NARRATIVE SWEAT AND FLOW:
THE CHALLENGE AND FULFILLMENT OF COVERING SENSITIVE SOCIAL
ISSUES

Simina Mistreanu

Jacqui Banaszynski, Committee Chair

ABSTRACT

Long-form narrative writers who immerse themselves in other lives and situations to cover social issues have one of the hardest jobs in journalism. They take on difficult, often heart-wrenching subjects, and tell stories that trigger emotions – those of readers and, no doubt, their own. In this article, seven writers, all Pulitzer Prize or National Magazine Award winners, talk about the sweat, tears and joy of writing narratively about social issues such as poverty, race, illness and trauma. They talk about flow – a state of intense concentration when nothing except the task at hand seems to matter – stalemates, the power of stories and how, in the end, they’ll just find a way to get it done.