
Reflection On Journalism Studying And Work

Throughout my first month of studying journalism, one of the most significant things I've learned is that journalists face many struggles and that despite these struggles, they must stick to their ethics and beliefs. The pressure being placed on journalists to try and keep up with the ever advancing world is more demanding than ever; and the shift in how the news is being covered has been reborn in recent years. However, I think this movement is becoming a source of worry for both journalists and readers. The finest journalism is that of a writer who knows their trade, who knows what's acceptable, who knows how to push the boundaries but more importantly who knows when to draw a line. However as my interest in journalism has increased over the last few months and in particular the last few weeks, I've realised how much the emergence of social media has given way to a new world of casual journalists - which in turn has changed the face of journalism in many ways.

The Belfast Rape Trial that took place earlier this year was perhaps the landmark moment when I realised the extent of the changing world of journalism. The public interest meant that we had twenty-four seven coverage at our fingertips. News correspondents such as Frank Greaney provided us with minute to minute updates from inside the court room via social media, while Twitter became a cauldron full of 'keyboard warriors'. From first thing in the morning to last thing at night, Irish news platforms were dominated by updates from the Trial. The way in which the case was handled by both the media but more so the public could be questioned by some - as many believe the non-stop coverage could have threatened the jury's decision, even if just on a subconscious level.

As mentioned above, Frank Greaney covered the Belfast court case from beginning to end. I have no doubt that he had his own personal opinions on what was divisive trial but his professional training and the fact that he had to remain accountable for his work ensured that he remained balanced and neutral at all times. He provided the public with every piece of information and evidence - be it good, bad or indifferent. This starkly contrasts the way in which the general public covered and discussed the Trial on social media. It also highlighted how important neutrality is in journalism. There was a lack of factual information in many cases on Twitter and other social platforms but even more worrying, there was very little sense of balance. In today's world, everyone's a journalist on some level; we have the ability to post our work and our thoughts on multiple platforms. The world is at our fingertips, but this comes with responsibility; a responsibility that many of the general public aren't aware of. I've learned that journalists are taught their trade like every other profession; they're taught that there's an appropriate way to get your point across without crossing the line. They spend their college years learning the art of writing, but more importantly, the art of remaining neutral. Remaining neutral on a topic as divisive as the Belfast Trial is extremely difficult; and I appreciate that everyone has a right to voice their opinion but in this new age of social media, I think we're in danger of overstepping the mark. Social media users don't have anyone to answer to for the words they use. They also have no idea of the impact their words have on others. Reflecting on the way in which the Belfast Trial was handled and matching it with what I have learned throughout my first month in journalism, I have learned that the Ethics of Journalism are more important today than ever before. In a world full of extremities, in a world where people are not required to be accountable for the remarks they throw around, I believe journalists need to work

harder than ever before to ensure that balance doesn't get lost in the haze of 'keyboard warriors'. In the book 'Sapiens', journalists are compared to keepers who 'inform society and thus protect it'. Journalists have a responsibility to ensure that there's balance in the media so that the majority don't overshadow the minority. They must be prepared to show both sides of a story, however difficult that might be.

The Belfast Trial saw extremities from one end of the spectrum to the other and in the chaos of it all, journalists like Frank Greaney showed the importance of balance and objectivity when pursuing a career in journalism. In conclusion, the biggest thing I have taken away from my first month of Journalism is the importance of good, ethical journalism in an age where it doesn't seem to be a number one priority all of the time.

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