so, and in the meantime to think about what question we want to ask at the conference—how we want to focus discussion—and who we want there.

Jo Ellen: Finally, I want to close with a big picture thought. Media Consortium outlets are by and large composed of white reporters and editors and mainly reach white audiences. All of our outlets believe in pursuing racial justice. For over 15 years our outlets have talked about being more diverse and inclusive. That hasn’t happened (except in a few cases). So I think it’s time for us to confront the question squarely: is there something about how TMC outlets think about ourselves that maintains our whiteness?