**Report**

**Journalists and Journalism Educators meet to talk about Trauma Informed Literacy**

**Ola Ogunyemi, convener JETREG**

**An** international contingent of journalism educators, journalists, students and policymakers gathered for a two-day virtual conference from 18-19 Nov., 2021 to discuss the effects of work-related trauma suffered by journalists and how best to prepare them to cover traumatising events.

The event, funded by BA/Leverhulme grant, was organised by Journalism Education and Trauma Research Group (JETREG) at Lincoln School of English and Journalism in partnership with the Center of Culture Media and Society at Sheffield Hallam University.

The conference titled **‘Safe Space for Journalists and Journalism Educators to talk about Trauma Informed Literacy’ sought** to build dialogue between them and identify key challenges to embedding trauma informed literacy in journalism curricula and explore the roles of journalism educators. Participants from 25 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe and North America attended the conference.

The convener of JETREG, Ola Ogunyemi, said that journalism education is lagging behind in preparing students to cope with the effects of exposure to traumatic events during their careers, and to make matters worse, journalism educators claim to lack the skills to teach trauma informed literacy. This raises concern about a possible failure of duty of care by journalism educators in not offering opportunities for students to develop skills which may reduce risk to their personal and professional wellbeing. Natalie Seely (2020) defines trauma literacy ‘as an awareness of the potential effects of trauma and adaptive coping mechanisms’.

Mr Canela, Chief, Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists Section for UNESCO, acknowledged in his speech that trauma literacy is an unmet objective in the UNESCO’s Safety of Journalists’ policy agenda. Since 2007, the Safety of Journalists’ agenda covers a range of issues from violence, conflict, physical and online abuse, harassment and impunity but overlooks journalists’ emotional and psychological responses to exposure to traumatic events.

Ms Theresa Chorbacher, who works with Mr Canela, spoke about UNESCO’s preparation to host the World Press Freedom Day in Uruguay in 2022 and extended an invitation to JETREG to present a panel.

Guy Berger, Director, International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) said prioritising trauma literacy among journalists is important and offered his support for JETREG’s project.

Gavin Rees of the Dart Centre Europe and Jo Healey of the Trauma Reporting provided evidence of their research with journalists on the emotional and psychological impacts of exposure to traumatising events. Ola Ogunyemi and Lada Price presented the initial analysis of the survey of journalism educators which shows that while there is a high awareness of work-related trauma among journalism educators, they cited lacks of knowledge, resources and reading materials as barriers to inclusion of trauma literacy in journalism curricula.

The journalists’ panel produced some powerful and moving stories about their traumatic experience. Journalists openly share their experiences of covering conflict, crimes, natural disasters etc. They noted that emotional and psychological effects occur over time and journalists fail to seek help in time because they don’t know the signs/symptoms and because of stigma associated with talking about them.

The leads of JETREG’s regional research hubs in Asia, Africa, and North America presented regional perspectives on the attitudes of journalism educators to teaching trauma informed literacy. They also organised panels comprising journalists and journalism educators to share ideas on how to address these challenges. Panellists included Natalie Hughes of KFOR Oklahoma City television; Micah Wilson, a multi-skilled journalist/reporter with 5NEWS; Tamara Cherry is a trauma researcher; and Naseem Miller, a senior health editor at *The Journalist’s Resource*.

A panel of students at Oklahoma University was the highlight of the event who were in the midst of covering one of the most traumatic stories. The students are covering an execution scheduled tomorrow for their newscast time. The State had called off executions due to the botching of several six years ago.  But has now resumed. The man being executed has proclaimed his innocence and students have been highly engaged in protests. The students discussed how this has affected them and whether the session with a counsellor to mitigate the effects have been helpful. After the conference, the lead for RRH North Africa wrote that ‘the governor called off the execution today. He has commuted the sentence, and Jones will have life without parole’.

The conference ended on a high note with members agreeing to publish a Special Issue in a refereed journal; network with AJE, IAMCR, ECREA, NUJ, NCTJ, EJTA etc to raise awareness about the need to embed trauma informed literacy in journalism curricula; publish an edited book; grant applications. Ola Ogunyemi has been invited by the Global Media Education Council (GMEC) in India to give a keynote address on 21 December, 2021 at their conference to commemorate the 75 years of India’s Independence and 101 years of Media Education in India. His presentation is titled ‘Trauma informed Literacy in Journalism Education: Awareness, Challenges and Prospects’.

For more information about JETREG, please visit <https://jetreg.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/>

Who are they and what did they say?

Jo Healey is the author of Trauma Reporting, A Journalist's Guide to Covering Sensitive Stories. A news journalist with more than thirty years experience reporting for newspapers, radio and BBC TV, Jo introduced Trauma Reporting training to BBC News and Current Affairs and Factual Programming.

KFOR-TV’s Natalie Hughes has spent 30 years in the Oklahoma City television market perfecting her journalistic, storytelling and leadership skills. In KFOR’s 72-year history, Natalie is the third female to hold the position of News Director at the station.

Micah Wilson is a multi-skilled journalist/reporter with 5NEWS, "covering news where you live" in Western Arkansas. He has a passion for telling stories to amplify voices, inform, and connect with the community.

Tamara Cherry is a trauma researcher, victim advocate and communications consultant who spent the bulk of her career as an award-winning journalist in some of Canada’s largest newsrooms. She left her post as *CTV News Toronto*’s crime specialist in 2019 to launch Pickup Communications, a public relations firm that specializes in supporting victims and survivors of traumatic events, as well as journalists who cover trauma.

Naseem Miller is a senior health editor at *The Journalist’s Resource*. She covered the Pulse Nightclub mass shooting while at the *Orlando Sentinel* and later helped start the Journalists Covering Trauma Facebook group to provide support to reporters who cover tragic events.