
COLLAB

REPARATIVE JOURNALISM, Y'ALL

Final Report

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Introduction	3
Special Thanks	5
Survey Summary	6
Survey Strategy	10
Barriers	14
Recommendations	16
Data Results	
• City of Nacogdoches and Nacogdoches County	21
• Brownsville and Rio Grande Valley region	30
• Native American Communities Statewide	36
• City of Bastrop and Bastrop County	42
References	48

Introduction

This engagement project was spearheaded by Black women with a generational legacy inextricably connected to Texas's beginnings. We are not only witnesses but share the historical brunt of a state predicated on white supremacy and the silencing of oppressed people.

The purpose of this project was to take a rehabilitative approach toward this history of oppression. We wanted to develop a replicable model the *Texas Observer* and other outlets across the state could use as a foundation for coverage of historically overlooked communities, especially in rural areas of the state. We also wanted to empower exploited residents and grassroots leaders by putting the tools of journalism into their hands while we gained insight into coverage needs.

It's important to note that this work is informed first by history. Since its genesis, journalism in the Lone Star State has spread propaganda that aided the violent removal and dehumanization of Indigenous tribes; encouraged lynchings, burnings, and the persecution of Black chattel; and justified unfathomable anti-Mexican violence along the border across the state. The atrocities mentioned here are only a fraction of past and present afflictions that journalists in this state must work to expose and remedy.

For the reasons cited above, much of this work is galvanized by the principles of Movement Journalism as defined by movement journalism organization Press On:

Movement journalism is journalism in service to liberation. This does not mean turning journalists into soapboxes for activists, but fostering collaboration between journalists and grassroots movements, and supporting journalism created by oppressed and marginalized people.

It's an approach with an array of practitioners and strategies but has been practiced historically by oppressed communities—specifically Black Southerners. In the context of this project, we want to point to the foundational readings that inspired our approach. The first is a report titled, “Out of Struggle: Strengthening and Expanding Movement Journalism in the U.S. South,” which was released by the movement-building organization Project South and co-authored by Anna Simonton, who is now interim development director at the *Appeal*: “If robust journalism which centers the interests of marginalized communities has the potential to push the government and society toward justice, then that push has got to come from the South.”

This report later helped lead to the founding of [Press On](#), a movement journalism-organization. This collective along with several other organizations like Free Press, The Listening Collective, and The Southern Movement Assembly inspired the framework for this project.

Throughout this work, we have seen the consequences for communities when leaders are not held accountable for their actions by the press. It is evident that this type of journalism is essential, even beyond this project's targeted areas.

We want to make it clear that this project has not been, and is not, a perfect solution for issues we're seeing in misrepresented and overlooked communities across the state. We are all actively unlearning how to disinvest and unlearn white supremacist thought and ideology, whether personally or as a community-engagement team.

We also understand that newsrooms across the state are working to find the balance between catering to overlooked communities, rectifying a lack of staff diversity, transforming organizational structures that fall short, and maintaining revenue to keep publications afloat. But in order to alleviate these challenges, it's important that underrepresented journalists with vision and innovative strategies are respected and fully supported—to their standards, not those who have traditionally held and continue to hold power in journalism organizations—in order to help birth solutions enriched by the very communities most affected.

As the state of Texas sees a shift in demographics, ideology, economy, environment, and healthcare, we can no longer content ourselves with awards and “increased” diversity, followed by exhaustion and untimely turnover. We need to move beyond traditional and passive journalism. Our hope for existing legacy organizations and those on the horizon is that this report helps invigorate a journalism that's quite the opposite.

Sincerely,

DaLyah Jones, Director of Community Engagement
Zacharia Washington, Engagement Fellow

Special Thanks

The engagement team would like to thank the following list of essential and innovative collaborators who worked with us during this project. The work we were able to complete would not have been possible without their guidance, advice, and dedication:

Community Partners:

Resilient Bastrop County Initiative
Bastrop Public Library
21/7 of Nacogdoches
Proyecto Juan Diego
Voces Unidas RGV (Formerly Equal Voice Network)
Angry Tias and Abuelas
Urban Inter-Tribal Center of Texas (UITCT)
American Indian Heritage Day
Dallas Indian United Methodist Church
OCA-Greater Houston
Texas Gulf Coast Area Labor Federation
American Civil Liberties Union of Texas
Partnership with Native Americans (PWNA)

Journalists and Collaborators:

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Jaime Longoria
Kristen Cabrera
Pete Ramirez
Yvonne Marquez
Reynaldo Leanos Jr.
Kavitha Rajagopalan
Aaron Foley
Loyce Gayo
Uyiosa Elegon
Keri Mitchell

Journalism Organizations:

Trucha (Formerly NETA)
Press On
Tyler Loop
Scalawag
National Association of Black Journalists
National Association of Hispanic Journalists
Shift Press
Dallas Free Press

Technical Support:

Events Unleashed
Austin Language Justice Collective Austin
Area Urban League
Huston-Tillotson University
Hearken
Kendall Gilliam
Amy Allen
Michael L. Hirsch
Mueni Rudd
Cory Brown
Kerr Community Center
Bible Fellowship Church
Brown Family Health Clinic

Donors:

Flo Code
Hank's
Chick-Fil-A

Survey Summary

This project was originally designed with a two-year timeline and funding model. However, the project timeline was ultimately shortened to one year with the hope of achieving the same goals outlined in the original model. As we began work in our targeted communities, we saw quickly that limited staff capacity, unexpected man-made disasters and the pandemic would hinder our ability to meet our original goals. As a result, we eventually narrowed the project to focus on just four areas of the state rather than the eight we originally proposed, with the aim of targeting several communities within each of those four areas.

When determining which areas to target, we focused on several key criteria:

- *Local access to coverage?*
- *Organizing, advocacy and leadership in communities, etc.*
- *Areas the Texas Observer wasn't present, had a dearth of coverage in or needed more in-depth research?*
- *Established connections to communities?*
- *Interest in reporters looking to connect with certain communities?*
- *Urgency of coverage needs.*
- *Demographic based on ACS poverty status, racial makeup, density, regional characteristics.*

We also reached out to community leaders at the beginning of the project and asked them questions about their needs, values, motivations, coverage critiques, and more to better understand how we can serve chosen regions with this project. Below we've provided a few examples of our questionnaire:

- ***What MOTIVATES you?***
 - *What are 3-5 goals that you and your organization are working toward?*
- ***What SUCCESSES do you see?***
 - *What are your successes?*
- ***Who are HELPERS?***
 - *Who helps you achieve your mission?*
 - *What other groups are achieving success in your community?*
- ***What are BARRIERS to your success in your mission?***
 - *What are the 3 biggest problems you face?*
- ***What are CORE NEEDS that you have?***
 - *What keeps you up at night?*
- ***What can JOURNALISM do better?***
 - *What should people know about your community that they don't already know?*
- ***What do you think the media is getting wrong?***

- *What do you think has been underreported in your community? What do you think has been reported wrong or in a detrimental way?*

We focused on Nacogdoches County and the City of Nacogdoches; Brownsville and the Rio Grande Valley region; Native American communities statewide with a focus on reservations and communities in Houston and Dallas; and Bastrop County with a focus on residents in the cities of Bastrop, Smithville, and Elgin.

For this project, we were able to collect information through town hall events, vigils, media trainings, aimed canvases, social media campaigns, and more. Graduate students in social work with Huston-Tillotson University helped us develop survey questions and dissemination methodologies as well as draw conclusions from the information we collected. During events, our goal was to leave with as much information as possible while minimizing extractive approaches. In exchange for surveys, residents were given non-perishable items or gift cards. We also worked to provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for all in-person or hybrid events.

Our plan was to collect 1,200 survey responses from all of the communities we worked in, go back to follow up with folks willing to sit down and offer more insight into local issues, and follow up with our media outlet partners so that leads could be looked into. We also aimed to become a resource for the community by making ourselves accessible to residents who may need tools or guidance for local accountability issues.

The next phase of the project was to work alongside residents and reporters to help folks tell their own stories in a capacity built specifically for affected communities. At those events, not only would we present relevant information in a storytelling format, but also provide relevant resources.

One year is not enough to see the effects of a project like this, which is why this work and a team of our size would have benefited from more resources, staff, and support.

We also realized that there was a need for this work from residents outside of targeted communities. We have had ongoing conversations with advocates and leaders in areas like Beaumont where there have been issues with language accessibility for non-English speakers (including those who do not speak Spanish) as well as deaf and hard-of-hearing residents.

There's a burgeoning movement for Black lives taking place in the Huntsville area, where Black and Brown residents have historically been disenfranchised by the local old guard.

Asian communities in Texas are seeing high rates of violence in the state as well as a potential for redlining to impact local businesses, especially in the Harris County area.

We have also heard of environmental issues, along with the threat of displacement and loss of historical relics and structures, in former Freedman colonies across the state.

Our experience underlines the importance of investing in journalists of color. We were able to collect about 700 surveys for this project, but would have benefited from collecting more responses. Given the time and resources, this project would have resulted in more coverage of crucial issues, and we would have worked with an audience engagement partner to provide state and local coverage information to our community partners.

Nonetheless, This project provides a framework for newsrooms looking to repair relationships with overlooked communities across the state, regionally, or on the hyper-local level.

In no way are we saying that our survey methods and approaches are the only answer for issues in coverage. Also, the feedback we collected does not represent all of the thoughts and feelings of residents of color in targeted areas. But this information can be used to help guide newsrooms or organizations toward better strategies for connecting with folks on the ground and getting them engaged with relevant news.

This information could also help determine the best revenue models for organizations looking to cover overlooked communities that may not have the resources to invest in outlets personally but would benefit the most from coverage.

Summarized results for each community:

Nacogdoches - More than 300 responses were collected in the city of Nacogdoches and Nacogdoches County. Thirty percent of respondents trust their news source and feel represented and 65 percent of respondents said the news incorrectly stereotyped the community. Overall, participants would like to see more coverage of the Black community.

RGV - More than 300 responses were collected in the RGV region. A majority of respondents follow the news. Seventy percent of respondents find the topics their news outlets cover as important and only 4 percent distrust their news outlet. Almost 30 percent of respondents believed that the media stereotyped the community and 40 percent of RGV participants believe people who look like them are represented positively while 36 percent of participants marked neutral. Participants mentioned that they would like to see more information related to health and COVID-19.

Native American Communities - Eighteen surveys were collected from Native American communities across the state. More than 60 percent of respondents marked neutral on overall trust of news sources. Most participants consumed news via television and/or social media. A fourth of Indigenous respondents who belonged to federally or state recognized tribes wanted to see more coverage of Indigenous issues, specifically of missing and murdered Indigenous women. They also mentioned a need for information resources and events pertaining to Indigenous communities.

Bastrop - About 20 survey responses were collected from the City of Bastrop and Bastrop County. A majority of residents followed local and state news and over half responded that the news provided the information they needed. Over 70 percent of respondents trusted their news source, but about 75 percent agreed the media incorrectly stereotyped their community. Almost

70 percent of respondents said they watched a Black news reporter. Respondents would have also liked to see more local news coverage of BIPOC communities and positive portrayals.

STRATEGY

Below we have laid out the approach taken by the engagement team. In an effort to streamline the process, we have listed **Steps 1-9** as well as provided subpoints. Each community we worked with informed and followed this blueprint, which includes an à la carte method that's adaptable to each community's needs and creative approaches. This model has been through many iterations. The hope is that as we continue this work beyond the *Texas Observer*, it will be improved and even expanded when the proper resources are available.

Step 1 - Establish Community Selections

Each community is selected based on key factors, which include demographics (income, race, age, density, etc.); access to news, information, and coverage; the embrace of the project by community members/leaders; and the interest of editorial staff and nature of past coverage of the area.

The engagement team then meets with business and editorial leadership to update and discuss the communities they'll be targeting.

Step 2 - Initial Outreach/Research/Listening Sessions

During step two, the engagement team takes a three-part approach:

A) Establish points of contact for communities by introducing themselves and taking feedback from leaders or residents. Questionnaire feedback and transcribed conversations are summarized to find trends and common issues that may need to be addressed.

B) Potential collaborators beyond just residents are identified during this phase. They include but are not limited to grassroots organizations, churches, libraries, local media outlets, and others.

C) Closed-door group and individual meetings are held with community points of contact to determine the optimal path forward.

Step 3 - Identify and define specific community needs and choose your adventure

In this step, the community-engagement team reviews community-feedback summaries and meeting notes from step 2c, and meets with the editorial team to determine what reporter the engagement team should collaborate with or provide information to.

Step 4.1 - First Community-wide Event

During this step, there's an à la carte approach taken with each community depending on their needs and the best approach they feel should be taken for each of their communities to gain insight on coverage needs. Below, community members get the option to receive media training (4A), attend a town hall (4B), go to an event of their choice, (4C) and/or participate in a survey

event (4D). The end goal is to build and repair trust within the community in an effort to get the most feedback.

4.1a. Media Training

During this step, the engagement team reaches out to community leaders willing to co-host the event in order to establish relevance and trust. If residents recognize a familiar organization name or community leader, they are more likely to trust the project or event taking place.

During this portion, the engagement team also reaches out to volunteers to help co-host the training as well as reporters, who either cover and/or are from the local region. Reporters from *Texas Observer's* own editorial team are selected to help facilitate the training.

4.1b. Town Hall

Town halls are an opportunity for community members and journalists to have critical conversations about local issues and/or local coverage needs. These events can be in-person, virtual, or a hybrid of the two.

A TxO reporter, community leader or local reporter from an area outlet is tapped to host the town hall. The engagement team works with community members to determine participants, topics, partners, and format.

4.1c. Event of Choice

This approach allows community leaders to help determine the best approach for a community event, which can be in-person, virtual, or hybrid. This event can also be tied to an existing annual community event.

4.1d. Survey Event (Refer to Step 5)

The community-engagement team determines the best type of event to collect community feedback. Models **4.1a**, **4.1b**, **4.1c** and **4.1d** are options for survey distribution, but this event is solely tied to a canvassing event (**4.2c**) with community volunteers.

Step 4.2 - Post-event debrief with community points of contact

The engagement team assesses what went well and what needs to be improved during the survey. It also allows the engagement team to understand what community members took away from the preferred events. After this assessment, the team determines whether to move forward to **4.2C** or refer back to the strategies in **4.1a**, **4.1b**, or **4.1c** under **step 4.1**.

4.2a. Event feedback

During this portion, the community-engagement team will collect, organize, and summarize feedback from community members, reporters, community leaders, and more.

4.2b. How engaged is the community at this point?

This step will assess summarized feedback. The team will assess and determine whether more training, a town hall, or survey event is needed. The community-engagement team should meet to discuss findings, meet with editorial to update them about feedback, and determine if reporters should be involved in the strategy moving forward. The engagement team will also take a look at the strategy to see if the approach can be improved.

4.2c. Is this community ready for a survey?

This step will determine whether a community is ready to move forward with **Step 5** or backpedal to **Step 4.1**. This step will also assess the best ways to distribute surveys if **Step 5** is selected.

If it's determined that the community should move forward with **Step 5**, the engagement team assesses the best way to distribute surveys, which includes but is not limited to: canvassing, posting print and digital flyers, social media, etc. The engagement team then updates community members about next steps.

Step 5 - Survey Event

During this step, the engagement team will move forward with a survey approach with community members. Determine between **Step 5a** or **Step 5b**.

5a. Yes, move forward with canvassing

If yes to **5a**, this step includes distributing surveys through canvassing campaigns and flyers.

5b. Yes, but hold a second community event along with canvassing

This step involves incorporating strategies presented in Step 4.

5c. No, what does the community need?

During this step, the community-engagement team will meet with both editorial and business staff to determine the best approach. The team will also look at ways to make any strategy tweaks to best serve the community they're in. The community-engagement team will update business leadership as well as editorial about issues or strategies to best move forward.

Step 6 - Survey collection and data crunching

During this step, survey information will be collected and organized into a summary.

Step 7 - Data review, pass results to editorial staff

This step will allow the engagement team to summarize and present information to the editorial staff. This information will be given in a report with demographics, survey results, and the engagement timeline.

Step 8 - Editorial review, discussion, feedback

This portion of the strategy involves meeting with editorial staff and discussing next steps. This step will determine whether or not it's best to move forward with identified potential stories that the *Texas Observer* could pursue. This portion of the strategy will also identify which reporter is best to pass that information to.

Step 9 - Assess progress and the best next steps with community members

BARRIERS

Although the engagement team was able to collect essential feedback, each community presented a different challenge for the engagement team and it should be emphasized that several man-made disasters, the pandemic, staff capacity, and unexpected internal transitions hindered the completion of this project.

Funding

When beginning this project, it was under the assumption that the *Texas Observer* would be able to secure funding for the project in an attempt to continue the work that Director of Engagement, DaLyah Jones and Engagement Fellow Zacharia Washington were spearheading across the state. After this summer, it became clear that was indeed not the case and there was a funding shortfall of about \$20K for the project.

Additional funding for a second year would have been required for the engagement team to continue their work effectively and accomplish the originally outlined goals to their full ends. Our work on this project clearly established that it takes time to establish rapport with communities and give information to staff writers in order to produce the much-needed reported investigations as well as targeted media strategies to serve and hear from communities.

Capacity

During the initial portion of this project, we had an audience and membership consultant who helped us target communities geographically and demographically. But we weren't able to complete the project with their help since they were let go, leaving a gap in needed audience work.

The engagement team was also stretched thin due to a dearth of staff. There was also hesitation regarding hiring an events coordination team to help do events with selected communities. They were hired in June—halfway through the project—and helped pick up extra work Jones and Washington were stretched thin attending to. The addition of an events team was essential to getting many of the community events planned and completed.

Organizational Structure

When doing this work, it is essential that the engagement team be either housed under both the business and editorial departments or become its own independent department. Firewalls between the business and editorial department hindered the engagement team's ability to work directly with reporters and editorial staff after March, resulting in a detachment between the engagement team and staff writers. We were, however, able to share leads with several reporters and involve them in meetings and events.

There was also an unexpected transition in leadership and staff during this project that resulted in a decision to wrap up the project in light of limited capacity and a fast-approaching deadline.

Man-Made Disasters

In the midst of a global health crisis, the engagement team worked to create ethical engagement strategies and events that wouldn't put staff or the general public at risk. Due to these constraints, several events were either rescheduled, delayed, or cancelled resulting in issues completing survey events.

Although the engagement team leaned on virtual and hybrid events for media trainings and survey events, the lack of access to broadband Internet as well as a computer or phone hindered access for residents whom the *Texas Observer* could serve with vital coverage but couldn't engage directly without being on the ground.

On top of lack of access due to COVID-19, the winter storm that hit Texas in February delayed access to communities who were being directly affected or in the midst of recovery, which resulted in project delays.

Recommendations for the *Texas Observer*

Although there were hindrances to the project and its progress, it is essential that the *Texas Observer* and partner outlets continue the work that the engagement team has spearheaded over the past year. Below, we have listed recommendations for the outlet:

The *Texas Observer* should work to determine the best organizational structures for a community-engagement team that would allow staff members to work cohesively with both the business and editorial departments.

There should also be a concerted effort to secure funding and support for a community engagement department that would allow the team to both continue the work with existing communities as well as hire on an audience team to strategically identify best practices to engage with communities.

Because of the strict deadline for the project, the *Texas Observer* should continue completing initial surveys, assessing data and (possibly) partnering with Hearken to go into communities with more targeted questions around coverage needs. This tool could also be used to help target community members with newsletters and content related to their area of residence in an effort to serve undercovered areas while getting leads for investigations and coverage.

The *Texas Observer* should work to come up with a disaster-response protocol that includes and collaborates with local outlets and reporters directly. This emergency response protocol should also include distribution of accessible resources for residents looking for relief from vetted government and nonprofit aid organizations as well as a way to communicate with the newsroom or engagement team about what's happening on the ground and what resources are needed.

The engagement team also recommends an internal culture revamp that centers equity as well as looks to build a sound organizational structure that supports underrepresented journalists. This also means sitting BIPOC journalists at the head of the table of organizations like the *Texas Observer* along with a knife and fork.

Community Tools and Resources

Below, we have provided examples of different tools and resources we've developed during this project. Much of this was developed alongside the community or in response to unexpected man-made disasters:

Rural Resource List - In response to the Winter Storm in February 2021, which resulted in power outages across the state during frigid temperatures. This man-made disaster resulted in hundreds of deaths.

After the first several days of outages, the engagement team began reaching out to community partners to get more information about community needs and what resources they needed. Residents relayed the need for basic information as far as knowing where to go for resources or to donate resources for others.

During the storm, we recognized that grassroots organizations were either starting mutual aid campaigns or sharing master lists via social media. During that time, we saw a limited number of those lists in our project areas, except the RGV. Taking the lead of organizers and advocates and insight from community members, we began a google Doc form and database to collect resource information in our project areas.

We also updated staff during meetings on potential story leads or issues we were hearing about on the ground.

After about a week of the engagement team sharing out the form via social media and email as well as community members encouraging local leaders and advocates to fill out the resource list form, we were able to compile about 40 vetted hyper-local organizations that we shared publicly and updated regularly.

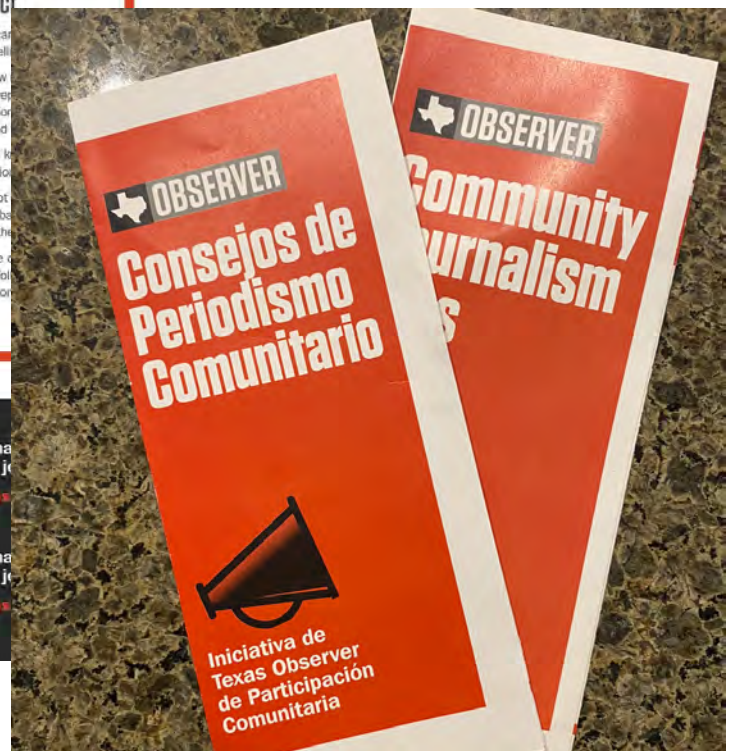
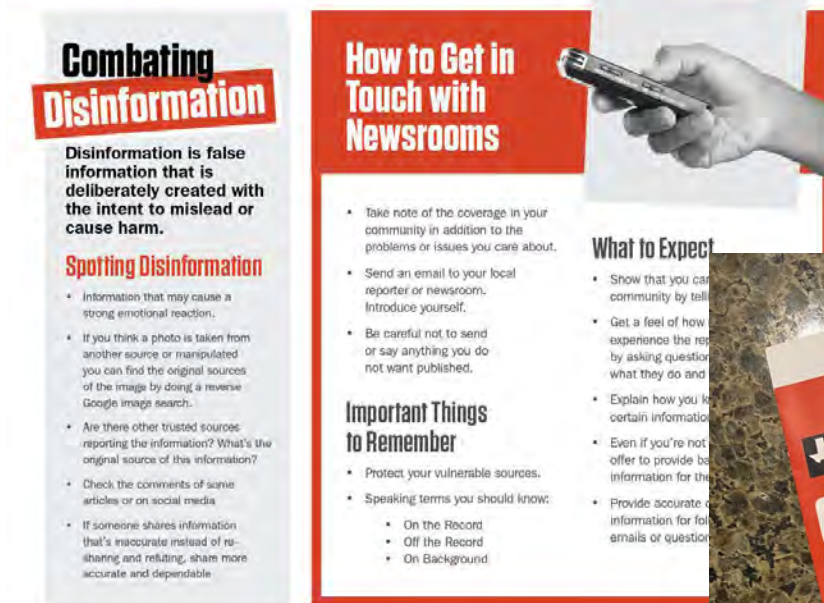
We also included a list of resources for mutual aid and disaster assistance.

[Database can be viewed here.](#)

Media Training Pamphlets and Infographics

During media training and events, we would disseminate a simplified version of our media training curriculum in the form of a printed pamphlet (English and Spanish). We were also

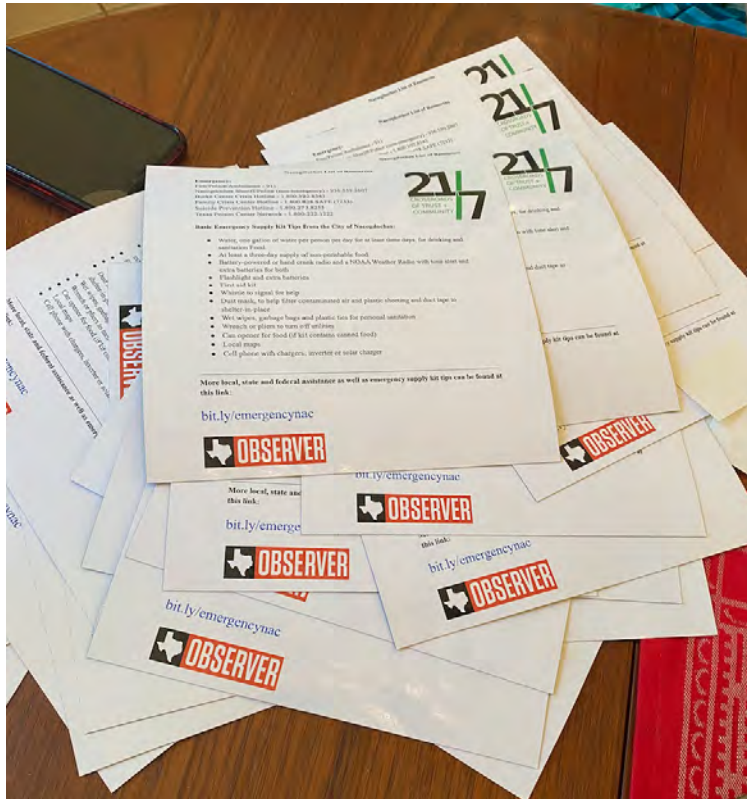
allowed to put these in a few local churches and libraries. We also provided infographics (in English and Spanish) through social media and during virtual events and also made them accessible on the community engagement landing page thanks to the *Texas Observer's* Danielle Lopez.



Emergency Resource Magnets

The engagement team was able to provide refrigerator magnets for the Nacogdoches town hall event, which was held in response to issues across the county during the winter storm in February 2021. This was developed after the 21/7 organization members mentioned that they had

made magnets with county- and city-level information and gave them to residents. They found them useful and convenient. We provided emergency information as well as emergency disaster tips and handed them out at the town hall event as well as during the canvassing and training. We also provided them for some local businesses and public emergency officials to hand out in the area.



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

During all in-person or hybrid events and canvassing, we provided Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like medical-grade surgical masks, gloves, mini hand sanitizers, and lysol wipes. All events were either virtual, hybrid, held outside with masks, or inside well-ventilated areas with masks and safe social distancing encouraged.



Engagement Fellow Zacharia Washington and 21/7 member sit at the Texas Observer table at the Nacogdoches vigil event hosted in the Brown Family Health Clinic parking lot. The event was in remembrance of more than 100 residents lost to COVID-19 in 2021.

Nacogdoches County and City of Nacogdoches

The engagement team has reached out to more than 30 community members in Nacogdoches County.

After hosting several individual and group meetings with more than 30 advocates, local retirees, former educators, social workers, healthcare professionals, preachers, deacons, business owners, and other advocates, we gleaned that the southeastern and southwestern portions of the county are home to many low-income and non-white residents.

After assessing feedback from community members, an issue emerged of = teens and younger adults being overpoliced and not being empowered in the local community. Certain sections of the City of Nacogdoches and the county, the community reported, were overpoliced and lacked adequate housing, healthcare, and other services. Local weather disasters have also greatly impacted the community. There have been complaints about access to emergency help, resources, and language accessibility for county and city information.

Individuals talked about the lack of jobs in the area as well as high poverty rates. Factory jobs, Stephen F. Austin State University, and the local Walmart were pointed to as some of the only options for a decent income without a degree.

In relation to local news providers, the city and county are mostly served by the print and digital newspaper *The Daily Sentinel*—owned by Southern Newspapers Inc.—which now only prints once or twice a week. The ABC/Telemundo-affiliated television station KTRE also serves Nacogdoches and neighboring counties. Complaints about coverage included inaccurate portrayals of communities, especially around local police and arrests. The paper mostly prints local events and advertisements without taking an informative news angle. Many of the Black and Brown community members we spoke to complained about a lack of balance in coverage, which results in a negative portrayal of their communities. These trends were the same for the area's local TV station, KTRE.

During the project, the engagement team worked closely with 21/7, an intergenerational organization of community members heavily involved in grassroots work. Their organization's work is centered in the area nested between Highway 21 and Highway 7—which includes predominantly Black, Brown, and low-income communities in the southeastern and southwestern portions of the county. But in response to COVID-19 and environmental disasters, 21/7 expanded its aid to the City of Nacogdoches and the wider county. Each month, the engagement team attended the organization's monthly meetings. The team also held more than a dozen group meetings with community members inside and outside the organization for event planning and feedback.

Beyond a partnership with the 21/7 organization, local leaders, and the local library, we were able to collaborate with the *Tyler Loop*, an independent media organization based more than an hour away in Tyler, Texas. The *Tyler Loop* has a reporter based in Lufkin who regularly reports from the area for the publication, which is seeking to expand coverage into deep East Texas.

After consideration, the engagement team and community members determined that the best approach would be to host two events to engage community members, followed by media training and canvassing events. We have listed event details on the following pages.

Community Vigil for Those Lost to COVID-19 - 01/19/21



During this event, attendees gathered to honor more than 100 Nacogdoches residents who lost their lives to COVID-19. Local leaders, pastors, and health staff gave words of solace as well as advice on how to continue to stay safe.

For the event, the engagement staff provided PPE (hand sanitizer, gloves, masks), free magazines, memorial flags, candles, and paper/online surveys.

The event was hosted in collaboration with the 21/7 organization

in the Brown Family Health Clinic parking lot. More than 30 residents attended.

Since this was our first event, we tested general surveys to see how respondents interacted and ended up reassessing how we distributed surveys and the order of questions.



Photos by DaLyah Jones

Community Town Hall about Emergency Planning - 05/6/21



Photo by DaLyah Jones

In the aftermath of the winter storm, residents and advocates called for a community conversation with local leaders. In preparation for the event, we worked closely with former TxO environmental reporter Amal Ahmed, who helped with research and curated questions. Ahmed

and Civil Rights Reporter Michael Barajas sat in on several meetings with Nacogdoches residents to listen and better understand the community's needs for the event and potential stories.



The engagement team and local 21/7 members gathered to stamp, sticker and stuff small brown gift bags containing Texas Observer magazines, media tip pamphlets, emergency disaster information, magnets, PPE and keychain flashlights. Photo by Zacharia Washington.

Local volunteers with 21/7 spread word of the event via social media, in local businesses, in the city library, and more.

The engagement team also went door-knocking in targeted areas of the community to distribute flyers. There was

immediate interest from residents, and the engagement team also got feedback about issues with policing and a lack of resources, especially during the winter storm, in the area.

During a hybrid town-hall event that was also streamed on Facebook, the engagement team as well as TxO's Loren Lynch passed out information and surveys. Barajas distributed grab bags and spoke with local residents. The grab bags were made alongside a couple of community volunteers who contributed information on how to get involved or ask for help in the aftermath of the winter storm.

The engagement team provided bags, media training tip pamphlets in both English and Spanish, magnets with emergency resource and preparedness tips (at the request of local community members who deemed them very useful), PPE (hand sanitizer, gloves, masks), keychain flashlights, magazines, and surveys distributed via paper and QR code.

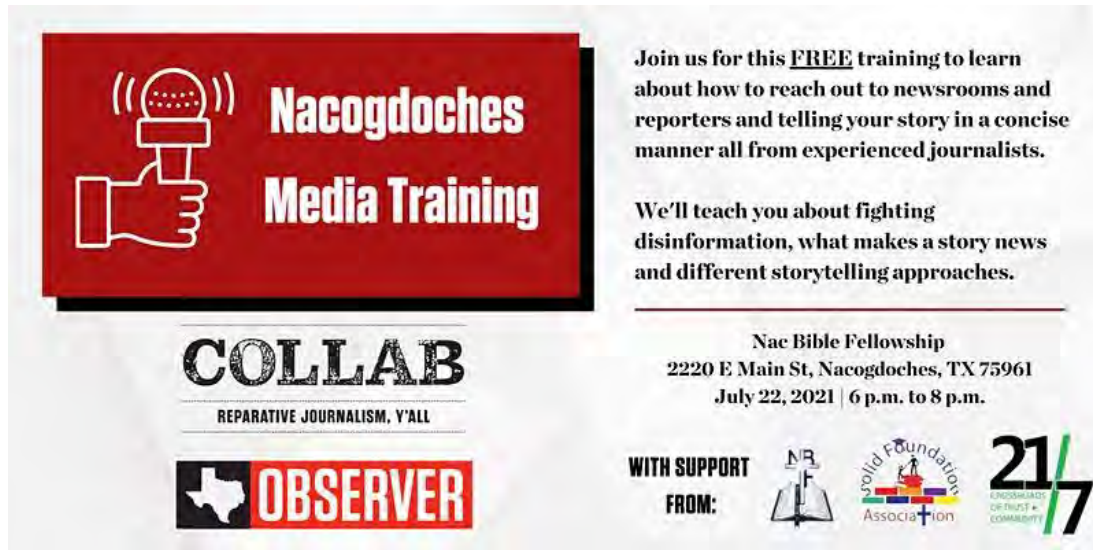
Our collaborators for this event included the 21/7 organization, the Brown Family Health Clinic. Participants included Aloma Marquis of 21/7,

Nacogdoches City Manager Mario Canizares, Pastor Don Mills of Little Zion Baptist Church, Nacogdoches Fire Chief Keith Kiplinger, Reverend Donald Lacy of Zion Hill First Baptist, and Pastor D. Sebastian Tolbert of Stonewall Baptist Church. The event was hosted at Festival Park. Over 30 attendees arrived in person and over 800 streamed the event online. About 30 paper surveys were filled out and submitted.



Photo by DaLyah Jones

Training Event - 07/22/21



The poster is for a media training event. It features a red banner at the top with a white icon of a hand holding a microphone. To the right of the icon, the text "Nacogdoches Media Training" is written in white. Below the banner, the word "COLLAB" is written in a large, bold, black font, with "REPARATIVE JOURNALISM, Y'ALL" in a smaller font below it. To the right of this, the text "Nac Bible Fellowship" is written, followed by "2220 E Main St, Nacogdoches, TX 75961" and "July 22, 2021 | 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.". Below the text, there are logos for "WITH SUPPORT FROM:" (with a small icon of a person), "Solid Foundation Association" (with a small icon of a person), and "21/7" (with a small icon of a person). The "21/7" logo also includes the text "ENGAGE OUR TRUST & COMMUNITY".

Join us for this **FREE** training to learn about how to reach out to newsrooms and reporters and telling your story in a concise manner all from experienced journalists.

We'll teach you about fighting disinformation, what makes a story news and different storytelling approaches.

Nac Bible Fellowship
2220 E Main St, Nacogdoches, TX 75961
July 22, 2021 | 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

WITH SUPPORT FROM:

COLLAB
REPARATIVE JOURNALISM, Y'ALL

OBSERVER

21/7
ENGAGE OUR TRUST & COMMUNITY

The engagement team hosted a media training for the 21/7 organization and local leaders. During the training, the engagement team, the Unleashed events team, and *Tyler Loop* Reporter Autumn Vanbuskirk facilitated a masked, in-person training that went over how to reach out to newsrooms and reporters, how to combat disinformation and misinformation, as well as the foundations of community storytelling.

The event was hosted at the Bible Fellowship Church, and thirteen people attended in person. Paper surveys were also distributed.

Canvassing Event - 07/24/21



Photo by DaLyah Jones

phone-banked for survey responses. The event was hosted at, and in partnership with, the Bible Fellowship Church.

During the canvassing event, the engagement team and Event Unleashed collaborated with the 21/7 organization, local grassroots leaders, and 15 community volunteers who helped collect more than 300 surveys from targeted neighborhoods in the southwestern and eastern portions of the county and city.

Volunteers helped the engagement team create small bags with media tip pamphlets and nonperishable foods, which were given to participants in exchange for filling out surveys.

Shifts of volunteers were hosted throughout the day.

Canvassers also



Photo by Lahoma Dade

Survey Results: Nacogdoches County and the City of Nacogdoches

The engagement team collected feedback from community members across the county and in the City of Nacogdoches to gain a better understanding of where residents find their information, how they consume that information, and how coverage could be improved. After hosting four community events—a vigil, a town hall, a media training and a canvassing—we were able to collect more than 300 survey responses.

Researchers identified 200 of the survey responses as useful and the appropriate amount to make an assessment about community information needs.

Participants in Nacogdoches consisted of majority Black individuals between the ages 35-54 ([Table 1.1](#)¹) who participated in a survey consisting of 23 questions that included open textbox, multiple-choice, and a Likert scale.

We found that about 30 percent of participants trust their news sources and believe individuals that look like them are positively represented in the media, while about 65 percent of participants believe the media incorrectly stereotypes their community.

At the end of the survey, we included an open-ended question asking participants what issues are important to them and what they would like to see their news outlets cover more. Numerous participants said they wanted to see more coverage of issues important to the Black community, more positive portrayals of the Black community, and greater accuracy in coverage of the Black experience. These open-ended responses provide us with extremely rich data that better helps us understand how to amplify the voices of these communities.

If given the time and resources, the engagement team would follow up with a survey targeting more Latinx and Spanish-speaking residents. The team would also work to get more detailed information from respondents who would be open to a follow-up.

Full summary of data provided on the next page.

¹ [County data](#) and [city data](#) provided in Table 1.1 is based on the U.S. Census Bureau estimates.

Summarized Data:

Respondents: 85% Black

Respondent Ages: Majority 35-54

Q5 – Over 54% believe news outlets cover issues that are important to them

Q7 – 56% regularly follow Texas news

Q8 – 65% believe media incorrectly stereotypes their community

Q9 – Less than half of participants believe news sources are provided with information they need

Q10 – A little over half of the participants believe topics in the news are important to them

Q11 – Only 35% trust their news sources

Q12 – 42% agree that news outlets provide them with everyday useful information

Q13 – Cost is an issue for over 30% of participants to access some news stories

Q15 – About 30% of participants believe people that look like them are positively represented

Q16 – Participants reported that the majority of their news reporters are white

Q17 – The majority of participants get their news from television or social media

Raw survey data:

Nac Survey [English](#)

Brownsville and RGV Region

The engagement team reached out to more than 20 community members in Brownsville and the RGV region.

We received feedback from more than 10 community members and advocates in the region in both individual and group capacities. We established regular communication with stakeholders, which primarily included grassroots organizers in the area.

Local organizers identified regional organizations and publications like *Equal Voice Network*, *Trucha*, and *Latino USA*, which offered information about and coverage of local issues. They also voiced concerns about inconsistent and inaccurate coverage of the region and its culture. There was also a complaint about newsrooms using police and ICE press releases in reporting, especially without getting the viewpoint of those who are being affected the most—asylum-seekers, low-income residents, and more.

There were complaints about national coverage and the inability to push back against narratives that misrepresent the communities in the RGV and in Brownsville specifically. Stakeholders voiced concern about the need for more independent and grassroots journalism in the area to combat issues associated with commercial news outlets. The issue of funding those organizations was also emphasized.

The issue of disinformation and misinformation was also brought up by several stakeholders who blamed this partially on language barriers, social media, and a mistrust of local outlets.

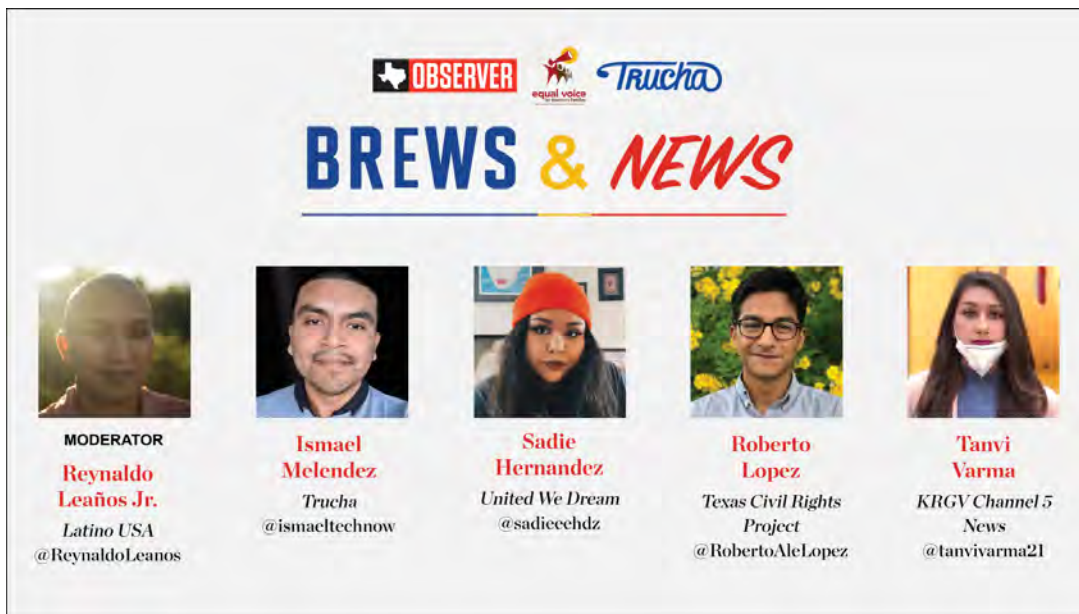
The engagement team partnered with a local independent outlet, *Trucha* (formerly NETA), which provides local information around arts, culture and more. Our team also collaborated with *Voces Unidas* RGV, formerly *Equal Voice Network*, a local advocacy organization that does work in Brownsville and in the RGV region. Additionally, *Voces Unidas* is an umbrella organization that collaborates with other area nonprofits and advocacy groups.

We established relationships with reporters including Reynaldo Leños, Jr. with *Latino USA*, reporter Tanvi Varma with the local TV station, KRGV, Jaime Longoria with *First Draft*, Yvonne Marquez with *Queer Tejas*, Kristin Cabrera with *Texas Standard*, and more who helped with local town hall and training events in the area.

We also worked closely with Austin Language Justice in the RGV and elsewhere, who provided interpretation for Zoom events as well as translated flyers, media-training curricula, and media tip pamphlets.

We confirmed that both a town hall and media training would be the best approach before distributing surveys. Community members felt that first having a critical discussion followed by the training would help people engage more with surveys. We've provided event details on the following page.

Town Hall Event - 04/03/21

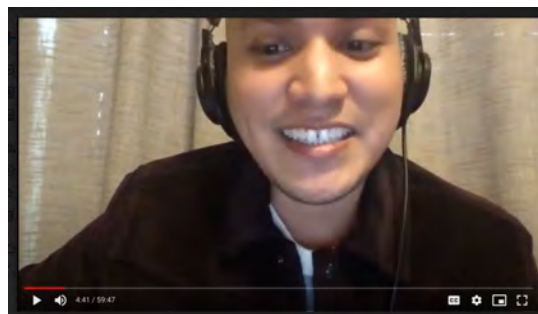


During this event, the engagement team, along with Trucha, Voces Unidas RGV, and TxO staff writer Gus Bova hosted a virtual panel that touched on the topic of critical coverage needs in the RGV and what outlets can do to better serve residents.

We also worked closely with Austin

Language Justice, which provided interpretation for the virtual event and translated flyers and surveys. All participants in this panel helped with research and questions. The event was hosted by Bova and the panel moderator Reynaldo Leanos Jr with Latino USA.

Panel



participants included Tanvi Varma with KRGV, Ismael Melendez with Trucha, Roberto Lopez with Texas Civil Rights Project, and Sadie Hernandez with United We Dream. Special help in the execution of the event was provided by Gisela Zuniga of Trucha and Michelle Serrano of *Voces Unidas* RGV.



Photo 1, left, Reynaldo Leanos Jr. speaking to virtual attendees; photo 2, right, Robert Lopez responds to a prompt. Screenshot images by DaLyah Jones.

Virtual surveys were also sent out via Facebook after the event.

Training Event - 4/24/21

Fighting Information Disorder / Combatiendo el Desorden Informativo

How to spot information disorder:

- Find the source and original
 - ♦ Reverse image search - [RevEye](#)
 - ♦ Video verifier - [InVID](#)
- When, where, why?
- More than just a photo, post or article...
~~Fake News~~

Cómo identificar el desorden informativo:

- Identifica la procedencia y el origen
 - ♦ Búsqueda inversa de imágenes - [RevEye](#)
 - ♦ Verificador de video - [InVID](#)
- Fecha, ubicación, motivación
- Más allá que una foto, un post o un artículo...
~~Noticias Falsas~~

During this event, the engagement team alongside *Trucha* and *Voces Unidas* RGV partnered to host a media training for the wider RGV community. Over 55 people registered for the event. Michelle Serrano of *Voces Unidas* RGV hosted the event. The engagement team alongside Gisela Zuniga of *Trucha*, Jaime Longoria of *First Draft*, and Kristin Cabrera of the *Texas Standard* gave a presentation on reaching out to newsrooms, combating disinformation and misinformation in local communities, and the foundation of storytelling to viewers from the RGV community.

We also did a Q&A with our trainers, as well as Pete Ramirez of *Frontera Free Press* and Yvonne Marquez with *Queer Tejas* after the training was over. Loren Lynch of TxO provided technical support. Austin Language Justice provided translation and interpretation for the event. General surveys were sent out online after the event.

Satellite Canvassing Event - 08/19/21



Staff members with Proyecto Juan Diego coordinate the RGV satellite canvassing in their office parking lot. Photo by Maria Sanchez



Photo by Maria Sanchez

During this event, we worked very closely with *Voces Unidas* RGV and Proyecto Juan Diego to do satellite canvassing. We initially planned to implement a canvassing similar to the one done in Nacogdoches. It was later determined that the engagement team needed to come up with an approach that reduced the chances of spreading the Delta variant of COVID, which led to high rates of hospitalizations and fatalities at the time.

After going back to the drawing board, the engagement team came up with a four-step walk-up canvassing protocol. We then coordinated with staff members of Proyecto

Juan Diego, who disseminated paper and electronic surveys from their offices where the satellite drive-up/walk-up canvassing was conducted.

More than 300 surveys were collected in the span of a day. Gift cards were given in exchange for the surveys.



Photo by Maria Sanchez

Survey Results: Brownsville and the RGV Region

The engagement team partnered with Proyecto Juan Diego for the Brownsville and RGV region canvassing. Initially, when the canvassing was planned the engagement team worked with Events Unleashed to come up with a canvassing strategy similar to the Nacogdoches approach. But it was evident that the rise in the COVID-19 Delta variant across the state would be a risk to both the community and the engagement team. We aimed to target the surrounding *colonias* and provide gift cards with each survey.

We decided to come up with a remote strategy in partnership with Proyecto Juan Diego. Instead of going door-to-door, the engagement team came up with a drive-up canvassing strategy.

After surveys were collected, Huston-Tillotson researchers studied the data to verify responses and gain a better understanding of where residents find their information, how they consume that information, and how they want to see coverage improved. After hosting three community events—a town hall, media training, and a satellite canvassing—we were able to collect more than 300 survey responses.

Our participants within the RGV area consisted of majority Latinx individuals, majority women, and a majority of our participants were younger than 35 ([Table 2.1](#)). Our survey results revealed numerous correlations between demographics, trust, and relevance of the material presented in the media.

Our results indicate that a majority of our participants follow local news and news regarding Texas. Over 80 percent of our participants identify as Latinx and about 77 percent of our participants have a Latinx-identifying news anchor. Over 70 percent of RGV participants find the topics of their news outlets are important and needed. Only 4 percent of participants stated having a distrust for their news outlets.

About 28 percent of participants believe the media incorrectly stereotypes their community while about 61 percent of participants marked neutral. Forty percent of RGV participants believe people that look like them are represented positively, while 36 percent of participants are marked neutral.

Something we found intriguing when analyzing the data was that there is a higher number of participants marking neutral on questions regarding representation. RGV participants offered a range of answers as to what they would like to see the media cover more. Multiple participants stated they would like to see more health-related issues covered, specifically COVID-related. Participants also stated they would like to see more current events in real-time, more information on general resources, immigration, politics, policy, culture, and art.

This leaves an open area for further research, more specifically for our follow-up interviews to better understand these participants' views on their representation in the media.

Summarized data provided on the next page.

Summarized Data:

Respondents: Majority Hispanic women

Respondent Ages: Majority younger than 35 years old

Q5 – About 70% of participants believe news outlets cover issues of importance to their community

Q6 – About 72% of participants regularly follow local news

Q7 – About 90% of participants follow Texas news

Q8 – About 28% of participants believe the media incorrectly stereotypes their community while about 61% stated neutral regarding this question

Q9 – About 70% of participants believes that news sources provides them with info they need

Q10 – About 76% of participants find the topics in the news important to them

Q11 – Over 57% of participants trust their news sources, while about 4% do not

Q12 – All participants find their news source easily accessible

Q14 – About 59% of participants finds that the news provides them with the information they use every day

Q15 – About 40% of the participants believe people that look like them are represented positively in the news, while about 36% stated neutral, and about 22% disagree

Q16 – About 77% of participants stated having a Latinx news reporter

Q17 – About 68% of participants get news from social media, about 60% television

Q19 – Health-Related issues; More information on resources; International news; Migration; COVID-related issues; Political news, Daily news, World news; Health issues, Financial issues; Positive news; The truth; Current events in real-time; Policy; Immigration, health, politics, arts, culture

Q20 – 81% Latino, 9% White

Q21 – 63% Female, 36% Male

Q22 – 69% younger than 35

Raw survey data:

RGV Survey_ [Spanish](#)

RGV Survey_ [English](#)

Native American Communities — Statewide

For this phase of the project, we established that a statewide approach was necessary for Native American communities in Texas due to the lack of accurate information and coverage. Our goal was to coordinate events and surveys rather than limiting this research to one region, city, or reservation, in partnership with former Indigenous Affairs Desk Reporter Pauly Denetclaw, who had been working diligently to repair and establish relationships with tribal members and leaders who have been historically overlooked or misrepresented in the news.

We were also receiving guidance from former Native American Journalists Association (NAJA) Associate Director and Texas Democracy Foundation Board Member Bryan Pollard and NAJA Executive Director Rebecca Landsberry-Baker.*

Alongside and in partnership with the *Texas Observer*'s Indigenous Affairs Desk reporter, we were able to make contact with the following tribal nations and organizations during this project: Alabama Coushatta Tribe of Texas; Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana; Jessica Johnson from Urban Inter-Tribal Center of Texas; Brian Larney from American Indian Heritage Day; and Pastor JB Jackson from Dallas Indian United Methodist Church.

During a series of meetings and conversations, we determined that the best outreach approach would be partnering with communities on existing events like cookouts, health week, heritage day celebrations, church services, and more. We also initiated a plan to do media training in partnership with former Indigenous Affairs Desk Reporter Pauly Denetclaw and the Native American Journalist Association.

While working with the Alabama Coushatta Tribe of Texas, we established rapport with about four tribal leaders on the reservation while elections for new leadership were underway. It was clear that access to tribal members on the reservation would be hindered by COVID-19 restrictions enacted at the time of communication.

We established rapport with two Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana tribal members associated with the American Indian Center of Houston: Nikki McDonald, director of the American Indian Center of Houston, and Jeremy Zahn. Both are leading a local health clinic and initiative in the Harris County region. They mentioned the need for more tribal affairs coverage as well as media training for tribal members across the state and in the Houston area.

We continued to reach out to urban Indian centers across the state and update both former Indigenous Affairs Reporter Pauly Denetclaw and former Editor-in-Chief at the *Texas Observer* Tristan Ahtone along the way to coordinate meetings and projects. We leaned on the guidance of community partners, who were hosting events for the next few months.

We finalized the Native American statewide surveys with our Huston-Tillotson University research team and NAJA's Rebecca Landsberry. Leaders also agreed to reach out to their respected communities to get the surveys completed.

We were not able to complete most of the above events due to COVID-19 and unexpectedly wrapping up the project due to several leadership and staff changes at the *Texas Observer*.

*Editor's Note: After initial publication of this report, the Native American Journalists Association requested the following clarification: "Prior to the release of the report, NAJA pulled its support of this collaborative, this white paper, as well as their support of the Indigenous Affairs Desk at the *Texas Observer*."

During our project, we executed the following events:

American Indian Heritage Day - September 25, 2021



The *Texas Observer* survey table during American Indian Heritage Day in Dallas. Photo by DaLyah Jones.

During this event, the engagement team set up a survey table and collected almost 15 in-person and digital surveys from attendees and vendors in exchange for gift cards. Communities across Texas came together in Dallas to celebrate American Indian Heritage Day. The engagement team thought it would be a great opportunity not only for feedback but also to meet community leaders in person. We worked with the events team to coordinate a space at the event and set up a table.

The engagement team provided bags, information from former Indigenous Affairs Reporter Pauly Denetclaw, media training tip pamphlets in both English and Spanish, PPE (hand sanitizer, gloves, masks), keychain flashlights, magazines, and surveys distributed via paper and QR code.

The event helped us collect feedback and gain a better understanding of organizations we could reach out to as we moved forward with this project.



Attendees listen to a panel during the American Indian Heritage Day in Dallas. Photo by DaLyah Jones.

The following events were planned but not executed, for reasons outlined below:

ICCT 2nd Annual American Indian Community Cookout hosted by the Intertribal Community Council of Texas - August 7, 2021 in Dallas

Cancelled because of a rise in the Delta variant

Back to School Health Fair hosted by the Urban Inter-Tribal Center of Texas - August 14, 2021 in Dallas.

Cancelled due to a rise in the Delta variant

Digital Campaign via Facebook and email hosted in partnership with community collaborators - Sept. virtually

Cancelled after it was clear that transitions in leadership and organization structures would hinder the completion of our surveys and report.

Media Training hosted in partnership with NAJA - Sept. virtually

Cancelled after it was clear that transitions in leadership and organization structures would hinder the completion of our surveys and report.

Survey Results: Native American Communities — Statewide

During the collection of feedback from community members and leaders, it became clear that there was indeed more coverage needed for Native American communities across the state but, in order to do that, more rapport and trust needed to be built with Native American community members.

Although we were not able to canvas for this portion of the project, we were able to collect 18 surveys. The information gleaned by our researchers and engagement team makes evident that focus and resources should be poured into establishing and rectifying relationships with Native American communities of this state. Moreover, that work needs to be led by Native American journalists and organizers centering equity in their work.

Our participants in the American Indian Heritage Day Event in Dallas consisted of majority Indigenous individuals, majority females representing a wide age range and multiple Indigenous tribes from different states ([Table 3.1](#)²). A few trends we found are that a majority of the participants find that the topics within their news outlets are important to them, but ideally would like to see more issues that are specific to the Indigenous community, as well as information regarding Indigenous community events.

Another intriguing trend that we spotted is that the same percentage (61 percent) of participants marked neutral when asked about if they trust their news source as the percentage of participants who disagreed when asked if individuals who look like them are positively represented in the media. A majority of participants marked White/non-Latinx when asked about the race of their news reporters and only 25 percent Indigenous.

Most of the participants receive their news from television and/or social media. More than half of the participants are not enrolled in a federally or state-recognized tribe, agree that their news source is easily accessible, and agree that subscription cost is a barrier to access some news stories.

Participants who identify as Indigenous stated they would like to see more Indigenous issues covered, specifically regarding missing and murdered Indigenous women. Participants stated wanting to see more information on resources and events pertaining to Indigenous communities and more Indigenous coverage in general.

If given the opportunity, the engagement team would have followed up with a survey campaign via social media and email and partnered with Indigenous organizations during community events and canvassing.

Summarized data provided on the next page.

² Data provided in table 3.1 uses the following sources: TX [Estimates](#); Alabama-Coushatta Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land [Estimates](#) U.S Census Bureau; Houston Metro [Estimates](#) U.S. Census Bureau; Dallas - Fort Worth Metro [Estimates](#) U.S. Census Bureau.

Summarized Data:

Q5 – About 38% of respondents disagreed that news outlets covered issues of importance to their community. About 33% agreed and about 27% were neutral.

Q6 – About 55% of respondents agreed that they regularly follow local news. About 22% disagreed and about 22% respondents were neutral.

Q7 – About 61% agreed that they regularly follow Texas news. About 22% disagreed and about 16% were neutral.

Q8 – All participants agreed that the media incorrectly stereotypes their communities.

Q9 – About 44% of respondents were neutral as to whether their news sources provided them with the information they needed. About 27% agreed and about 22% disagreed.

Q10 – About 61% agreed that the topics in the news are important to them. About 33% checked neutral and about 5% disagreed.

Q11 – About 61% of respondents were neutral about trusting their news source. About 22% disagreed and about 16% agreed.

Q12 – About 55% of respondents agreed that their news source is easily accessible and about 44% were neutral.

Q13 – About 53% agreed that subscription cost was a barrier for access to some news stories. About 23% of respondents disagreed and about 23% were neutral.

Q14 – About 50% of respondents agreed that the news provided them with information that they could use every day. About 27% disagreed and about 22% were neutral.

Q15 – About 61% of respondents disagreed that people that looked like them were positively represented in the news. 33% were neutral and 5% agreed.

Q16 – 68% of respondents answered that reporters from their primary news source were White/non-Latino. About 25% were Indigenous and about 18% were Black/non-Latino.

Q17 – 56% of respondents said they were not enrolled in a state- and/or federally recognized tribe. 44% said yes.

Q18 – Tribes

- Inca – Quechua x 2
- Tigua
- Sac & Fox
- Seminole Nation of OK

- Choctaw x 2
- Ponca x 2
- Muscogee
- Lipan Apache Tribe of Texas x 2
- Pueblo

Q19 – About 62% of respondents said they were descended from a state- and/or federally recognized tribe. About 37% said no.

Q20 – When asked which tribe, most respondents skipped the question.

Q21 – About 66% of respondents said their primary news source was television. 61% said social media, 44% said radio and about 28% said newspaper.

Q23 - When respondents were asked about which issues they would like to see covered by the news, answers included more Indigenous issues and Native American community events/news; Local issues; Information on resources; Indigenous missing + murdered women; More Indigenous coverage; Health/medicine; Indigenous issues; Native community events + news.

Q24 – 89% of respondents identified as Indigenous when asked about their racial background. About 22% said White/non-Latino and about 5% Latino.

Q25 – About 61% of respondents were female and about 39% were male.

Q26 – About 33% of respondents were 65 and over. About 27% were 25-34 and about 27% were 45-54.

Majority of individuals would be interested in a follow-up interview

Raw survey data:

Indigenous Survey_[English](#)

Bastrop County — Bastrop, Elgin, Smithville

The engagement team reached out to more than 20 community members in Bastrop County. After hosting group and individual meetings and attending monthly community meetings, we established regular communication and collaboration with nine confirmed stakeholders including local advocates, nonprofit emergency management staff, church leaders, librarians and more.

During this portion, we received feedback about information needs in the area and under-covered issues. Local stakeholders emphasized a need for more consistent and accurate coverage of the community beyond the Bastrop Advertiser, which only covers news related to major events, crime, or elections in the area.

Local leaders also cited outlets that serve Austin's urban core, KXAN, KUT, the *Austin American-Statesman*, and KEYE as covering news in the rural area sporadically and mostly when it's convenient for reporters around holidays, major events, or violent crimes.

Stakeholders mentioned the need for more localized outlets that not only cover issues in the area but also positive stories related to local community work and collaboration. They also felt that local coverage poorly reflected the real needs and realities of the region—alluding to coverage of lower-income Black, Brown, and undocumented communities. Stakeholders also expressed a need for more coverage of local suicides and substance abuse, which is increasing in the young adult population. There is a need for news that is interpreted and translated for the community. The Spanish-speaking population needs improved access to news and information.

Stakeholders were interested in not only the media training provided to residents but also seeing survey results to understand how to best target local resource needs in ignored communities in the county. We reached out to the local Bastrop Advertiser but did not receive a response.

Much of this work was made possible with the help of Krystal Grimes of Bastrop County Cares, Priscilla Ruiz of Ascension Church of Bastrop, members with the historically Black Kerr Community Center, Bastrop Library's Bethany Dietrich, community social worker Hannah Ruiz, and many more. Their guidance along with other community members helped us determine that a media training was the best first step since young teens and adults were particularly interested in telling their community's story.

Adult leaders we spoke with were specifically interested in holding the event to better understand how to reach out to newsrooms with issues happening in their community. Resident feedback also confirmed that a survey event would be better after the training.

Media Training - 03/11/21

For this event, we partnered with a local nonprofit organization Bastrop County Cares, which is leading an initiative called Resilient Bastrop, an effort to distribute resources and promote community healing. This effort is being led by local advocate, Krystal Grimes, who has generational ties to the area. We also partnered with youth counselor, Priscilla Ruiz, who works with mostly Hispanic teens and young adults at Ascension Church in Bastrop.

We further partnered with Ko Bragg, an editor and investigative movement journalist, who helped lead our first media training in the community. The events team and Bragg went over reaching out to newsrooms, combating disinformation and misinformation in local communities, and the foundation of storytelling to viewers from the Bastrop County community. TxO staff writers Amal Ahmed and Michael Barajas also participated in a Q&A session after the training. Austin Language Justice provided interpretation and translation during the event and for



DaLyah Jones, Zacharia Washington and Ko Bragg give a presentation on combating disinformation during the Bastrop media training. Screenshots by DaLyah Jones.



Jones, Washington, Bragg, Loren Lynch, and Susan Pimiento and Azucena Garza with Austin Language Justice wrap up the Bastrop media training.

flyers. TxO's Loren Lynch provided technical support.

During this event, between 20 to 30 residents attended the training. After the event, we followed up with stakeholders—Grimes and Ruiz—who gave us feedback about the event.

The local librarian, Bethany Dietrich worked closely with the engagement team. We gave them media tip brochures in both English and Spanish as well as survey flyers, which were showcased in the library.

Survey Table - 11/19/21



DaLyah Jones and Zacharia Washington sit at a survey table at the Kerr Community Center in Bastrop to collect surveys. Photo by Pauly Denetclaw.

The events team hosted a survey table at the historically Black Kerr Community Center in Bastrop.

During the event, we tabled outside with former Indigenous Affairs reporter Pauly Denetclaw while residents came to another adjacent event inside the building. We were able to collect 13 paper surveys in exchange for gift cards.



Former Indigenous Affairs Reporter Pauly Denetclaw sits behind a survey table at the Kerr Community Center in Bastrop to collect surveys. Photo by DaLyah Jones.

The following events were planned but not executed, for reasons outlined below:

Canvassing Event hosted in partnership with Bastrop Public Library - 08/06/21

We initially planned to work with community volunteers and the Bastrop County Library but had to cancel the event two days before due to a rise in Delta variant cases around the state.

Bastrop Rodeo Survey - 8/07/21

We initially planned to follow up the canvassing date with a table at the annual Bastrop Rodeo event but had to cancel three days before due to a rise in Delta variant cases around the state.

Canvassing Event - Sept.

This second attempted canvas was coordinated with the Kerr Community Center and Bastrop community leader Dock Johnson. We also partnered with the Austin Area Urban League to bus volunteers to partner with community members for canvassing. We cancelled a week before due to unexpected internal organizational shifts.

Survey Results: Bastrop County - Bastrop, Elgin, Smithville

The engagement team collected feedback from community members across the county and in the city of Bastrop to gain a better understanding of where residents find their information, how they consume that information, and how coverage could be improved.

After hosting two community events—a media training and a survey table at the Kerr Center—we were able to collect about 20 survey responses. We would have liked to collect more information through events, but had to cancel several due to uncontrollable variables outside of this project.

Our participants within the Bastrop area consisted of a majority of individuals who identify as Black, majority female, and over half of the participants were 65 or older ([Table 4.1](#)³). Bastrop’s survey data differed from data collected in other regions.

The majority of the Bastrop participants follow both local and Texas news and over half agree that their news sources provide them with the information they need, while over 90 percent agree that topics covered in the news are important to them.

An interesting find that makes this data set unique is that over 70 percent of the participants trust their news source, but about 75 percent of Bastrop participants agree that the media incorrectly stereotypes individuals that look like them. A potential data point that could explain the high level of trust is that about 68 percent of participants reported having a Black news reporter. Research shows that individuals are more trusting of others who look like them.

Participants in the Bastrop area said they would like to see more coverage of local issues. Multiple participants also said they would like to see more coverage of the experiences of people of color, along with positive portrayals of people of color.

If given the opportunity, the engagement team would move forward with a planned canvas of Black and Brown sections of Smithville, Bastrop, and Elgin.

Summarized data provided on the next page.

³ [County data](#) and [City data](#) in table 4.1 based on the U.S. Census Bureau estimates.

Summarized Data:

Q5 – About 47% of participants agreed that news outlets cover issues of importance to their community

Q6 – About 82% of participants stated they regularly follow local news

Q7 – About 95% of participants reported regularly following Texas news

Q8 – About 75% of participants agreed that the media incorrectly stereotypes their community

Q9 – About 54% agreed that their news source provides them with information they need; 23% neutral; 17% disagreed

Q10 – About 94% agreed that topics in the news are important to them

Q11 – About 70% of participants stated they trust their news source

Q12 – About 88% agreed their news source is easily accessible

Q13 – About 53% of participants agreed that subscription cost is a barrier to access some news stories

Q14 – About 94% of participants agreed that the news provides them with information that they use everyday

Q15 – About 29% of participants stated that people who look like them are positively represented in the news; about 23% disagreed; 47% checked neutral

Q16 – About 68% of participants stated having a Black news reporter; 50% White; 25% Latino

Q17 – About 82% stated television is one of their primary news source; 52% social media; 23% newspaper

Q19 - Broad local Bastrop news; Sports; Weather; More positive; Information on local events; Black & Latino issues; Economic disasters; Topics about POC; Positive things regarding POC; Local COVID impact; Local corruption; Local issues; Local news stories

Q20 – About 82% of participants are Black; 17% white

Q21 – About 62% female; about 37% male

Q22 – About 58% of participants were 65 or older; about 17% 55-64

Raw survey data:

Bastrop Survey_ [English](#)

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