

MEDIA TRAINING 101: GENERAL TIPS & PREPARATION

[AUGUST 2021]

A. DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Start by reviewing what's out there. Based on coverage we're seeing nationally and locally, we would expect you to get questions like:

- * What is CRT?
- * What are the relevant bills or laws in your state? (Make sure you know what the laws or bills say, do not assume what's there.)
- * Is "CRT" dividing us?
- * Is "CRT" taught in K-12 schools?

If your interview is for a local as opposed to a national audience, it would be good for you to see whether stories, or op-eds, or letters to the editor on the CRT crackdown have already appeared in your area. This homework helps you prepare for how people are already talking about it.

- * You might already have a sense of this from Facebook, Twitter, local listservs, or other places.

B. UNDERSTAND THAT JOURNALISTS ARE HUMAN

Like many of us, they may be underinformed, misinformed, or just confused, especially if this is not their "beat":

- * Keep in mind that most reporters are not out to "get" you. Many are not knowledgeable about the topics they get assigned to cover. And with media budget cuts, they often don't have much time to research—this is an opportunity!
- * Be mindful that reporters may be coming

to this as a "two sides" story. We want to emphasize that, in fact, most people agree that we should speak clearly about US history; that's a widely shared value.

C. CONSIDER THE FORMAT OF YOUR INTERVIEW AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SOUNDBITES

1. For short news segments: If you are doing a typical news segment for tv or radio that is 2 minutes or so, remember that less is more.

- * You must keep your answers brief and to the point.
- * If you give concise, clear answers, they will be far more likely to appear in the segment.
- * If you ramble, you don't know what an editor will extract from your interview.

2. Soundbites: For both short news segments and longer media formats, understand the power of soundbites: A soundbite is what editors look for: a catchy phrase that distills ideas down to a keyword or sentence.

A soundbite can be a sentence:

- * *Teaching about the contradictions in our history sharpens young minds to enhance critical thinking.*
- * *Teaching about systemic racism and sexism provides a bridge to unite us.*
- * *We can't fight for racial justice if we can't see,*

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Speak, and learn about racial injustice.

- * *“The truth is, we solve problems only when we are honest about the causes of those problems.” (Heather McGhee’s USA Today column)*
- * *It’s one thing to impose state curricular standards. It’s another to ban entire areas of inquiry.*
- * *This well-funded and coordinated disinformation campaign is brought to you by conservative think tanks that have for decades sought to undermine public education.*
- * *Many of the same states that recently passed drastic voter suppression laws are now threatening teachers with firing and fines if they talk about race and structural racism.*
- * *We cannot allow politicians to dumb down public education to satisfy their narrow definition of “patriotic education.”*
- * *A public education that seeks to serve only some of its students is deeply unfair and un-American.*

Or a phrase:

- * *age-appropriate conversations about systemic racism*
- * *robust multiracial democracy*
- * *manufactured moral panic*
- * *don’t dumb down public education*

Don’t think you need to make up your own; repetition and echoing of messages is good. Check out AAPF’s Messaging Guide.

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