

Reporting hate speech & violence in the Caribbean

An action plan for media practitioners,
managers and owners

Overview

In August 2018, a group of journalists and media professionals from across the Caribbean came together in Jamaica to discuss and create an action plan on hate speech and media coverage of violence for the region.

The workshop was facilitated by Dr Zahera Harb, Senior Lecturer in International Journalism, City, University of London and Ms Anika Kentish, President of the Association of Caribbean Media Workers, with participants from a variety of backgrounds and media organisations. The meeting, and the passionate debates that ensued, highlighted the need to produce a practical action plan to tackle the issue of hate speech in the Caribbean.

In developing a plan, the facilitators and participants first honed a definition of hate speech appropriate for the region:

Hate speech refers to content that targets and causes harm to identifiable groups and individuals with or without malicious intent.

Hate speech tends to be related, but not limited to, individuals or groups who can be categorised by race, religion, sexuality, country of origin, gender, political affiliation, residential location, cultural identity, disability and age.

There is a difference between hate speech and hurtful speech. The first can cause harm and incite violence. The second, despite being hurtful, does not necessarily incite direct harm or violence.

This action plan was developed with the regional media landscape in mind, with participants using their local and personal experience to inform its development and ensure its relevance for the Caribbean context.

In interpreting these guidelines, consideration must be given to context, editorial justification, freedom of expression, public interest and the capacity of media organisations to operate effectively across digital platforms.

Action Plan Hate Speech & Violence Reporting

1.

Understand what constitutes hate content and how best to identify it through the use of tools such as the Ethical Journalism Network's *Five Point Test for Hate Speech*¹ (see back page).

2.

Treat all identifiable groups and individuals with dignity and respect.

4.

Protect the vulnerable, especially children, particularly while covering violence and abuse.

3.

Ensure the contextual relevance of a story when identifying an individual as a member of a particular group in society. This includes political affiliation, faith-based group, nationality/ethnicity, race, gender or sexuality.

5.

Avoid propagating a prejudiced position or being manipulated to be a biased voice. Maintain good journalistic values; accuracy, accountability and building trust are three important factors in maintaining good journalism.

6.

Be aware that hateful expression can be by omission, silence, exclusion or inaction and could lead to marginalisation of certain groups or individuals.

8.

Be mindful of language used – context, semantics, phrasing or stereotypical references.

7.

Establish moderation processes to monitor feedback and comments made to stories or live coverage on various media platforms including social/online media.

9.

Pay close attention to verifying information. Differentiate between fact, fiction and opinion and ensure that verifiable background information is provided.

10.

Ensure regular training in journalistic ethics for media staff, especially as part of the orientation for new reporters/staff members.

¹ <https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/resources/publications/hate-speech>

HATE SPEECH

TURNING THE PAGE OF HATE:
A MEDIA CAMPAIGN FOR
TOLERANCE IN JOURNALISM

When it comes to hate speech, journalists and editors must pause and take the time to judge the **potential impact** of offensive, inflammatory content.

The following test, developed by the EJN and based on international standards, highlights questions in the **gathering, preparation** and **dissemination** of news and helps place what is said and who is saying it in an **ethical context**.

2 REACH OF THE SPEECH

How far is the speech traveling?
Is there a **pattern** of behaviour?

3 GOALS OF THE SPEECH

How does it benefit the **speaker** and their **interests**?
Is it **deliberately intended** to **cause harm** to others?

A 5 POINT TEST FOR JOURNALISTS

4 THE CONTENT ITSELF

Is the speech **dangerous**?
Could it incite **violence** towards others?

5

SURROUNDING CLIMATE
SOCIAL / ECONOMIC / POLITICAL

Who might be **negatively affected**?

Is there a history of **conflict** or **discrimination**?

1 STATUS OF THE SPEAKER

How might their **position** influence their **motives**?

Should they even be **listened to** or just **ignored**?

DON'T **SENSATIONALISE!**

AVOID THE **RUSH** TO PUBLISH

TAKE A **MOMENT OF REFLECTION**

EthicalJournalismNetwork.org



SHARE IT!



This Action Plan workshop was organised by the **Public Media Alliance** (PMA) in collaboration with the **Ethical Journalism Network** (EJN) and with the support of the **UNESCO Cluster Office for the Caribbean**.

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