

This case was prepared by University of Georgia journalism student Brenna Beech for JOUR 5170, Advanced Studies in Journalism, based on sources cited below.

Wiley Price: Relationships with the Police

Wiley Price is an African American photojournalist working for the historical African American *St. Louis American* newspaper in St. Louis, Missouri. Price has covered the killing of 18-year-old Michael Brown by a St. Louis police officer from immediately post-shooting to the present time. Because he knows the community so well, he has many opinions about how the Brown case has been covered by the mainstream media.

When the other photographers ran to the people obviously trying to get on the news, Price turned the other way. When media groups focused on the burning of the gas station or other areas of heated confrontation, Price knew that was only a fraction of the story and he moved on to cover other aspects. And when other photographers were getting arrested and questioned, Price was greeted by officers and allowed access. "As a local journalist, Price felt less pressure from police and wasn't questioned as often as others," reads the McGill Symposium write-up from when Price spoke to the University of Georgia's Grady College McGill Fellows.

- In an issue as big as the Michael Brown case, how important do you think it is to get to really know the community before covering it?
- Do you think the mainstream media did a good job covering the case?
- Would you trust local media over mainstream media or vice versa?

- Do you think Price should have focused more on the heated violence rather than avoiding it? Or do you think he made the right call?

Price adds in his lecture that it is beneficial for him to really make relationships with the police and fire officials in his area. He said, "You're no longer a threat when they know your first name." And all throughout his career, (not only in the Michael Brown case) in the instances when Price was removed from a scene or arrested by an officer he did not know, he followed orders until an officer who knew him called it off and brought him back.

- Could having relationships with police and fire officials get in the way of impartial storytelling?
- Do you think Price's trustworthiness as an unbiased reporter has been tainted by his close relationship with the police department? Or do you think it's entirely ok?
- How close is too close in regards to relationships between the media and the government/police/officials?

While other reporters were constantly getting arrested for their doings, Price never did. At the McGill Symposium, McGill Fellow Erin Smith asked Price about his "willingness to be arrested for a photograph." He said that he was honest with the *St. Louis American* upfront, telling them that he would never get arrested for a picture.

That being said, if he is shooting an assignment and an officer asks him to stand someplace else, he'll oblige, move, but still shoot the photo.

- Should a journalist be willing to sacrifice their freedom for the sake of a storytelling image?
- If an officer oversteps his/her authority by telling you to do something that you don't have to do, what would you do?
- Do you think that Price's approach in obliging and following orders is a positive rule that others should follow as well?
- Would it be courageous or outrageous for Price to refuse to move in this situation?
- Is it courageous of him to be polite and oblige?

http://grady.uga.edu/mcgill/symposium/reports/McGill_Report14.pdf