

# Hostile environment created by White House leads to best time to launch journalism career

By JENNIFER KARCHMER

Gone are the days when you could open the classifieds of *The New York Times* and circle all of the news jobs listed in the employment section. In the mid-1990s, I pounded the pavement in the Big Apple. In those days, *The Times* had girth so it might take several cups of coffee to get through every section. The stock market was flying and many of the news gigs listed in the paper were on Wall Street. I made my way to Prudential Securities as an editor, then to the Bond Buyer as a municipal bond reporter and finally to CNN Money as a personal finance writer. Times were good.

Today, it's no secret the downsizing sword has slashed newsrooms – to domestic and international bureaus alike. Many of my news brethren have jumped ship, turning in their cub reporter hat for the PR flak jacket. Others have changed careers altogether. Unfortunately, parents are advising their college-bound teenagers with: “There is no money in news,” “Don’t choose journalism as your major,” “The pay is bad.” Like a broken record, this gripe about our profession has been spinning for at least 10 or 15 years.

But the tide is turning. Due (or thanks) to the hostile environment created by today’s White House toward the press corps, news agencies seem to be stepping up and, I believe, it is the best time to launch your journalism career and throw your hat in the ring. Amid the esoteric headlines screaming “alternative facts” and the oxymoronic “fake news,” today’s reporters are serving as the Trump Administration’s punching bag, and in some cases, they themselves are feeding the frenzy. A new generation needs to pick up the reins and continue the legacy of journalism, the tenets that the profession sits on: questioning authority, holding government and those in power accountable and asking the hard questions. We need you now more than ever. Here’s some humble advice:

**Find the jobs.** If you’re a recent college grad boasting a journalism degree yet whining there are no jobs like those available to your counterparts with humanities and social sciences degrees, then you’re in the wrong profession. A true reporter is out there digging, mining, pawing and pushing until the jobs surface. But you don’t even have to get your hands dirty these days. Hundreds (yes, hundreds) of online portals list jobs. Just today, March 29, I did a search at *The Wall Street Journal* (a Dow Jones company, which is owned by NewsCorp), and 21 media jobs appeared, including copyeditor, reporter, photographer and producer. And those are positions just in New York City; *WSJ* has bureaus around the country. If you can deal with working for Rupert Murdoch, there’s a place for you to consider.

How about ProPublica, the independent news organization that does investigative pieces? They too are hiring: Web Producer, Engagement Reporter, Senior Editor, Data Reporter. Don’t forget about the obvious social media sites like LinkedIn, where I engage with companies directly, find recruiting managers and see job listings all the time for reporting and writing. We all know Facebook is great for posting birthday wishes for your cat and pictures of your favorite dessert, but I’m finding freelance, part-time and remote reporting jobs in FB groups dedicated solely to journalism.

The best part about FB is that you can see who is posting the listing and you can send your resume directly to them, or request more information about qualifications and pay and get your foot in the door through networking.

**Question authority and don’t back down.** “If journalism is good, it is controversial, by its nature.” So said WikiLeaks’ Julian Assange in the 2013 documentary, “We Steal Secrets: The Story of WikiLeaks.” Whether or not you’re a fan of Assange (he has lots of detractors), you’ve got to admit that he hits the nail on the head when it comes to role of journalism in our society. Who are we who call ourselves journalists if not the very people who ask the hard questions and challenge authority? The Trump administration is playing offense with the media, using a Twitter feed and overly aggressive tactics to prey upon and mock the people in charge of taking him to task. Being hard-nosed comes with being a journalist, and it’s nothing to apologize for. Get your journalism degree and wave it proudly (even if you are making only \$10 an hour).

**Join a news organization.** The Society of Professional Journalists, the International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors, Reporters Without Borders, the Committee to Protect Journalists, the International Women’s Media Foundation (IWMF), the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press – these are just a handful of the scores of journalism and media organizations that exist worldwide. They all do good work toward defending press freedom and it may be out of your pocketbook or schedule to join all of them. Many offer student discounts to join so if you’re even a few year’s out of college, now is a great time. Take one afternoon in front of your computer with a cup of coffee, and peruse each of these worthy organization’s websites and decide to support at least one this year.

Sure journalism is tough in terms of the workload, the pressure, the hours and schedule, but if you’re a true reporter and things like ledes, active voice and writing headlines are in your blood, then you know that the profession is right for you. Don’t let your parents, guidance counselor, friends studying business or anyone else downplay your passion. Now is not only a great time to choose the profession, it’s necessary.

“It is the role of good journalism to take on powerful abuses, and when powerful abuses are taken on, there is always a bad reaction.” – Julian Assange of WikiLeaks

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