

METPRO: A CASE STUDY IN DIVERSITY AND NEWSPAPER ECONOMICS

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ABSTRACT

METPRO (Minority Editorial Training Program) was an acclaimed program in the newspaper industry that trained journalists of color, beginning with reporters in 1984 and expanding to copy editors in 1989. Through long interviews with 25 of the copy-editing fellows, in addition to interviews with top editors and officials at Times Mirror, this study shows what the program meant to those beginning in journalism. For many young journalists of color, it was a foot in the door to opportunities they may not have had for many years, if ever. The program not only helped those of color break into the business, but it also helped newspapers themselves, during a time when newsrooms were pushing to increase the diversity of their staffs. And because copy editors play a large role as gatekeepers in the final production of the newspaper, this research also shows how considerable a role these participants had, through personal anecdotes recalling mistakes and offensive language or art, as pertaining to issues of race, ethnicity and gender, that did not make the newspaper because these copy editors were there to stop them. While successful on many levels, financial pressures came to bear on the program. It met its demise in an era of economic trouble and retrenchment among newspapers.