

# McGill

Symposium for Journalistic Courage



**March 18 & 22, 2021**



**Grady College of Journalism  
and Mass Communication**  
**UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA**

*The McGill program is funded by the McGill Lecture Endowment*

# EXCERPTS FROM GROUP DISCUSSIONS:

Covering a historic election year in Georgia  
*Stephen Fowler, Georgia Public Broadcasting, political reporter*

Covering racial tensions  
*Alyssa Pointer, Atlanta Journal Constitution, photojournalist*

Speaking truth to power  
*Lisa Krieger, San Jose Mercury News, science writer*

The effects of a pandemic on the mental health of journalists  
*Rana Ayyub, Washington Post, global opinions writer*

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## WELCOME

On behalf of my colleagues in the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, welcome to the McGill Symposium.

The McGill Symposium, now in its 14th year, is an outgrowth of the McGill lecture.

For nearly 40 years, the McGill lecture has brought significant figures in journalism to the University of Georgia to help us honor Ralph McGill's courage as an editor.

Roundtable discussions in 2006 with industry professionals and faculty led us to develop the McGill Symposium as the next step in honoring McGill and exploring journalistic courage. The McGill Symposium brings together students, faculty and leading journalists to consider what journalistic courage means and how it is exemplified by reporters and editors.



Over two days, 12 McGill Fellows – undergraduate and graduate students selected by a faculty committee for their strengths in academic achievement, practical experience and leadership – join four McGill visiting journalists for a discussion and a presentation of the 2020 McGill medal for journalistic courage.

Today will be a success if the journalists, faculty and students engage each other rigorously to try to answer the question “What does courage look like in journalism?”



# Covering a historic election year in Georgia

**Stephen Fowler**

**Georgia Public Broadcasting political reporter**

Moderated by Dodie Cantrell, senior journalism lecturer

Nothing about 2020 was normal or typical for Georgia Public Broadcasting staffer Stephen Fowler. As a political beat reporter in the middle of a pandemic, Fowler found himself working from his bedroom, attending livestream events and covering a consequential presidential race in his home state.

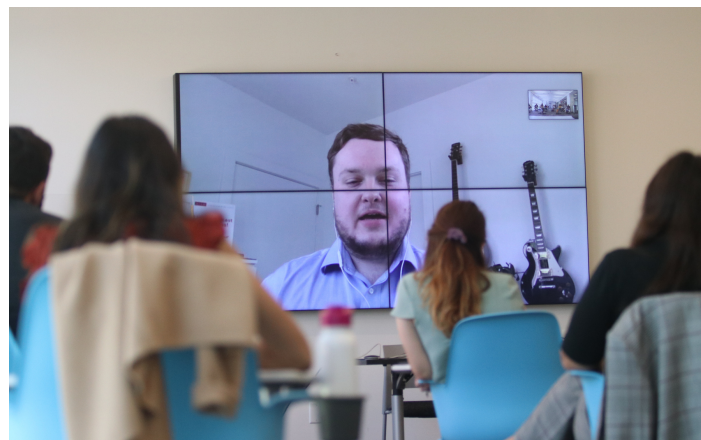
In the final week of the campaign alone, Fowler saw Donald Trump, Joe Biden and Barack Obama at different events that ranged from 20 people spaced apart on a lawn in Warm Springs to 35,000 people crammed together with no distance or masks at an airport hangar in Rome. In the weeks between Election Day in November and the Senate runoff in January, Fowler battled misinformation and disinformation about election fraud and ballot recounts in Fulton County. He also appeared on national news shows to share the latest updates and explain critical in-the-moment details.

“The only saving grace was that I had grown up in Georgia and know the people, places and things here,” he said. “I made the decision a few years ago to go really deep into a topic that ended up serving as a central role with what happened in the 2020 presidential election.”

McGill Fellow Evan Lasseter asked how Fowler reported on the misinformation and disinformation around the election and the most effective ways to incorporate fact-checking into political reporting.

Fowler said that it can be difficult to explain misinformation in a story when readers don’t have a base level of knowledge around the situation itself. Political stories — particularly ones focused on campaigns and elections processes — can become nuanced and complex, which may lose readers.

In Fulton County, for instance, officials with authority claimed that “suitcases of ballots” were pulled from under a table and added to a stack of ballots to be counted. To explain the misinformation, Fowler had to discuss the vote counting process, detail the video evidence of the ballot bins being stored hours earlier, and show that the number of ballots from the beginning of the recount process matched the final tally at the end of that night.



***“It takes time, work, nuance and confidence in what you’re saying,” he said. “The most effective way is to not only explain why something is wrong but help people to understand what’s right.”***

Fellow Lauren Swenson asked how Fowler eliminated jargon and created stories that were digestible without losing the integrity of the nuanced information. Political reporters should lean on their own curiosity of trying to learn how things work and then help the audience to understand, Fowler said.

When he first began reporting at the Georgia Capitol several years ago, for instance, he asked questions and wrote stories about the voting system, voting rights and election laws, which carried the readers along with him in the learning process. He likes to approach a story with a “blank slate” as if he were the reader and then “peel back the curtain” to explain the process and what it means.

Fowler also said the best advice given to him was to tell a story as if explaining it to a friend or relative who isn’t laser-focused and may be scrolling through a piece online. To ensure that someone will understand the main point of the story, he removes the political lingo and jargon and walks readers step-by-step through what’s happening and what could happen next.

Fellow Henry Queen asked if Fowler had ever been thanked by a reader for explaining a concept and uncovering misinformation heard elsewhere. Fowler said that although he tries to avoid contentious reader emails and social media comments as much as possible, he keeps in touch with some readers on Twitter and has shown them over time how there was no evidence of election fraud in Georgia. He also continues to answer their questions about other topics today. Fowler said that it helps to tell local stories with local sources that people know, such as a voluntary ballot audit in Bartow County where the poll workers were local volunteers.

"It's a good reminder that it's sometimes easier to put these stories in terms that people can understand and relate to," Fowler said. "When you're talking about people counting votes late at night, if you show someone's neighbor there, readers may have a different perspective rather than imagining a random, anonymous person counting the votes."

As a political reporter, though, Fowler still faces a fair amount of criticism on both sides of the aisle. Fellow Lexie Little asked if he had felt the effects of political parties claiming "fake news" and particular politicians attacking the media during the election. Fowler said he was banned from the Georgia Republican Party election party on Jan. 5, but he was able to watch it online, so it didn't affect his coverage. He has also received particular threats, such as people sending screenshots of his parents' home address or yelling at him at political rallies, but he doesn't let it deter him.

"The best thing you have is your work — if you do it well and people know you do it well, some will want to attack you, but chances are, they will still talk to you," he said.

***"The bottom line is to do good work and do work that helps people, and you won't have to worry too much for too long about anyone who wants to be negative."***

Fellow Caroline Odom asked about Fowler's relationship with his audience since he often writes digital stories and posts on social media. Fowler said that journalists have to acknowledge that anything they post online will likely be interpreted as part of what they do and who they are. In that case, he knows some reporters who opt to have private social media accounts and some who don't use social media at all. Fowler chooses to post on Twitter because of the political beat and his personality, but he also doesn't post about his personal life or family. Instead, he comments on the latest news updates and enjoys using GIFs to make people laugh.

"One thing people like about my reporting is I am a real person," he said. "Everyone is human, and as journalists, we are humans who have more to say than churning out copy."



Fellow Augusta Stone asked about reporting from home during 2020 and how Fowler was able to capture the pulse of the election and other political stories. Since everyone was affected by the pandemic, Fowler said, political parties and court hearings moved their meetings online, so reporters were able to attend and take notes for their stories. Local governments also held more livestream briefings, and Fowler was able to connect with numerous sources through social media since everyone was working from home and spending more time online.

"People were more forgiving because everybody was working in their bedrooms," he said. "Everyone was going through the same thing, and they were more accommodating with giving out their cell phone numbers or Zoom accounts."

Fellow Mack Brown asked if Fowler was still able to do his best work while reporting from home or whether he wished he could do anything differently. Fowler said the toughest aspect was covering statewide elections from a single location rather than visiting Georgia's 159 counties and talking to people face-to-face. He also missed capturing natural sound for some of the radio stories and working with colleagues in the newsroom to collaborate and discuss ideas. In addition, Fowler said he found it more difficult to create work-life boundaries and take breaks from the news.

"Everyone will say they did the best they could during the past year," he said. "Nothing like this could have ever been on anyone's horizon, and we saw a lot more empathy with reporting and a human-centered focus on stories."

Fellow Olivia Mead asked how Fowler has redefined "good reporting" since the beginning of his career and what his vision for his own storytelling is in the future. Fowler encouraged the Fellows to read others' stories and gain experience whenever possible. When Fowler began writing on the political beat and covered his first legislative session, for instance, he didn't know the major players or all of the details about the legislative committees. Along the way, however, he gained experience, worked with veteran reporters and read their stories to explore the angles, sources and context that they used. Fowler developed his own style from there and continues to evolve, with an aim to produce more nuanced and complex pieces.

"Soaking it up from other people has made me a better journalist," he said. "If you read and emulate good journalism, eventually you will do stories that people will say they wish they could do."

Augusta Stone asks about reporting from home.

Alex English takes notes.





# Covering racial tensions

**Alyssa Pointer**

**Atlanta Journal Constitution photojournalist**

Moderated by Mark Johnson, senior journalism lecturer

Throughout 2020, Alyssa Pointer captured images from some of the most intense, emotional moments in Georgia as a staff photographer for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. She covered Black Lives Matter protests following the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery. She was there the day after Rayshard Brooks was shot in a Wendy's parking lot in Atlanta. She traveled to Brunswick to cover courthouse protests and the arraignment for Arbery's death. She was the sole pool photographer to attend the funeral of Secoria Turner, an 8-year-old girl who was shot near the Wendy's where Brooks was killed.

Pointer had covered previous Black Lives Matter protests after Trayvon Martin and Tamir Rice were killed in 2012 and 2014, but she didn't anticipate how the summer 2020 demonstrations would erupt into unrest. On the first day, the group marched peacefully from Centennial Olympic Park to the Georgia State Capitol.

Pointer talked to people along the way about how they were feeling and asked about the meanings behind their signs. As the energy began to build among the crowd, however, she realized the depth and breadth of what was happening as they returned to the CNN Center. She and fellow AJC photographers moved around the scene, with Pointer often taking a step back to capture the emotion and tension among protestors, law enforcement and emergency personnel.

"I turned my camera on the demonstrators and on the police officers," she said. "I wanted to capture this feeling and let people be in the place that I was in to see what was happening."

Her images were powerful yet emotional: People throwing jugs of milk and tools as police guarded the CNN Center. People trying to flip a police car. Officers in riot gear guarding a firefighter trying to douse an enflamed police car. A man kneeling and pleading with a line of officers. A woman throwing rocks at the Omni Hotel windows. An officer aiming a tear gas gun toward the crowd. Empowered and vocal women calling for change.

"At the end of the day, these are all human beings," Pointer said. "It was an interesting dynamic to be part of, and I wanted to show the tension."



Professor Mark Johnson asked Pointer how she balanced her own safety with the need to share the story with the audience. Pointer said she often follows her journalistic instinct to act and document, but she always remains distinctly aware of her surroundings. Pointer suggested keeping an arm's length perimeter at all times, being vocal when others are too close, and noticing when discomfort arises.

When she felt uncomfortable with the churning unrest at the CNN Center, for instance, she looked for a new angle and decided to move to the top of a parking garage. While above the crowd, she was able to shoot stark, clear images of a burning police car with smoke rising into the skyline. Pointer also recommended befriending broadcast news crews, which often have video cameras that require more space and are given more deference at protest events, and making connections with security guards or other personnel who will let you stop and take a break in a safe area.

***"I'm an advocate for being comfortable and being safe, but the No. 1 priority is that this is a historic moment, and you need to let people know what happened," she said. "That's why I turned my camera on everyone."***

Johnson noted a distinct difference in the images that Pointer shot and the ones made by her coworkers. Pointer said the other photographers were seeking action shots on the protest frontlines, where people often look angrier, and she wanted to step back and be aware of what was happening everywhere. She decided to focus on the emotions being exchanged between people that day. As part of that, McGill Fellow Lora Yordanova asked whether to make editorial decisions in the moment, such as choosing not to make images of a particular scene.

"I photograph everything in front of me as it's happening," Pointer said. "You're essentially a historian, and you don't want to choose not to take an image because of your emotions."

Fellow Olivia Mead asked whether having a similar background, experience or deep personal connection can build the innate empathy to tell the story at hand or whether it's difficult due to the emotions involved. Without hesitation, Pointer said it "helps 1000%" to connect to those in the frame.

"It was helpful that I am a woman of color and have shared experiences, so I was able to understand things in-depth that were happening," she said. "But you also have to manage your emotions on a case-by-case basis."

Fellow Augusta Stone asked how Pointer cares for herself after emotional stories, such as the protests or Turner's funeral. Pointer said she tries to decompress for at least 30 minutes each day by watching a favorite comedic show, journaling, gardening and speaking with her therapist. She advocated for journalists to consider seeking therapy and carve out time for themselves.

Fellow Savannah Sicurella asked how to handle charged moments when those at the scene may not want a photographer there. Pointer acknowledged that it was difficult but that it's the job of a photojournalist to document what's happening. As a reporter in Chicago, she sometimes appeared quickly on the scene of a shooting, when raw emotions were heightened. If law enforcement or other officials told her to leave, she'd often move to the other side of the street or find another vantage point to document the moment.

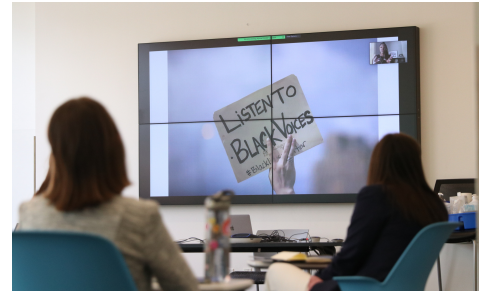
"You never come back without a photograph," Pointer said. "Document what you can and respect the people who are there, but don't come back without anything because you're there to report."

Yordanova also asked how to approach people in these emotional situations, particularly in breaking news moments when meeting someone for the first time. Pointer said to be honest, introduce yourself and explain the story. She suggested offering condolences, thanking sources for sharing their story and then expressing interest in documenting the story — either in that moment or for a follow-up story at a later date.

Pointer encouraged the Fellows to always record contact information and reach out to sources later, particularly for portraits, and look for moments of connection.

***"They are human, and you are human," she said. "Think about what you would want someone to say to you in that moment. Put yourself in their shoes and be genuine."***

Fellow Henry Queen asked whether Pointer felt that her images expressed the message and emotion that she wanted to document or whether she felt there was still more to say.



Pointer said she likes to dig deeper into the context of a situation when making images. In breaking news situations, such as protests, she looks for all sides of the story and tries to make the best use of the light and color at the scene. In planned news and feature pieces, she researches the background and nuance ahead of time to shed more light on the overall culture, significance and meaning of the story.

When reflecting on the past year and looking ahead, Pointer would like to focus more coverage on the South, the African American community in the South, socioeconomic status concerns that affect people in the South, and the housing boom as people recover from the pandemic.

"Right now it's a seller's market where people are paying above and beyond, and young people are getting blocked out of the market," she said. "It's an interesting story about a generation trying to make money to get into a home, but they can't afford it."



Pointer shows her photographs from the Black Lives Matter protests.

Yordanova questions the best way to approach sources to get information while being mindful of their situation.





# Speaking truth to power

**Rana Ayyub**

**Washington Post global opinions writer  
2021 McGill Medal Recipient**

Moderated by Sofia Gratas (AB '20), 2020 McGill Fellow

Critically-acclaimed writer Rana Ayyub never intended to focus her career on journalism. At age 19, however, she volunteered to provide humanitarian aid in India's state of Gujarat, where 1,000 Muslims were massacred in a week. She saw the suffering and helplessness and wanted to assist those in need. She realized that writing about the situation in India could spread the word internationally and prompt a response.

"I thought I could give a voice to the voiceless," she said. "I went to a journalism institute in Mumbai and never really looked back."

At first, Ayyub worked at news channels where the editors didn't believe women were cut out for investigative work. After focusing on lifestyle and pop culture for a few months, she resigned to take on other jobs where she could report on injustice, civil rights and minorities in India. In 2013, she became an independent journalist to work for herself and write the stories that she couldn't publish as a staff reporter, and in 2019, The Washington Post recruited her to write a regular column about the latest updates in India.

***"We need to write about the oppressed in the name of caste, color, religion and more," she said. "In 2021, that's become the reality of the country."***

Grady College alumna Sofia Gratas asked Ayyub to describe the experience of living and working as a journalist in a country that censors media. Ayyub explained that it's always tough to report in a country where people show prejudice against a journalist's particular religion or beliefs, but the situation has grown worse as Prime Minister Narendra Modi has come to power.

Those who are critical of Modi's regime, particularly female and Muslim reporters, have faced backlash and sedition lawsuits, she said. Recently, Ayyub's face was edited into a pornography video and distributed across the country. Law enforcement officials have also shown up at her doorstep numerous times, and intelligence officials have threatened the safety of her friends and family.



"I don't know how I've survived this," she said. "Every day when I wake up, I think I've seen the worst, but people who are suffering far more are still doing journalism, so I have no reason to stand back and complain."

Although Ayyub has received journalism fellowships and requests to report from another country, she has decided to stick where she is as an independent voice in India.

She sees it as a personal responsibility to her readers to stay physically present and tell stories on the ground that need to be told. She also views it as her journalistic duty to bear witness to the events that are unfolding in India. Plus, she appreciates the support that she receives on social media and decidedly takes an optimistic outlook on what independent journalism means for India's future.

"This is a great time for journalism to shine," she said. "This is the time when we are truly being tested, and it is time for us to prove that we cannot be silenced by intimidation."

Ayyub has been particularly focused on the human rights abuses in the territory of Kashmir, where Muslims have faced an insurgency, curfews and blockage of their digital connections to the world. The attack felt like an assault not only on minority populations but on overall fundamental human rights, she said.

While pro-establishment media talked about normalcy in India, Ayyub and fellow journalists traveled to the region, dressed in Kashmiri attire, and operated without a phone to avoid surveillance. She witnessed children and teens being jailed, women being threatened with molestation and people being attacked with pellet guns.

"We saw the worst kind of excesses by a state against its own people," she said. "The only people reporting the truth were foreign media."

Though the ongoing coverage has gained some traction internationally, Ayyub feels that more needs to be done. That's why she continues to tell the story in different ways, again and again.

Rather than face the atrocities with a sense of disillusionment or cynicism, Ayyub believes each article helps to wake the world up to worldwide authoritarianism and accountability. Top magazines around the world have written about human rights concerns in India, and Ayyub hopes global leaders will respond.

"Critics in my country call me an alarmist, but when the biggest magazines in the world say India is in its worst period, the point is being made," she said. "The world is hearing the news, and now there needs to be some accountability that the world needs to hold India to."

Ayyub also self-published a book called "Gujarat Files: Anatomy Of A Cover Up" after an eight-month undercover investigation into the 2002 Gujarat riots. She posed as a Hindu nationalist and filmmaker from the American Film Institute Conservatory. While undercover, she met bureaucrats and top officials in Gujarat who held pivotal positions between 2001-2010. The video recordings and transcripts revealed the complicity of state players in crimes and ultimately led to the arrest of Amit Shah, who now serves as India's Minister of Home Affairs and is a close aide to Modi.

Although Ayyub sees the project as one of her greatest feats, she also described it as a harrowing, lonely time. Fellow Alex English asked about the unforeseen challenges of working undercover. Ayyub recommended never assuming a fake identity or going undercover if there's a better avenue for reporting a story.

She said the experience was an "assault on emotional well-being" and that she felt like a "sitting duck" while wearing multiple cameras and downloading footage each night. She felt like she lived as an entirely different personality for eight months, where she'd force herself to laugh at officials' bigoted comments and then lock herself in the bathroom at night to cry.

"The sting operation was the only way to find out the truth. The larger public good and justice was at stake," she said. "But I wouldn't wish it on anyone. Do your due diligence and hard work through any other avenue before going undercover."

Fellow Tylar Norman asked how Ayyub copes with the fear and whether it has stopped her reporting process. At times, Ayyub said, the fear can get in the way, and she has taken antidepressants since 2010. She often can't sleep without medication, and she has experienced panic attacks and anxiety attacks throughout the past decade. However, she holds onto the trust and support from her family and takes breaks to disconnect when she can.

***"Journalists are fighting an unpopular battle, and this is going to be a long fight," she said. "But also, journalism gives purpose to my life."***

Fellow Augusta Stone asked about the top traits that journalists must develop to succeed. Ayyub repeatedly encouraged the Fellows to "develop a thick skin," emphasizing that reporters can't allow disillusionment, criticism and censorship to dissuade them from the important duty of reporting the unheard stories to their readers. She also advocated for reporting the truth, no matter how inconvenient or difficult it is, and making sure leaders are held accountable.

Fellow Mack Brown asked about the future of journalism in India and how to navigate there. Ayyub said she felt encouraged by the cadre of young journalists — mostly women — who have taken it upon themselves to report on human rights abuses and other atrocities in the country. She's also pleased that international news outlets are providing space in their publications for Indian reporters. Ayyub said that journalism institutes and fellowships should fund more students from countries affected by censorship to make sure their voices are represented.

"It inspires me to wake up every morning to see that journalism in this country will be saved by bright, young journalists," she said. "It gives me hope."

Fellow Tylar Norman asks if Ayyub has ever stopped the reporting process out of fear.

Henry Queen takes notes.





# The effects of a pandemic on the mental health of journalists

**Lisa Krieger**

**San Jose Mercury News science writer**

Moderated by Sabriya Rice, Knight Chair in Health and Medical Journalism

Covering the COVID-19 pandemic during the past year has been one of the most professionally rewarding times of Lisa Krieger's career. While writing daily updates for The San Jose Mercury News, she's felt the true calling of a journalist — to educate, inform, enlighten and protect readers. She's found it rewarding to pick up the phone to talk to leading scientists, communicate the developments in a compelling way, and be able to make sense of a world-changing situation.

At the same time, writing about the pandemic nearly every day for more than a year has been depleting, she said. At the beginning, new updates poured in every few hours, and the potential ramifications have continued from there.

Krieger said she feels like she's been "surfing a wave of information," where she must understand the latest news, translate it for an audience and hit a constant deadline. She's written about all angles of the pandemic, too: the science behind the virus itself, testing, travel restrictions, shutdowns, schools, therapeutics, personal protective gear, hospital shortages, case surges and vaccine news.

"I'm ready for it to be over," she said. "Things are lightening, but it's still ongoing."

In January 2020, Krieger and her editors talked about a new virus that was circulating in China. Since Santa Clara County receives the largest number of flights from China to the U.S., the reporters paid particular attention to the growing number of cases but thought the virus would dissipate. Once the virus was sequenced and scientists reported community transmission, however, Krieger and fellow science journalists knew that the outbreaks should be taken seriously and addressed urgently.

"The nearest analogy is a car accident, where you're careening and trying to put your brakes on, but you can't. You wait for the moment of impact," she said. "That's how it felt in February as it became clear that we were just waiting for this to arrive and that we couldn't stop it from coming."



Fellow Savannah Sicurella asked what it was like during the early days of the pandemic, when people claimed that news outlets were trying to stoke fear about the virus. Krieger said she wrote numerous Q&A articles and short explainers early in the year to credit as many facts as possible to prominent scientists at well-known University of California schools.

She also attended virtual hospital meetings to describe what doctors were seeing, explain how sick the patients were, and underscore the transmissibility of the virus. She heard the harrowing narratives about patients who weren't able to be intubated and who were dying quickly.

"Science doesn't tend to become political, but that was not the case here," she said. "The best we could do was summarize the emerging science and relevant details on a daily basis."

Krieger said it was challenging to write about the disinformation and misinformation around the pandemic, particularly when she had to acknowledge and then dispute the inaccuracies stated by the president or other prominent officials.

She'd typically quote a top public health official — such as Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases — or an infectious diseases expert to correct the false claims. Krieger recalled similar tactics when reporting on AIDS and HIV in San Francisco in the early 1980s or rotaviruses in later decades.

"This pandemic has exposed how we set the stage of skepticism in this country and how science has been challenged by a lack of investment in public health," she said.

***"A lot of people who don't know or appreciate science see it as weaponized or politicized."***

Fellow Caroline Odom asked how Krieger handled the constant news cycle and whether she found a healthy balance to prevent burnout or disengagement. At first, Krieger said, she wasn't able to create a healthy balance because of the work demands and widespread work-from-home adjustment. She'd wake up early to begin reporting, write stories during the day, and then play "catch up" at night by reading other journalists' stories or the latest scientific literature.

That schedule continued until about June, when she realized that the pace was unsustainable. She decided to work remotely in Alaska for some time, where she had a nice office and could hike in nature. Now she's back in California but occasionally rents a room along the Point Reyes National Seashore for a change of scenery. Most of all, Krieger recommended finding a sustainable pace and writing about a subject that provokes energy and excitement.

"There's no other subject where readers had a sustained interest over the course of 13 months," she said. "I heard from readers who were grateful for coverage, had good questions and shared stories with people who didn't understand it."

Fellow Olivia Mead asked Krieger how to interact with family and friends who may not understand a nuanced topic and how to explain the science to them. Krieger encouraged the Fellows to use a fact-based approach that takes someone's viewpoint into account without attacking them. As an example, Krieger spoke with a friend who considered not getting a second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine due to potential side effects, and she was able to make the case for why it might be important for her friend, his family and his community.

***"You don't change minds by telling people that they are ill-informed," she said. "You can help them to think it through and see what's in their best interest, framing it differently for every person."***

Fellow Tylar Norman asked Krieger how she organized the relevant research and key details during such a long time period.



Caroline Odom asks about managing the constant news cycle.

To control the firehose of information, particularly at the beginning of the pandemic, Krieger created Google documents for specific subjects — such as the science behind the spike protein on the coronavirus or the shortage of personal protective equipment — where she posted updates. She was then able to share the documents with colleagues and editors who were writing stories, too.

"Your role is translational," Krieger said. "The amazing thing about being a journalist is that you learn more and keep building on the expertise to explain it to others."

Fellow Lexie Little asked how Krieger's coverage of the pandemic may have differed from other reporters' coverage since she has a background in biology. Krieger said that having a degree helped her to more quickly understand new scientific papers, particularly around terminology such as "variants" and "mutations."

With a foundational level of knowledge, she could also create a rapport with scientists, which often helped them to open up and have engaging conversations. She found that she could create trust and ease with her sources, and she'd often end up with more information than she had initially requested. Having a solid background also boosted her confidence in the writing and accuracy of the scientific information in her stories.

"Whatever your interests are — whether science or political science or sociology — become the newsroom powerhouse in that field," she said. "You don't need the academic expertise, but if you develop a strength in that field, then stories in the newsroom will be funneled to you, which is really rewarding."

Fellow Lora Yordanova asked what science stories are on the horizon that Krieger would like to cover. Krieger mentioned numerous ideas, including a new field of ecological work that uses DNA tracing to track rare or declining species. She's also interested in the latest gene editing updates and potential applications to edit genes for ALS, Huntington's and sickle cell disease. Beyond that, Krieger has her eye on several environmental developments that are linked with current litigation and natural landscapes.

"There are so many stories out there that aren't being covered, and I want to let people know what's happening," she said. "There's so much to catch up on, and I can't wait to get back to it."



# 2021 McGILL FELLOWS



**MACK BROWN**



**ALEX ENGLISH**



**EVAN LASSETER**



**LEXIE LITTLE**



**OLIVIA MEAD**



**TYLAR NORMAN**



**CAROLINE ODOM**



**HENRY QUEEN**



**SAVANNAH SICURELLA**



**AUGUSTA STONE**



**LAUREN SWENSON**



**LORA YORDANOVA**