Transparency in and out of the newsroom

(and why both matter)

(image from Rob!/Flickr)
Inside the newsroom: People definitely should know what you’re up to.
Some ways to do this:

1. Talk about it: And not just with the people who agree with you.
2. Show how the change you’re proposing is working elsewhere (and not just in journalism.)
3. Make it formal. And make sure everyone in the newsroom knows about it.
Outside the newsroom: People definitely should know what you’re up to.
Some ways to do this:

1. Explore with the audience

PIN perspectives

Carlos Restrepo, a 23-year-old Colombian student at Webster University, told us, “The words are not interchangeable. However, they both could apply to the same person. Someone from Brazil, for example, would be a Latino, but not a Hispanic.”

And in Colombia, he said, they’re taught we’re all Americanos, “In other words, we are all from the American continent.”

Vincenza Previte was born in the United States, but her mother was born in the Philippines and her father lives in Venezuela. She prefers to get country-specific.

“I usually say I’m from Venezuela to avoid explaining my background,” she told us. “But if I had to choose, I would say I’m Latina.”

Previte, a 24-year-old graduate assistant at Webster University, doesn’t think there’s a better alternative to the terms and that maybe we make too big a deal of labeling people in the first place.

“People are what they are,” she said. “Here in the United States there’s too much thought into using a specific term for a group of people that share the same race.”

Michael Byrd, an architect, prefers Hispanic. Latino seems more about cultures that speak Spanish, which he doesn’t. And Karlos Ramirez prefers identifying himself as Mexican-American, which speaks of both his
Question from ACES2015: Is it time to accept ‘they’ as a singular pronoun?

by Lauren Klinger and Kristen Hare
Published Apr. 2, 2015 1:59 pm
Updated Apr. 3, 2015 8:52 am

The Associated Press didn’t announce any earthshaking changes last week at the annual American Copy Editors Society conference. But Ben Zimmer did notice a recurring topic.

“It feels like at every session I’ve attended, singular ‘they’ has come up,” said Zimmer, a Wall Street Journal columnist and the editor of Vocabulary.com.

Zimmer was on a panel Friday with Emily Brewster, an associate editor with Merriam-Webster, and they both addressed the question there. But it’s not really a new one.
lawordsmith · 6 months ago
Thank you for sharing McIntyre's experiment. As an editor, I personally prefer the singular they, but I always take into account the audience before advising a client whether to use it. It's interesting to hear that McIntyre didn't get a single complaint.

Elyria · 5 months ago
This is a situation my staff and I are currently grappling with. We wrote a story where we had no choice but to remove all of the pronouns for one of the sources. The source had asked us to use they, but it quickly became confusing because there were multiple sources in the article. We have since decided that we will instead be using ze/zir for people who do not identify within the gender binary. It's not a perfect solution, but it will work for us until there is a better one.

Eric Michael · 6 months ago
It's not only time for it; it's already been accepted as such in usage. Likewise the non-gender specific singular pronoun "themself."
2. Write about your choice:

L.A. Times updates guidelines for covering immigration

May 01, 2013 | By Deirdre Edgar

The Los Angeles Times has announced new guidelines for covering immigration.

The goal is to "provide relevance and context and to avoid labels."

That means stories will no longer refer to individuals as "illegal immigrants" or "undocumented immigrants," but instead will describe a person's circumstances.
How the Times showed the changes:

A recent Column One article by Cindy Chang introduced the subject this way:

"She was 6 months old when she crossed the border illegally, carried in her mother's arms."

In a March column, Steve Lopez described a similar situation:

"... she and her family had moved here a decade ago from the Philippines without papers."
Local

Washington Post editorial board stops using the word ‘Redskins’
How the Post described the process:

Fred Hiatt, the editorial page editor, said a number of factors contributed to the board’s decision to stop using the name now. In the past, the board’s prevailing view was: “We’re a newspaper. We have to cover the world as it is.” But over time, Hiatt said, that argument could not overcome “our discomfort in using a slur.”
Then be ready to listen to and moderate comments.
3. Put your style guide online (this is from BuzzFeed’s)

Humorous, simple correction:
Gah! Miley was first documented twerking in public on Jan. 20, 2013. An earlier version of this post had the wrong date.

Humorous, restating the error:
Oops! Kim Kardashian’s favorite selfie pose is the smize. An earlier version of this post said her favorite selfie pose is duckface.
News orgs that share their stylebooks online (add ‘em if you got ‘em):

The Guardian
BuzzFeed
Reuters
BBC
NABJ
The Economist
NPR
NLGJA
NCDJ
The Telegraph
Finally...

Think of your stylebook like a garden...or a Web site...or a child...