A Day on Diversity

with Keith Woods, Dean, The Poynter Institute
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10-11 – The "Why?" of Diversity: One of the challenges to the long-term health of a diversity plan is a lack of clarity in response to the question, "Why do diversity?" More often, we begin by asking, "What should we do?" or "How should we do it?" A faculty member who can articulate the reasons "Why?" will teach a deeper lesson that will stay with students long past the next visit of an accreditation team.

11-12 – Points of entry: Explore the ways, big and small, you can make diversity make a difference in your course. What are those points over the course of a semester when issues of diversity might be directly or indirectly blended into the work?

12-1 – Lunch & Discussion on "Talking Across Difference": You or your colleagues have had those thorny and uncomfortable conversations centered on one of the many diversity issues that come up in the classroom.

1-3 – Cases for the Classroom: We'll work through a few cases from across the curriculum that demonstrate ways of raising diversity issues provocatively and constructively in any class.

Bio: Keith Woods

Keith Woods is Dean of Faculty of The Poynter Institute, a school for journalists in St. Petersburg, FL. Besides leading a dynamic faculty of 14, he also teaches writing, reporting on race relations, ethics and diversity. He is co-author of "The Authentic Voice: The Best Reporting on Race and Ethnicity," a text now used in some of the nation’s top journalism schools. He has worked to help professionals, faculty and students better understand and handle matters of diversity. He has led workshops at Indiana University, the Medill School, the University of Southern California, the University of Missouri, Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of Colorado-Boulder, The University of Texas-Austin, West Virginia University, Louisiana State University, Columbia College, South Dakota State University, the University of South Dakota, the University of Kentucky, Drake University, Arizona State University, the University of Florida, Emory University, and others. He has led dozens of newsroom workshops for journalists ranging from Hearst-Argyle’s news directors to CBS News to editors and reporters at The New York Times. He is the former editor of "Best Newspaper Writing," the annual collection of prize-winning stories and photojournalism selected by the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Woods has served stints as chairman of Pulitzer Prize juries in editorial writing and commentary. He is a native of New Orleans and a former sports writer, news reporter, city editor, editorial writer, and columnist, having worked his way through those jobs in 16 years at the New Orleans Times-Picayune. His professional writing won statewide and national awards, including the 1994 National Headliner Award he shared with colleagues for the 1993 series "Together Apart/The Myth of Race," an expose on race relations in New Orleans that has been the subject of several book chapters and dissertations.
Why do diversity?

Ask a group of journalists that question, and many will begin by describing a vision of the future. Their reasons will invariably include the industry’s noblest goals:

- Because we want to reflect the reality of our increasingly diverse communities
- Because a more diverse newsroom can do a better job of covering the whole community
- Because a more diverse news report will attract a more diverse audience.

Those reasons describe an ideal and, in many ways, prescribe a solution: Hire a more diverse staff and increase the breadth and depth of coverage of the whole community. But there’s more to the question of “why” that would make the problem clearer and the answer more complete.

To understand why journalism needs to focus on diversity, we need to look to the past and the present, not just to the future. In the past is a history of exclusion, distortion and neglect – in the profession and in the larger society – that affects the way communities regard journalism and explains the diversity deficit we are trying to correct.

In the present is a set of unrelenting factors that perpetually threaten to undermine the better intentions of the media: Our individual limits, the organizational structures of our news-gathering operations and the societal segregation that persists into the new millennium.

- As individuals, we are beset with biases, prejudice and blind spots. We bring fear, ignorance and untested assumptions to work. If unaddressed, those vision-limiting traits will narrow the range of stories we’ll tell, frame those stories perpetually in familiar – and sometimes inaccurate – ways, and reveal in the language of the story the biases we brought with us. We do the work of diversity because those individual limits live on.

- News organizations are often arranged in a way that makes it difficult for some people to get their stories told. An over-reliance on institutions – the school board, city council, zoning commission,
police department – leaves less time for covering the public and fewer opportunities for developing sources in under-covered communities. If much of the daily storytelling derives from press releases, press conferences, scheduled meetings or the police scanner, what becomes of the people who aren’t electronically connected, civically engaged, or not inclined to summon reporters to their communities? We do diversity because coverage patterns continue to leave people out.

Even if the individual journalist is self-aware and the organization inclined to seek out a more complete report, societal factors can thwart the best intentions of diversity. Across the United States, segregation holds on stubbornly in the places we play, pray, learn and live. Shopping malls, nightclubs, playgrounds and movie theaters all bear evidence that people continue to separate themselves from one another. Police departments still pursue crimes differently depending upon the class or race of victims and suspects, setting skewed priorities for unwary journalists. The public relations director at the local hospital may still think “man” when a reporter asks to speak to a doctor.

So a journalist may embrace the idea of seeking out “diverse views” while reporting on the issue of prayer in the schools. Her newsroom may encourage the staff to get past official sources and familiar neighborhoods to include a wider swath of the public. But if she doesn’t account for the segregated nature of schools, neighborhoods and houses of worship by choosing multiple venues for reporting, she will likely wind up leaving out whole groups of people. If the police reporter doesn’t pursue stories beyond press releases and press conferences, all of his best intentions to report fairly can be sabotaged by the biases of the police department. We do diversity because the society we live in still makes it necessary.

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[Excerpted from website of The Authentic Voice: The Best Reporting on Race & Ethnicity; www.theauthenticvoice.org]
A Complete Picture

Excellent, ethical journalism honors the profession’s core principles of truth, accuracy, fairness and balance. To be complete and, thus, excellent, journalists must get better at reporting and writing those “untold stories;” at bringing the fullest possible range of people and issues before viewers, listeners, readers and users. There are three parts to that picture:

Inclusion

Include in your coverage those who have frequently been left out of the news, particularly black people, Asians, Latinos, Native Americans, white women, gays, lesbians, and poor people of all races. Show them in their “ordinariness” by including them in stories and images about things other than race, class, gender, sexuality and social pathology. Use them as meaningful sources; as parents, business owners, rocket scientists, pollsters, etc.

and …

Covering the undercovered

Find the people whose stories aren’t being told and tell them. Find people where they live, learn, play, pray and work. Get to know the “listening posts” in your community so you can locate stories that help your audience understand the people and the world around them. Discover the “universal” stories of perseverance, heroism, humor, irony and all the news values that guide daily coverage and resonate with the people you seek to serve.

and …

Mitigating bias & prejudice

Strive to tell stories that are free of euphemisms and stereotypes. Examine the framing of stories for unchecked bias. Be ever conscious of the dangers inherent in juxtaposed words and pictures so that you avoid delivering unintended messages.

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Diversity in Your Syllabus
SIX Points of Entry

A syllabus is a contract between the professor and students. It signals the kind of relationship professors want to establish. With thoughtful crafting of the syllabus, you can show, in small and big ways, how diversity factors into their work. Your syllabus has many points of entry. Find the ones that fit your style, your students, and your subject matter.

**Course title:** A professor added “in a diverse society” to the title of a course. It’s the first clue of the importance and relevance of the issue. It’s a tool best used sparingly, but worth considering.

**Course objectives:** What competencies in diversity do you expect your students to achieve over the term? Awareness? A craft skill? Better critical thinking abilities? It needn’t dominate the statement you make in the objectives, but it’s a place to express how diversity relates specifically to your course.

**Guest speakers:** Your speakers can help you achieve multiple missions around diversity. They can represent a diversity of experiences, backgrounds, perspectives. They can talk about the diversity they represent. They can talk about their subject-matter expertise. They can do both.

**Supplemental readings/postings/video:** Select textbooks, video, stories, ads, images, etc., that are created by or about a diverse group of people. Use supplemental resources that inform your students about groups or are consistent with your diversity definition. Teach other lessons using excellent examples that fall into the latter two categories, even if you’re not making a “diversity” point.

**Assignments:** Use assignments such as “Listening Posts” to push your students into arenas that expand what they know about the people and world around them. Make it visible in the syllabus.

**Grading:** If you want something to happen, measure it. Hold people accountable. Create simple diversity metrics: Representation of diverse ideas and people in stories, ads, etc.; specific assignments undertaken and completed; etc. Make it measurable, then reward students with your grading system.

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[Adapted from “Finding Points of Entry,” by Lillian Dunlap, 2006]
Diversity In the Classroom
A Strategic Approach

Whether the course is dedicated to diversity or incorporates the issue into more general material, a well-considered approach will work best.

1. Ground the conversation in excellence – Detail the elements of excellent storytelling, advertising or public relations using examples from the field. Allow the list to become the standard against which all work will be measured.

2. Identify the universal principles of journalism – Ask students: "What Do You Stand For?" Make that list your definition of purpose. Your diversity initiatives must flow from that definition to have credibility in a conversation about excellence.

3. Unite diversity and ethics – Demonstrate the connection between these two values. Create a common language for the two that highlights how inextricable one is from the other. Find ways to underscore the diversity or ethics components of an issue even when that's not the topic of the day.

4. Lay a philosophical foundation – Provide a cogent, thorough argument for why diversity belongs in the conversation, complete with an understanding of the roles that historical events have played in creating the problem. Define your terms so that students will know, throughout the year, what you mean when you use the word "diversity."

5. Reveal the myth of objectivity – Challenge students to see the ways subjective reasoning guides decisions. Replace "objectivity" with "fairness" or "completeness" and move students toward a more honest and self-aware approach to their craft.
6. **Build talking skills** – Set the stage for later conversations by deciding how class discussions about and across difference will be handled. Give students tools for working through the tough issues, a language through which to hold those discussions, and frames for considering the less visible influences difference has on understanding, debate and craft. Use small groups, journaling, blogs and other tools to give students a chance to build community during the term.

7. **Teach through technology** – Use instant messaging, chats, social media, multimedia projects and whatever else lies on the cutting edge of technology to help students find new ways to get deeper on diversity.

8. **Build new competencies** – Replace outdated, ungrounded and oft-unexamined diversity strategies with techniques that heighten precision, accuracy, fairness, complete reporting, etc. Create opportunities to build **awareness**, sharpen **skills** and foster **critical thinking** through readings and video resources, guest speakers, classroom exercises and large projects.
Leading the Diversity Discussion

There's no magic to leading classroom discussions about diversity. Some things, though, do seem to work. Inform your strategy with the things you've learned about how people respond when asked to talk about matters of significant difference. Then structure the discussion to create the greatest chance of success. Here are some tips:

State your goals/Acknowledge their fears – People are more likely to go with you down the path toward a diversity discussion if they have a sense that you know where you're going or, at the least, that you know why you're going there. It's also critical that you acknowledge the vulnerability many feel when talking about difference. Your comfort alone won't assuage their fears.

Tell illustrative stories – Storytelling can be a powerful tool in getting a group to join in on a conversation about difference. Keep the stories short and on point. Ask the group to tell stories to one another.

Write things down – The best way to get people to participate in a tough conversation is to ask them first to commit things to paper. It's better if you make it clear that the writing is for their benefit and won't be collected. Writing can ignite and focus thinking.

Use small groups – Debrief some things in small groups; two to five in a group, depending upon how much time you allow for the conversation. Small groups serve several purposes. Among them:

- They get people talking. Sometimes people just need a prompt to get their vocal cords oiled.
- They draw out the quiet and shy. Not everyone is comfortable talking in large groups, but your goal is to have every voice heard, so this accomplishes the core goal.
- They lower the sense of risk. We'll say to three people what we might not say to 30.
- They produce more information for discussion. Even if shy people don't like to talk in large groups, a debrief of the small groups can bring all ideas to the fore.

Let people talk – Give people as much opportunity as possible to respond to others and complete thoughts. Resist the urge to respond to each comment, as that can prematurely cut off the discussion. Put a marker down here and there in the conversation if there are specific points you want to make, then return to them later.
More questions, fewer statements – Ask as many clarifying questions as possible. Summarize what you’ve heard and feed it back to the speaker. Combat generalizations and euphemisms with simple questions: What do you mean? Can you expand on your point? Are you saying that ...? Model the core values of interviewing as taught by Canadian John Sawatsky: Open-ended, non-judgmental questions when you want information; Closed-ended, yes-no questions when you want verification or denial.

Handle humor with care – Humor may be one of the best weapons to combat fear in these discussions, but it comes with a high risk of backfiring. As much as possible, keep the barbs aimed at yourself. Let the depth of your knowledge and cultural competence be your gauge for how much to joke about groups different from your own.

Build in feedback – Everything from a question toward the end of a session (So, how was that?) to journal writing to email feedback to evaluations can give participants a chance to say what they thought. Beyond the obvious evaluative value, that kind of feedback creates an opportunity for checking in with students and, if necessary, for resolving problems that might have arisen in the session.

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TALKING ACROSS Difference

Be honest. Be aware that cross-difference conversations pass through filters that interpret, analyze and sometimes bend the message. When you’re clear and honest about what you mean, you build trust.

Seek clarification before confusion and conflict. Be willing to extend the benefit of the doubt. Ask questions before reacting. “What do you mean?” “Can you explain that a little more?”

Challenge with passion, not poison. Keep the conversation going through rough spots by letting the other person know that your passion is born of a desire to get past misunderstanding.

Be willing to change your point of view. Practice the skill of truly considering the other’s way of seeing things. You don’t always have to change your mind. Just make sure it’s possible.

Stay in the room. The toughest thing to do when something is uncomfortable or painful is to keep doing it. The challenge here is to have faith that there is gain on the other side of the pain.

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TALKING ACROSS

Difference
(The Other Side of the Conversation)

Acknowledge the Fear
It's the elephant in the room taking up precious psychic space. It is the invisible hand, influencing the way you listen; the way I interpret; the way she responds. Give fear a name and rob it of its power.

Sharpen your language
Listen to yourself and correct for muddled phrases, clichés, euphemisms, generalizations, innuendo and other forms of indirect communication. Clarity is a two-way street. Make sure you understand, but work on improving your chances of being understood.

Check in regularly
If you accept that these conversations are always going to be complicated by subtext, context and the baggage we each bring to the table, then checking in makes sense, especially if your goal is to understand and be understood. Ask: “How does that sound to you?” Or: “How comfortable are you right now?” or some other question that opens the door for reaction or critique.

Build relationships
Work on understanding people across difference. Talk about the things that make you the same: family, ambitions, fears, passions. Often, those commonalities are the capital you'll need to draw upon when the conversations get tense. Keep working past friendship. You are never done.

Become a Student
Read, watch and listen more about the vast arenas of difference. The choices are myriad. You just have to start. Get into “cybersations” – listservs, chat rooms, blogs, etc. – with colleagues or others who learn through dialogue. Join a book club. Start a book club. Do something.

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Attribution In Action

Attribution. In journalism, it’s connecting information to its source. In communication, it’s assigning motive to action. In a diverse culture mired in a history of oppression and bigotry, that common, human act of attribution can severely undermine understanding. Here’s a way of looking at the process of attribution in communication:

First, you perceive: You witness something or you’re told about it from someone else. (“He walked right past me without speaking.”)

Then you judge: You decide, based upon your experiences – real and vicarious – what you think of the action, and you judge the person, a judgment that often reflects your worst fears. (“He seems to do that with all the women here. He does it on purpose.”)

Then you attribute: You make a declaration of the person’s disposition. (“Well, he must be sexist.”)

Then you act: You react to the negative attribution with negative actions. (“I’ll snub him back!”)

There are ways to suspend the process, once you’re aware that it’s going on. During that pause, there’s a chance for further reporting, more reflection and greater insight. It may not be possible to eliminate the human instinct to judge. But it’s clearly possible to slow the process down.

Some questions to ask:

1. What have I based my judgment upon?
2. What other things might explain what I’ve observed?
3. What can I learn from my own actions?
4. Is it possible to get more information?
5. How can I communicate my fear without leveling an accusation?

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The Listening Post
A guide for journalists

How do you get to know the stories, ideas, needs or aspirations of places, people and neighborhoods that have, for various reasons, gone uncovered or undercovered by your profession? One way is to find the places you can go to tune in to a community’s frequency. Here are some guidelines for using "listening posts."

Before you go

1. Find places where people are likely to stop and talk, mingle, share information about themselves: Barbershops and beauty salons; grocery stores; community centers. Some of the most informed people in a community are often the funeral directors, day care center directors, health clinic workers, neighborhood association presidents; school principals.
2. Choose a variety of listening posts within a community to avoid becoming overly influenced by factions or prominent sources.
3. Learn all you can about the people and community you plan to visit before you get there. That way, you’ll be aware of any cultural challenges or historical obstacles you might have to meet and overcome.
4. Don’t go in a rush. Allow enough time for a leisurely visit.

While you’re there

2. Resist the temptation to interview people right away. Then, sit down and have a conversation.
3. Listen carefully to the language people use to describe themselves and what they do. Take your cue from them.
4. Be willing to be wrong about a place or person. Show up with an open mind.
To The Listening Post

By Keith Woods
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A new reporter assigned to the police beat knows without being told that one of the best places to go for information is a police station. She gets to know what time "roll call" happens each day, when the shifts change, who the shift commanders are, which street cops like to talk and which ones defer to public information officers.

The reporter understands the importance of getting to know secretaries and volunteers and home telephone numbers. She reads the bulletin boards and newsletters, websites, blogs, and all other publications that come from the department, as well as regional and national trade publications. She establishes relationships and begins what she knows will be a long-term process of breaking through the wall of suspicion, misdirection, even hostility that comes with the beat. She does it because the news organization sees the beat as central to good coverage.

The police station is a listening post, and checking in there is part of the normal routine of most news organizations. Journalists check in with institutional listening posts all the time - legislative bodies, schools and school boards, local government offices. Their routines, personal and professional, bring them in contact with large segments of the population. Those routines also result in large chunks of the population being left out of coverage.
Journalists interested in telling more of a community's "truth" need to establish listening posts in the places that fall outside the routine of journalism. The skills for doing this are not new to the profession; just ask the police reporter. But there are things the journalist needs to think about when working on setting up listening posts in under-covered communities.

The first thing they need to know is that they have to leave the office, the neighborhood, maybe even the comfort of personal likes and dislikes in order to make this happen. When they do, though, they'll find new, interesting stories that no one else has, fresh sources, and the chance to paint a more accurate picture of what happened in the world that day.

Methodology

This is about beat coverage, so the focus should remain on that universal point, even as the instructor has something more specific in mind. Every reporter and photojournalist should have a range of listening posts beyond the institutions to which they've been assigned. Placing this exercise in that context normalizes the work rather than separating it out as a "diversity" exercise.

The Lesson

It's good if the instructor already knows of a few good listening posts in the community. Such places might include day-care centers, eateries, bars, barbershops and beauty salons, factories that employ an eclectic collection of people, funeral homes (among the places people in a community always must go eventually), community centers or playgrounds. The list can go on.

Send reporters out to establish contact with one or more listening posts. Here's one set of criteria for their choices:

1. It must be a place you are not likely to go otherwise.
2. It should include a group of people who are poorly understood and/or poorly covered by the media.
3. It should offer a window onto a "community" of people that might provide information on the group beyond the people who come there.

*Give the journalists a set of questions to answer while at the listening post:*

1. Who comes here?
2. What can I learn about the community from this place?
3. What stories might I do about this place, the people who come here, or the things I've learned from looking around?
4. How might the people I encounter here fit into my (or my organization's) everyday coverage of other beats?

A number of things can flow from the day(s) out. You might spend some time debriefing the exercise in class, asking students not just what they learned, but how they felt. You might also ask the students to put this information in an essay or write it in a journal you've had them keep throughout the term.

Students could be required to produce stories from the listening post. They could be asked to use sources found at the listening posts in stories unrelated to that place. They might be asked to write a few descriptive paragraphs for a feature-writing class, produce a source list for a beginning news writing class, analyze the way the group is portrayed for an advanced class.

**Discussion**

This exercise, a staple of our work with professional journalists, strikes at many levels of the complex thing called diversity.

*It raises awareness, often introducing journalists for the first time to a group of*
people, a faith, a condition – whatever the source of difference being explored.

It informs, providing primary (though very limited) information to the journalists, information that will have immediate applications in their daily work. Talking to Muslims at a mosque demystifies the faith, expands the journalists’ vocabulary and makes it all the harder to stereotype or demonize a whole group of people.

It energizes often-abstract discussions about story ideas or ethics or "diversity."

A conversation with students should probe for any or all of these results, reinforcing and expanding the learning by the degree to which students shared similar experiences or added new perspectives for the class’s consumption.

Summary

The “Listening Post” exercise offers a good opportunity to reconcile one of the abiding paradoxes of diversity: under-covered people want to be treated no differently than anyone else, but they want their differences recognized by the media. Treat them the same and treat them differently. This exercise emphasizes the ordinary nature of beat reporting while demonstrating the need for – and advantage of – going to the places no one else goes.

The exercise has many applications. It can be used to sensitize journalists to the world around them. It can be used to help beat reporters and photojournalists improve the range of their coverage. It can be used to help copy editors know more about the names and places that will be mentioned in stories or the loaded language usually associated with this group. It can help managers understand the worlds of the people they supervise. Ethics students could wrestle with the conflict between truth telling and independence that arises when journalists seek out under-covered groups for coverage. Advertising students can use it to
discover new customers. **Strategic communicators** can learn to adapt messages to resonate across differences. There’s hardly a part of journalism to which it doesn’t apply.

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Is It Something I Said?

Three things to remember when reporting on ethnic and racial eruptions

Words are at the center of your work as a journalist, and precision of language can be the difference between successful communication and trouble. When the issue is race, ethnicity or any other significant difference, the peril – and the need for thought and precision – couldn’t be more acute. We’ll look at language issues using three notions:

ONE  Meanings will change depending upon speaker, listener and context

That is true whether you’re talking about hot-button differences or innocuous semantics. Wherever there are meaningful differences, particularly tied to a history of oppression, discrimination or some other form of discord, expect greater suspicion, ignorance and offense. A man (speaker) asking a female colleague (listener) to get a cup of coffee during a meeting (context) does so at the risk of coming across as chauvinistic.

The more individuals know about another’s history – their thoughts and actions – the better able they are to judge meaning when multiple meanings are possible. Conversely, the less we know, the quicker we are to assume the worst.

TWO  The list of words, phrases or actions that offend across difference is extensive

Invariably, the list will be longer than you know, and the level of offense will be more acute for some than for others. The important thing to recognize is that the offense is not new. What is new is the number of people willing to say so and the range of ways they can now communicate their feelings.

For the Romanian Gypsies in the U.S., for example, the common use of “gyp” as a synonym for “swindle” has always been an insult, though many Americans grew up ignorant of the word’s origins.

THREE  When words explode, remember: information first, judgment last

Reporting on word controversies involving race and ethnicity seems to follow a path of predictable questions: Did he admit saying it? Is he a racist? Did he apologize? Those are not the most useful questions. It is practically impossible, for example, to prove that someone is not a racist. Your audience is trying to figure out what to do next. They need more context, more insight, more understanding.

Better that you ask: What did she mean? Does she understand the problem? Who is she? Journalists should climb into the heads of the speakers just as they comb their backgrounds. They must remember that few one-time proclamations are the sum total of a person, for better or for worse.
Reporting the Story
(After the eruption)

If people are to take an action after the eruption, they'll need information to make a good decision. Here are four questions that advance knowledge and understanding.

1. What did they say? Don’t get seduced by the sexy sound byte and leave out important facts. Be precise and avoid paraphrasing. That enhances fairness and sharpens accuracy.

2. What did they mean? Beware assumptions here. It might not mean what you think. Even if the words rank among the most profane or bigoted terms in the language, ask the neutral question: "What do you mean?" Another question that gets to the heart of the story: "Do you know why those words would hurt or anger some people?" Another: "What would you most want people to know about you right now?"

3. Why does it matter? If someone has uttered a racial or ethnic insult, remember that not everyone knows the history or context of the words and, therefore, might not understand why anyone would be upset. That context also helps your audience put the remarks in perspective and judge for themselves the severity (or lack thereof) of the words.

4. Who are your sources? Remember that opinions vary among and between people. If the insult is aimed at Arabs, don’t just seek reaction from Arabs. Ask Latinos, Native Americans, white people, etc. That includes and expands perspective.

Here are a few websites that list slurs and insults across race and ethnicity. The online lists tend to borrow from one another, so no single list can be considered the "authority." Use these as a way to start a conversation:

http://www.nps.gov/history/ethnography/aah/aaheritage/intro_furthRdg1.htm
http://www.bookrags.com/wiki/List_of_ethnic_slurs
http://www.rsdb.org/
http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/List_of_ethnic_slurs

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The Excellent Story
Three Key Ingredients When Writing about Race & Ethnicity

Voice
What makes a voice authentic? It’s more than just including a verbatim quote or a full sound bite. It also means understanding a source well enough to know which bite, quote detail or scene best captures the personality, motives, and meanings of the source. That comes from strong reporting. Without that authentic voice, stories are done about people rather than with them.

Context
Context lends meaning to facts. It adds to understanding. It puts action into perspective, zeroing in on the reasons things happen as they do so that the viewer, reader, user or listener won’t have to guess about the motives of a character in a story. When a story provides too little context, a character’s actions can seem odd, inexplicable.

Complexity
There are always more than two sides to any story, and there are usually more people in the middle on a controversial issue than there are at either extreme. Pursuing that complexity is a part of excellent journalism. When journalists can see past the polarized sides of an issue, they gain access to more nuance, more truth, and, often, a more interesting story.

We frequently frame stories about race and ethnic relations in the false dichotomy of saints and sinners, with little acknowledgment that there’s probably a bit of both in everyone. Such stories don’t always ring true in the public ear. Three ideas to remember:

1. There’s more to it than that: Begin your reporting with the expectation that each interviewee or group has more than one perspective on the issue. Be counterintuitive, listening for the things you don’t expect to hear from individuals or groups.

2. Prejudice is universal: Report thoroughly so that you can put prejudice in its proper context and you’re better able to show all sides of your sources.

3. Contradictions can coexist: When there are competing pictures of a person – the saint and sinner, for example – one need not cancel the other out. Journalists should include both in the story, trusting that the more complete, more genuine picture will resonate with readers, listeners, users and viewers.

Source: The Authentic Voice: The Best Reporting on Race & Ethnicity
by Arlene Notoro Morgan, Alice Irene Pifer, and Keith Woods
On the web at: www.theauthenticvoice.org
DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM DIVERSITY POLICY

The Department of Journalism is committed to following university guidelines related to equal employment opportunities and to student affairs. It is committed to providing educational opportunities for all qualified persons without regard to race, religion, color, sex, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, national origin, ancestry, age, or citizenship. It recognizes the existence of societal barriers and wishes to take a leadership role in overcoming them. It is therefore, committed to these goals and strategies:

Goal 1
To attract and retain through active recruitment, diversity within faculty, staff, graduate assistants and student employees in the department.

Strategies:
1. Place ads or job postings for faculty and staff positions in media, including print and Web, that target diverse audiences.
2. Utilize personal networking and organizational contacts to encourage minority applicants.
   See Addendum 1 for a list of minimum recommended media to use when advertising for faculty and staff positions.

Goal 2
To include in the curriculum due emphasis on the contributions of under-represented populations (female, ethnic and racial minorities) in the communication profession.

Strategies:
1. Require inclusion of diversity issues and department approved diversity statement in all course syllabi.
2. Encourage faculty to include teaching and course materials with ethical considerations of bias based on race, religion, color, sex, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, national origin, ancestry, age, or citizenship.
3. Make diversity resources and training for faculty and students available.
4. Encourage workplace diversity training for faculty, staff and students.
5. Provide faculty, staff, student media and organizational leaders with in-service presentations on diversity and the incorporation of diversity in curriculum and student media and/or organizations on an annual basis.
6. Make the Diversity Committee a permanent standing committee of the department. Members of the committee shall be appointed annually by the department chairperson; the committee should include under-represented populations whenever possible.

Goal 3
To attract and retain an increased number of students from under-represented populations and minorities to the department.

Strategies:
1. Increase the department’s participation in university-wide multicultural activities.
2. See Addendum 2 for a list of minority groups that the Journalism Department reports to Ball State University and ACEIMC.
3. Provide appropriate recruitment material for local, regional and national high school and junior high school advisers and adviser associations.
4. Track enrollment and retention of under-represented students on an annual basis.
5. Identify and maintain a list of financial assistance resources (i.e., programs and scholarships) for minority students.
6. Encourage pre-professional student organizations to foster peer support and professional growth for all members.
7. Maintain ties with the university’s Early Outreach Office (minority recruitment) and provide it with departmental recruitment material.
8. Consider under-represented professionals as candidates for Departmental awards.
9. Have a presence at state and/or national conferences dedicated to under-represented populations.
   See Addendum 3 for a list of suggested state and national conferences dedicated to under-represented populations.
10. Encourage alumni to identify minority students.
11. To provide a diversity speaker annually for students, faculty and staff.

Goal 4
To increase the exposure and sensitivity to diversity issues among all students and faculty in the department.

Strategies:
4.1 Strive to provide student exposure to diverse speakers, guest lecturers and professionals-in-residence in both instructional and social settings.

4.2 Encourage student media and organizations to address diversity issues.

4.3 Include diversity issues in journalism workshops and other programming such as Junior High J-Day, High School J-Day and Communication Week.

4.4 Include diversity in department showcases.

4.5 Teach students in all classes to seek out and include diversity issues and viewpoints in classroom assignments and projects.

Goal 5
To annually review the department’s progress toward these goals.

Strategies:

5.1 The Diversity Committee will be responsible for ensuring and assessing the implementation and accountability of this policy by collecting data as outlined in Goals 1-4. It is the Diversity Committee’s responsibility to compile an annual report that assesses whether the spirit and intent of the policy is being followed, and present this analysis to the full faculty.

* Specific measures are included in the department’s Strategic Plan that is assessed and reported on each year to the associate provost. (Document approved July 16, 2009)

Diversity Policy

Addendum 1
Some recommended media to use when advertising for faculty and staff positions:

Addendum 2
Minority groups that the Journalism Department reports to Ball State University and ACEIMC:
National Association of Black Journalists and other organizations as appropriate.

Addendum 3
Some recommended national and local conferences dedicated to under-represented populations: