New Ledes: The Media & Criminal Justice Reform
November 19, 2015 and November 20, 2015
Harvard Law School

Thursday, November 19, 2015

Panel 1 – Defining the “Moment”: Covering Criminal Justice in the Current Media Environment (3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.)

The media environment for criminal justice issues has transformed – systemic problems have received sustained attention, and the tone of coverage is hospitable to reform. Why has that shift taken place? Does this reflect changing attitudes or tastes among the media’s consumers? Institutional transformations in media organizations? A shift away from media “organizations” to citizen journalism? Better advocacy by reformers and activists? An emerging “consensus” in favor of reform among elites in the media and policy world?

Panelists
1. James E. Johnson (Debevoise & Plimpton/Board of Directors, Brennan Center for Justice)
2. Bill Keller (The Marshall Project)
3. Heather Mac Donald (The Manhattan Institute)
5. Nick Turner (The Vera Institute)

Friday, November 20, 2015

Breakfast – 8:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.

Panel 2 – Blind Spots: Institutional Barriers to Effective Coverage of Criminal Justice (9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.)

Reform of the criminal justice system has gained considerable momentum – supported, in part, by increased attention in the media to systemic problems. But important gaps remain between the realities of the criminal justice system and the picture presented in the most influential media outlets. What are the most significant blind spots or biases in the media’s treatment of the criminal justice system? What institutional factors account for those shortcomings? Are there intangible cultural factors within media outlets that contribute to those blind spots? Where can new media fill the gaps?
Panelists
1. Julie K. Brown (The Miami Herald)
2. Lincoln Caplan (Yale Law School)
3. Rev. Vivian Nixon (College and Community Fellowship)
4. Simone Weichselbaum (The Marshall Project)

Panel 3 – Innovation, New Media, and Criminal Justice Reform (11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.)

New media and social media have catapulted criminal justice issues into the center of the national conversation. How has social media allowed activists to reframe media priorities or story lines? To what extent has “citizen journalism” – as exemplified by video of police-civilian encounters – reoriented institutional journalism around criminal justice? How have media organizations leveraged the reach and structure of new media tools to amplify the effect of traditional “old media” tools in approaching criminal justice?

Panelists
1. Morgan Hargrave (Witness)
2. DeRay McKesson (We the Protestors)
3. Carl Williams (ACLU of Massachusetts)
4. Ethan Zuckerman (MIT/The Berkman Center)

Lunch – 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Panel 4 – Making News: When Journalists Drive Change in Criminal Justice Policy (2:15 p.m. to 3:45 p.m.)

How does journalism drive sweeping change in criminal justice policy? In this panel, we explore how journalism can catalyze fundamental shifts in criminal justice policy and the limits to even the most high-impact journalism in bringing about change.

Panelists
1. Ken Armstrong (The Marshall Project)
2. Charles Hoffman (Office of the Appellate Defender for the State of Illinois)
3. Jennifer Gonnerman (The New Yorker)
4. Scott Levy (Bronx Defenders)