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One Step Forward and Two Steps Back

Minorities

While women continue to make strides into management, overall numbers for minorities are down for the second year in a row.

By Bob Papper

The latest figures from the 2003 RTNDA/Ball State University Annual Survey show the largest percentage of women television news directors ever, but almost all the numbers for minorities—in both radio and TV—are down.

Women now make up 26.5 percent of TV news directors—a slight increase from last year's record of 25.9 percent.

But there was no good news for minorities in either radio or television. In television, the minority workforce dropped from 20.6 percent to 18.1 percent. All minority groups fell except Native Americans, who remained the same. Minority news directors fell from 9.2 percent to 6.6 percent—with all minority groups dropping except Asian Americans.

Ironically, the number of minorities in television actually increased, but they didn't increase as fast as overall staff rose. Consequently, the minority percentage slipped. In radio, the minority workforce continued its near-relentless slide, which started with the elimination of the EEO rules. The percentage of minority radio news directors remained largely unchanged.

Behind those numbers are real people. This year, in addition to the latest research, we provide profiles of some women and minorities rising through the ranks of the industry, and also give an update on some rising stars from previous years. ■

Broadcast News Workforce

	2003	2002	2001	1994
Television				
Caucasian	81.9%	79.4%	75.4%	82.9%
African American	8.4	9.3	9.9	10.1
Hispanic	6.5	7.7	10.1	4.2
Asian American	2.7	3.1	4.1	2.2
Native American	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6
Radio				
Caucasian	93.5%	92.0%	89.3%	85.3%
African American	4.8	4.1	5.2	5.7
Hispanic	1.2	2.4	5.5	7.5
Asian American	0.3	0.8	<1	0.6
Native American	0.2	0.7	<1	1.0

In TV, minorities dropped to 18.1 percent, with all minority groups except Native Americans edging down. In fact, over the last nine years, there has been no consistent, meaningful change in the percentage of minorities in television news. Without Hispanic stations, the minority percentage fell from last year's 19 percent to 17 percent this year. In radio, the percentage of minorities continued the general slide that started with the elimination of the EEO guidelines.

Broadcast News Directors

	2003	2002	2001	1994
Television				
Caucasian	93.4%	90.8%	92.0%	92.1%
African American	0.9	2.0	0.6	1.6
Hispanic	4.4	5.8	5.7	3.8
Asian American	0.9	0.4	1.1	1.5
Native American	0.4	1.0	0.6	1.0
Radio				
Caucasian	95.0	94.9%	95.6%	91.4%
African American	2.5	1.9	1.5	5.4
Hispanic	1.7	2.6	2.9	2.4
Asian American	0	0	<1	0
Native American	0.8	0.6	<1	0.8

In television, the percentage of minority news directors fell across the board, except for Asian Americans. Among non-Hispanic stations, the percentage of minority news directors plunged to 4.1 percent. Last year, the figure rose to 6.7 percent from 5.3 percent the year before. Radio has changed little in the past few years.

Source for all charts: RTNDA/Ball State University Annual Survey, 2003
Due to rounding, not all columns will total 100 percent.



PROFILES

Lori Waldon

Managing Editor
KPIX-TV
San Francisco

“The minute I walked into the newsroom to do the internship,” says Lori Waldon, “not to sound too corny, but that’s what changed everything for me.” She says she wanted to make a difference—and bring more voices and perspectives to the table.

Now managing editor at KPIX-TV in

San Francisco, Waldon got her bachelor's degree from the University of Southern California and a master's at Northwestern. She started as a reporter at WMBD-TV in Peoria, IL, and moved quickly to WALA-TV in Mobile, AL, and WPCQ-TV (now WCNC-TV) in Charlotte, NC. At WCNC, new management eliminated much of the staff—including Waldon.

"I decided I don't ever want to be at the mercy of somebody else again," says Waldon. "I realized I was going to have to reinvent myself."

Newly married, she and her husband decided to move back to Waldon's native California and start all over again.

After a brief stint at a small, independent station in San Francisco, she started part time at KPIX-TV in 1991. From there, she worked her way through the producing ranks and became executive producer of mornings and noon. In January, she was promoted to managing editor—the No. 3 position in the newsroom.



Steve Osunsami

Correspondent
ABC News, Atlanta

ABC news correspondent Steve Osunsami first met his two older sisters when he was in the 6th grade. His parents emigrated from Nigeria in search of a better life. Osunsami was born in this country while his parents saved the money to bring over their first two children. It took 12 years.

"We were very poor," says Osunsami. "There were times when I'd go home and the electricity wouldn't be on."

He worked his way through the University of Illinois in Champaign and interned at WREX-TV in Rockford, IL. He also spent three years as a reporter at WOOD-TV in Grand Rapids, MI.

One of his stories got the attention of ABC, and the network sent him to Seattle. After a year, they moved him

Women in Local TV News

	News staffs with women	Women news directors	Women as percentage of workforce	Average number of women on staff
All Television	90.0%	26.5%	39.3%	12.5
Network Affiliates	91.5	21.5	39.3	13.3
Independents	80.0	22.2	33.8	6.7
DMA 1–25	80.6	22.6	39.0	19.1
DMA 26–50	80.6	18.2	36.4	15.5
DMA 51–100	93.7	17.5	40.1	15.1
DMA 101–150	94.7	25.0	41.2	10.1
DMA 151+	91.4	28.6	37.9	5.9
Staff 51+	100.0	17.0	39.3	25.8
Staff 31–50	100.0	17.6	39.5	13.4
Staff 21–30	100.0	28.3	38.8	9.0
Staff 11–20	97.1	35.3	40.0	5.3
Staff 1–10	80.0	15.8	42.1	3.5

Women news directors in television hit another record high this year at 26.5 percent, up slightly from last year's record of 25.9 percent.

Women in Local Radio News

	News staffs with women	Women news directors	Women as percentage of workforce	Average number of women on staff
All Radio	44.7%	14.4%	24.0%	2.1
Major Market*	62.5	7.7	32.1	2.6
Large Market*	56.0	4.3	25.8	2.2
Medium Market*	41.8	17.6	22.6	1.7
Small Market*	33.3	8.8	16.1	2.2

The percentage of women news directors plunged from last year's 22.3 percent to this year's 14.4 percent. The percentage of women in the radio workforce also fell.

*Major markets are 1 million or more listeners. Large markets are from 250,000 to 1 million. Medium markets are 50,000 to 250,000. Small markets are fewer than 50,000.

Source for all charts: RTNDA/Ball State University Annual Survey, 2003

About the Survey

The 2003 RTNDA/Ball State University Annual Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2002 among all 1,421 operating, nonsatellite television stations and a random sample of 1,490 radio stations. Valid responses came from 890 television stations (62.6 percent) and 272 radio news directors and GMs representing 445 radio stations. Data for women TV news directors are pulled from a complete census and are not projected from a smaller sample.

Bob Papper, professor of telecommunications at Ball State University, conducted the research with support from *Communicator* magazine at RTNDA and the Department of Telecommunications at Ball State. The Bureau of Business Research at Ball State handled data entry and tabulation.

to Atlanta with NewsOne, and a year later, he was promoted to World News Tonight—first on the weekends, then weekdays starting in 1998.

“I’m idealistic,” says Osunsami. “I think that one story can really make a difference, and sometimes I can do that story.” Although he covers news out of the Atlanta bureau, he has developed a niche covering stories on race.

“It’s an area I’m comfortable with,” says Osunsami. “It’s an area where they’re comfortable with me...and they’re stories of significance.”

His long-term goal is to work on a news magazine. His other goal is to get his personal life in order. He has worked so hard and moved so quickly that he’s never had time—or the luck—to develop a life. “I’m sometimes so busy covering other people’s lives that it’s hard to have one of my own,” he says.

Tina James-Tafoya



Host and Producer
National Native News
Albuquerque, NM

Tina James-Tafoya’s family just got electricity a year and a half ago; they still don’t have running water.

But that’s life on the reservation in Wheatfields, AZ.

One of her dreams growing up was to become Miss Navajo Nation. “It’s kind of like Miss USA, but [there’s] no swimsuit contest,” she laughs. On her second try, in 1992 at age 20, she succeeded. That meant taking a year off from school to travel and speak, and that’s when she really became interested in media. She graduated from Arizona State University in 1997. She became press officer for the Navajo

Nation, then president, and then press officer for the New Mexico Office of Indian Affairs.

Then she started working for Native America Calling, a one-hour weekday call-in program. In February of this year, she became host and producer of National Native News. Fed from Albuquerque, the five-minute weekday newscast runs on more than 200 radio stations across the country. The idea is to help Native Americans and educate others.

“I want to be here with National Native News to see it grow,” says James-Tafoya. “I want to see it improve, and I would love to have a part in that.” She and her husband have a 3-year-old son, Zak, and a daughter who’s a year and a half. Her name is Dezbah—which in Navajo means “she’s ready for war.”



Tracey Russell

News Director
KYW-AM
Philadelphia

Tracey Russell, news director at KYW-AM in Philadelphia, may be in broadcast today because she couldn’t find a print internship in college. Instead, she went to a radio news station and loved it.

She worked at WCAU-TV in Philadelphia part time in college and full time after—as a production assistant, then assignment editor and then special projects producer. She left for a short-lived experiment in talk TV, and had to start all over again.

She went to KYW-TV as a part-time writer and assignment editor, and quickly moved to assignment manager and then managing editor. She left the business in 2000 for public relations.

Daughter Danielle grew up in newsrooms and sometimes was picked up from school by news crews. A guilty mom wanted to give 5-year-old Jordan more attention. But she desperately missed news, and in 2001 she went to KYW-AM as news director.

“You have to make some decisions

TV General Managers

	Caucasian	Minority	Men	Women
All Television*	96.4%	3.6%	86.1%	13.9%
Network Affiliates	97.9	2.1	85.6	14.4
Independents	100.0	0	90.0	10.0
DMA 1–25	100.0	0	90.3	9.7
DMA 26–50	91.4	8.6	82.9	17.1
DMA 51–100	96.7	3.3	90.3	9.7
DMA 101–150	97.2	2.8	86.8	13.2
DMA 151+	96.7	3.3	76.5	23.5

The percentage of women GMs edged up slightly from last year’s 13 percent, but the percentage of minority GMs dropped from 5.2 percent. We found no Native American or Asian American GMs. Three-quarters of the minority GMs were Hispanic—primarily at Hispanic stations. In the four years we’ve tracked GMs, the number of women has remained largely unchanged, but minorities have dropped steadily every year—starting at 10 percent four years ago.

*The figures for GMs include only those stations with news departments; those without news departments are not included in this survey.

Radio General Managers

	Caucasian	Minority	Men	Women
All Radio	97.5%	2.5%	93%	7%

The percentage of women GMs dropped from last year’s 11 percent. Minority GMs dropped again—from 5.7 percent two years ago to 3.8 percent a year ago to 2.5 percent this year.

Source for all charts: RTNDA/Ball State University Annual Survey, 2003

about how you handle these responsibilities and balance them with life,” Russell says, adding that she feels she’s done that. “Every day I get to do something I didn’t do the day before, which is what really makes this busi-

ness a good one to be in.”

As for the future, she thinks that maybe there’s room higher up in parent Infinity. While she hasn’t talked it over with corporate brass, she’s “available to discuss” all the possibilities.



Syleste Rodriguez

Reporter
KTVB-TV, Boise, ID

“It is everything I expected and more,” says Syleste Rodriguez, reporter for KTVB-TV in Boise, ID. “There are things that I’ve experienced as a minority, a woman, and just a reporter in general that I was not taught.”

Rodriguez grew up in the diversity of Phoenix; now, she’s a year into the white bread world of Boise, ID. “My entire family lives within a five-mile radius of each other [in Arizona],” says Rodriguez. “Some next door to each other. So it was a big move for me.”

Before she went to Boise she asked whether there were problems with skinheads or hate groups there. She says she was told, “No. That was years ago.” This summer, the Aryan Nation scheduled a rally in Boise.

“Personally, this means that I have had to just become more aware of what life is like outside the four walls of my cultural family,” says Rodriguez. In the meantime, she says she’s trying to bring diversity to her workplace.

“I think the newsroom is becoming more aware about minority issues,” says Rodriguez. “It’s not changing it too much, but it’s becoming more aware.” Long term, she wants to work as a network correspondent.



Jose Flores

News Director
KTMD-TV, Houston

For about five years, Jose Flores taught third grade all day, then produced the 10 o’clock news at night.

He figures it probably worked because he didn’t have a family, although it did cost him a relationship. “But you know, I really loved it,” he says. “I love teaching and I really love working in TV.”

Minorities in Local TV News

	News staffs with minorities	Minority news directors	Minorities as percentage of workforce	Average no. of minorities on staff
All Television	89.2%	6.6%	18.1%	5.7
Network Affiliates	89.6	3.5	16.9	5.7
Independents	70.0	0	18.7	3.7
DMA 1–25	67.7	3.4	24.9	12.2
DMA 26–50	83.3	11.8	19.5	8.3
DMA 51–100	92.1	6.7	15.0	5.7
DMA 101–150	94.7	5.6	17.6	4.3
DMA 151+	97.1	6.2	12.8	2.0
Staff 51+	78.7	2.1	19.9	13.1
Staff 31–50	96.0	5.5	16.9	5.7
Staff 21–30	97.8	4.7	14.9	3.5
Staff 11–20	97.1	17.2	22.4	3.0
Staff 1–10	95.0	11.2	17.6	1.5

The percentage of television staffs with minorities is virtually unchanged from a year ago. The average number of minorities on staff rose, but not as quickly as the total staff, so the overall percentage of minorities in TV fell from last year (20.6 percent to 18.1 percent). The percentage of minority news directors fell substantially—to 6.6 percent from last year’s 9.2 percent. Most of that drop came from independent stations. Historically, independent stations have tended to employ a much higher percentage of minority news directors than the average; this year, not one survey came in from an independent station with a minority news director. The percentage of minority news directors at the largest and biggest news departments also fell noticeably.

Minorities in Local Radio News

	News staffs with minorities	Minority news directors	Minorities as percentage of workforce	Average no. of minorities on staff
All Radio	15.9%	5.0%	6.8%	1.7
Major Market*	31.3	8.3	7.4	1.2
Large Market*	32.0	9.0	13.3	2.0
Medium Market*	12.7	2.0	4.8	1.1
Small Market*	2.8	0	1.2	2.0

As with television, the number of minorities in radio news increased, but not as quickly as the overall staff. The minority workforce percentage slipped from last year’s 8 percent to 6.8 percent. After a slight increase last year, the percentage of minority news directors has remained virtually unchanged—from 5.1 percent last year to 5 percent this year. The percentage of news staffs with minorities also fell—from 19.8 percent last year to 15.9 percent in 2003.

*Major markets are 1 million or more listeners. Large markets are from 250,000 to 1 million. Medium markets are 50,000 to 250,000. Small markets are fewer than 50,000.

Source for all charts: RTNDA/Ball State University Annual Survey, 2003

Newspapers vs. Broadcast

The latest survey by the American Society of Newspaper Editors found that minority journalists make up 12.52 percent of newsroom employees at daily newspapers, up from last year's 12.07 percent. African Americans were 5.33 percent of the total, Hispanics 4.04 percent, Asian Americans 2.62 percent and Native Americans 0.53 percent. Women remained about the same, at 36.86 percent from 37.05 percent last year.

In contrast, minority journalists make up 18.1 percent of television newsrooms. African Americans are 8.4 percent of the total, Hispanics 6.5 percent, Asian Americans 2.7 percent, and Native Americans 0.5 percent. If we look just at English-language TV news operations, the minority population is 17 percent. African Americans are 8.6 percent, Hispanics are 5.2 percent, Asian Americans are 2.7 percent, and Native Americans are 0.5 percent. Women make up 39.3 percent of the television news workforce.

The Latest on EEO at the FCC

In November 2002, the FCC adopted new Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) rules and policies for broadcasters. Along with prohibiting discrimination, the rules require broadcasters to widely distribute information concerning each full-time opening; provide notice of each full-time opening to recruitment organizations that request it; and complete two or four (depending on company size) longer-term recruitment initiatives within a two-year period. That can include job fairs, scholarship and internship programs, and other community events on employment opportunities.

There are also new record-keeping requirements, and the FCC says the EEO rules will be "reviewed and enforced" at license renewal time.

Now news director at KTMD-TV in Houston, Flores graduated from the University of Houston in 1989 and got a job at the Univision station as a photographer, moving up to chief editor and then 10 o'clock producer. But there had been layoffs at the station, so Flores hedged his bets with a teaching certificate.

He wanted to quit teaching and focus on producing, but the station couldn't pay him enough. He left TV in 1997. In 2001, the Telemundo station offered him the job as news director, and he started right after the school year ended.

"I've always wanted to stay in Spanish TV," says Flores. "It's very important to me to give to my community."

Long term, he says he'd like to become a general manager of a TV station. The newsroom sometimes reminds him of school. "They're just bigger kids here," he laughs. "Sometimes I just want to tell each of them, 'You go to that corner and you go to this other corner. You're in time-out.'"



Nancy Leung

Director of Affiliate Newsgathering
CNN, Atlanta

Even though she didn't realize it at the time, Nancy Leung, director of affiliate newsgathering at CNN in Atlanta, says she chose broadcast journalism because that's what Connie Chung did.

She started in journalism in high school in Teaneck, NJ, writing for the local paper. When she graduated from Syracuse University in 1987, she went to work at CBS in affiliate relations, later working part time at CBS News.

A convention and job fair sponsored by the Asian American Journalists Association opened new doors, and in 1991 CNN called and offered her a starting videojournalist position in Atlanta.

It meant starting from scratch, but it also meant full time in news. Leung made the rounds at CNN, working

her way to the national desk and then assignment editor. Now, she oversees the gathering of news from around the country and Canada from more than 700 affiliates.

She used to dream about being a station owner but thinks being a station manager is more realistic. "At some point," Leung says, "I would like to have a family."

Her major hobby is fencing, and she goes to sectionals and nationals to compete. She says she's "not that good but likes to compete. It's about planning and strategy."



Janet Perez

Senior Producer
MetroSource, Phoenix

"I came to town, and I realized I'm the only Hispanic sitting at the table and not busing it," says Janet Perez about her arrival in Phoenix a dozen years ago. Now, she's senior producer for national news at MetroSource.

Perez started at her high school paper in El Paso, TX. In 1989, she graduated from college on a Saturday, took Sunday off, and started full time Monday at the *El Paso Times*.

Two years later, KDBC-TV in El Paso hired her as a reporter. Then, she returned to newspapers with the *Phoenix Gazette*, and went back to TV again at KSAZ-TV in Phoenix. After some freelance work, she entered radio at MetroSource, starting as a writer, then moving to assorted producing shifts until taking over morning drive.

"Some reporters like projects," says Perez. "I like the breaking news stuff." She says it wasn't easy starting out.

"As a minority, you always feel that you have to justify why you're there," says Perez. "I always felt that I had to work twice as hard because people will go, 'She's an affirmative action hire' or whatever."

Now that's all changed. "Today, 'Fine. You hired me for that,'" says Perez, "but you also got one hell of a newperson." ■