Social media platforms, the Big Lie, and the coming elections

Pakistan's biblical floods and the case for climate reparations

Judges are suing “Catholicism” with the Constitution

For its local news websites has no rival. (What happens now?)

The worst of the pandemic is a bigger story than Biden CBS star reporter fears we’re on the brink of civil war

Widening the lens on democracy

Two of the main arguments against student debt cancellation are wrong

Did you know-

How did the changes the Legislature made this year affect your ability to vote? What do they mean for you, and how will you cover this contentious election? Join Fort Worth SPJ at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 28, as NFJA-7V’s ‘Jason Whitely, Volunteer Voters — Voter Rights and Corruption,’ and former deputy registrar Laurie James offer advice via Zoom on these critical issues. And remember, the last day to register to vote in Texas is Oct. 11.

More Latinx residents, the community’s political half has not matched its growing population. A Fort Worth Report panel Thursday, Sept. 29, will explore ways Tarrant Latinos can strengthen their political voice. The panelists: Sal Espino, former Fort Worth City Council member; Rosamont Jimenez, FW ISD board member and small business owner; and former Fort Worth City Council member; Laurie James, former deputy registrar Laurie James offer advice via Zoom on these critical issues. And remember, the last day to register to vote in Texas is Oct. 11.

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Jyoti Madhusoodanan knew nothing about the dynamics of reporting with interpreters when she worked on a story about deaf college students in the sciences. She wondered whether the responses would sound rehearsed. Then the interviews began, and the interactions were seamless, partly because the science-journalist shared some of the topics and even questions with her sources and the American Sign Language interpreter before the interviews began. “I don’t think we lost any spontaneity because of it,” she said.

“The best interpreters are the most briefed interpreters, those who understand where the limits of their background information may hamper or benefit their understanding,” said Steve Mines, a longtime legal and conference interpreter in Austin who has worked for the State Department. Mines, who is fluent in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese, may be more familiar working with reporters because he was a stringer in China. He drew on those experiences when he worked for New York Times reporters who interviewed Central American migrants in a Texas detention center.

Mines said his experiences with interpreters taught him that it’s critical to set ground rules. He and other interpreters note that many journalists may not know what they should — and should not — expect in language services.

Thorne Anderson, a photojournalist who has worked with interpreters covering the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, addresses the reporter-source relationship when training interpreters for a project in Mexico. Language services pros are taught to take the focus off themselves. Because the interpreters play such an important role in the reporting, they are expected to be as committed to accuracy and transparency as the reporters are.

Anderson: “I think that’s essential to the success of our project.”

It’s not uncommon for reporters to ask interpreters to be their drivers or even stringers. That’s especially true in emotionally charged situations characteristic of conflict zones. But Kathy Kauffman, a Spanish-speaking legal and conference interpreter who has interpreted for the BBC and Reuters, discourages journalists from doing that.

Interpreters who take on other tasks risk crossing lines and diminishing the integrity of information reporters gather, said Kauffman, who has interpreted for secretaries-general of the United Nations. She said newsrooms should have guidelines for working with interpreters. “If you’re that good a fixer, and your connections are that good, and you can get the insider knowledge, then you’re probably not as impartial as you need to be to do a completely accurate and completely impartial interpretation.”

Anderson is an associate professor, UNT Mayborn School of Journalism. He has had work in Newsweek and The New York Times, and he knows of situations where reporters have asked someone to play multiple roles. To navigate dangerous environments, having someone who can talk a reporter out of trouble may be more valuable than someone with perfect English.

But interpreters who offer themselves as jacks-of-all-trades may not perform any task well. Anderson believes it’s unrealistic to expect an interpreter to deliver 100 percent of the time while filling a variety of other roles.

“It’s exhausting for interpreters to work for a journalist. If you can remove from them the obligation of keeping you safe, remove from them the obligation of transportation and the obligation of getting you from one place to another, then they just have more energy to put into interpreting.”

Next month: Tips for working with interpreters

-- Margarita Birnbaum

federally certified interpreter | Texas licensed court interpreter

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

Learned it the hard way: Smart watches, phones can blow up pacemaker

=Note= October 03

FOI column: Times of trouble remind us Texas open government laws are here for everyone