

Antiracist Journalism

The Challenge of Creating Equitable Local News

Across the United States, newsrooms are grappling with systemic racism in their organizations and the media industry. Many have implemented diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives or made other attempts to confront past and present biases in pursuit of greater equity. Are such efforts merely performative, or are any transforming norms and power structures? What would it take to hold newsrooms truly accountable? Andrea Wenzel provides a critical look at how local media organizations in the Philadelphia area are attempting to address structural racism. She focuses on two established, majority-white newsrooms, the Philadelphia Inquirer and the public radio station WHYY, and two start-ups where at least half the staff identify as Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC), Resolve Philly and Kensington Voice. Drawing on more than five years of field research, Wenzel charts how these outlets have pursued a range of interventions—such as tracking the diversity of sources, examining reporting and editing practices, and working with community members to gain input—to varying degrees of success. Wenzel argues that institutional and systemic transformation will be possible only through the establishment of structures that facilitate holding those with more power responsible for listening to and addressing the needs and concerns of those with less. Offering recommendations for building infrastructure that enables sustainable accountability, Antiracist Journalism is an important book for all stakeholders interested in making local journalism more equitable.

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