

# Foreword

It is 70 years since the American journalist Alan Barth first coined the term about news, or journalism, being 'only the first rough draft of history.' Now regarded as a cliché, it has been subject to much misunderstanding. It should not be taken to mean that reporters can take a relaxed approach when stories first break in the expectation that the facts will eventually emerge. From the off, they should be trying to get as close as possible to discovering the truth. And that also means doing the reverse, by refusing to report rumour as fact and taking a sceptical view of official sources.

These journalistic sins were evident in the early reporting of the 2011 UK riots. But those ethical lapses have to be seen in the context of a much more profound and disturbing problem for our media, and for our society. The uncomfortable truth is that there was a huge divide in class and culture between the journalistic tribe and the people who rioted and looted. This factor is the motif running throughout this disquieting report.

Gradually, over a period stretching back at least as far as the 1960s, fewer and fewer of the men and women who report for the major newspapers and broadcasters have been drawn from the working class. There is also plenty of evidence to show that too few are black.

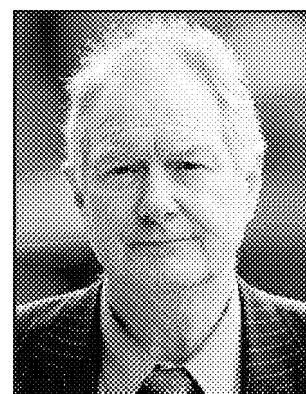
Most obviously, there is an absence of black editorial executives taking the key decisions

about what is published and broadcast. The situation is little better on regional and local newspapers.

In such circumstances, it is heartening to read in the report of journalists who took to the streets to try to understand what happened and, most especially, why it happened. I note that some were criticised for their efforts, which is itself a measure of the chasm between the media élite and the people they affect to serve.

This report both raises questions and offers some hugely positive recommendations, and I am particularly happy to see that one of those is an endorsement for the need to encourage grassroots citizen journalism. But 'big media', at least at the moment, continues to hold sway over the national conversation. If it wishes to enhance democracy then it must ask itself whether it has become too remote from the public by creating a media class, a class apart from its audience.

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# Media and The Riots: Executive Summary

This report is the first to examine the relationship between mainstream media and communities affected by the 2011 riots, the role of social media and citizen journalism.

The report answers two questions:

- How do young people and community members living in riot-affected areas react to media representations of youth culture, young people and their communities during and after the riots?
- In contrast, how do people represent themselves and tell their own stories in media spaces?

The events of August 2011 have spawned a range of writings. Yet there is little mention of “media” in many reports aside from a fascination with social media. These reports do not specifically address the role of “mainstream” broadcast and print media, and alternative forms of journalism that can enable new voices to be heard.

This report aims to do something different.

It is unique because it shares the insights of a first-time opportunity: the Media and the Riots conference organised by the Citizen Journalism Educational Trust and The-Latest.Com (the UK’s first dedicated citizen journalism website), which took place in November 2011. For the first time, young people and others from riot-affected areas were able to come face to face with working journalists and media professionals and hold a dialogue with them. This report aims to reflect the views of speakers and participants who attended the conference and to build on their concerns and the solutions they proposed. These voices are combined with those expressed in other reports, journalistic reporting and research.

Conference participants were angry and dismayed by unbalanced, unhelpful media

coverage of the events of August 2011. They identified misrepresentation of the facts surrounding the death of Mark Duggan at the hands of police as the most recent example of the problematic role of the media. Duggan's death was said to be the initial catalyst for the unrest that followed in Tottenham and spread to other parts of England.

Yet while participants saw challenges, they also identified the possibility for "big media," citizen journalists, social media and its enthusiasts to collaborate effectively and for the voices of those involved and affected to be heard in new ways. This report insists on opportunities arising out of the fear and violence of August and the first-time discussion that took place at the Media and the Riots conference.

Part One, 'The Many Faces of the Media', maps the ways in which perspectives and suggestions made by conference participants connect with and challenge existing reports, journalistic reporting and public debate. It explores the many aspects of media coverage and the processes they set into motion: as a disinhibiting or a protective force; a tool for inciting rioting or to call for calm; a vehicle of consumerism or the voice of moral condemnation; a source of misinformation or data; as stigmatising or positive. Understanding the promises and challenges of these processes helps us seize on opportunities without trusting in them blindly or throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Part One lays the foundation for a plan for action.

Part Two, 'What Now?' examines the opportunities to act and how they can be realised. Five action points are proposed:

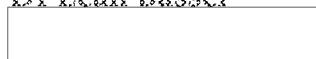
1. **Hold the Media to Account**
2. **Engage with Journalists**
3. **Communicate with Decision-Makers**
4. **Promote Citizen Journalism**
5. **Ensure wider access to Journalism**

For each of these points, concrete recommendations are elaborated, geared toward community organisations, activists, youth groups and charities, as well as professional journalism bodies. The aim is to open up new spaces where previously marginalised voices can be heard.

The time is ripe for taking action. At this moment the culture, practices and ethics of the media are being publicly examined through the Leveson Inquiry and the relationship of the press with the public, police and politicians is under scrutiny. A window of opportunity is open to make the connections between this public soul-searching and the lessons that can be drawn from August 2011. This is a chance for media's social function to be fulfilled by providing more representative, balanced, rigorous reporting and to promote new forms of journalism and citizenship.

This report identifies the opportunities we now have to counter the damaging representations that we have been condemned to repeat and, more importantly, to enable the telling of new stories.

Dr Leah Bassel



Written in collaboration with the Citizen Journalism Educational Trust and The-Latest.Com.

The analysis and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the author and do not represent or engage the University of Leicester.



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# Media and The Riots: Why Another Report?

## Introduction:

This report is the first to examine the relationship between mainstream media and communities affected by the 2011 riots,<sup>(1)</sup> the role of social media and citizen journalism.

The report aims to answer two questions:

- **How do young people and community members living in riot-affected areas react to media representations of youth culture, young people and their communities during and after the riots?**
- **In contrast, how do people represent themselves and tell their own stories in media spaces?**

There is little mention of “media” in many of these reports, aside from a fascination with social media. For instance, the Independent Riots Communities and Victims Panel which was set up by Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg to examine and understand why the August 2011 riots took place and whose final report was presented to the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Official Opposition<sup>(2)</sup> (hereafter Victims Panel) mentions the role of social media but says very little about “mainstream” broadcast and print media and their role in connecting or disconnecting individuals and communities to society – though this concern is at the heart of the report.

This report will bring these issues to centre stage, building on the ways they have been discussed in the past and providing recommendations for the future.<sup>(3)</sup> It is unique because it shares the insights of a first-time opportunity: the Media and the Riots conference organised by the Citizen Journalism Educational Trust and The-Latest.Com, (the UK’s first dedicated citizen journalism website), that took place in November 2011. The conference featured a range of high-profile speakers and included four breakout sessions (see Appendices 1 & 2). At this conference, the audience had the opportunity to discuss and air their grievances about media reporting of the riots as well as engaging with

journalists. For the first time, young people from riot-affected areas were able to come face to face with working journalists and media professionals and hold a dialogue with them. Drawing on the rich discussion that took place, this report aims to reflect the views of speakers and participants who attended the conference and to build on the concerns they expressed and the solutions they proposed. These voices are combined with those expressed in other reports, journalistic reporting and research.

Conference participants were angry and dismayed by unbalanced, unhelpful media coverage of the events of August 2011. This anger began with the reporting of the initial events that triggered the mass disturbances of August 2011: the death of Mark Duggan, the 29-year-old black man who was shot dead by police in Tottenham on 4 August 2011. For many participants, this was only the most recent example of how the machinery of the state and the media can work together to misrepresent the facts surrounding a death at the hands of the police and the profile of the victim. Duggan’s death was said to be the initial catalyst for the unrest that followed in Tottenham and spread to other parts of England. In first reports of Duggan’s death, police stated that he was involved in a shoot-out with them, a statement that was later proved not to be true yet was reported as fact by news media.<sup>(4)</sup>

The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) announced on 9 August 2011 that Duggan did not fire at police before they shot him. Although a bullet had been found lodged in a police radio, there was no evidence that it had come from the gun that was in a sock several feet away from Duggan’s body, contradicting information the commission had previously provided to the effect that shots were exchanged between Duggan and the police, which “inadvertently” misled the media.<sup>(5)</sup>

Duggan’s family stated that they do not trust the IPCC to conduct a fair and independent investigation of the killing and asked for an independent inquiry into the relationship between the Metropolitan Police and the IPCC. They sought to get an independent second postmortem.<sup>(6)</sup>

On 28 February 2012 the IPCC and the Metropolitan Police apologised to Duggan's family for the lack of information and support afforded to them in the days following Duggan's death.<sup>(7)</sup> At the time of writing, the IPCC had expressed its frustration at the limitations of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 which prevented it from revealing information from its investigation, meaning that a coroner's inquest might never be held.<sup>(8)</sup>

While the problematic relationships between state and media were vigorously presented at the conference, it is important to recognise the promise that conference participants identified. Participants also saw the possibility for "big media," citizen journalists, social media and its enthusiasts to collaborate effectively, and for the voices of those involved in the riots and after the disturbances to be heard in new ways.

While the aftermath of the riots hardly gives rise to starry-eyed optimism, this report will insist on opportunities arising out of the fear and violence of August 2011 and the unique discussion that took place at the Media and the Riots conference in November 2011. Philosopher and activist Nina Power expressed some of this optimism:

"People are organising. There are defence campaigns for youth, people are sharing information and advice about lawyers and we will see more and more ongoing campaigns. We should not be pessimistic – it is hard to destroy peoples' desire to be sociable and politically active." (Nina Power, speaker, Birmingham Conference Report)<sup>(9)</sup>

Part Two of this report examines these opportunities and how they can be realised. This is why this report is a Call for Action. It includes concrete recommendations for young people, members of riot-affected communities, concerned citizens, journalists and policy-makers.

*Dr Leah Bassel*

# Part One: The Many Faces of the Media

Conference participants broadly condemned the failure of news media to address underlying issues at the heart of why people, most of them under 24, had rioted in August 2011. However, they also pointed to the multiple and positive roles that media – broadcast, print and social – have played, which are also evidenced in other reports and studies.

In order to build a sound foundation for action, we need to understand the many different dimensions of media coverage. This section will map the ways in which the views expressed at the conference connect to current debates about the role of the media in the riots, and how conference participants’ perspectives compare with and challenge the findings of other reports, reporting and public debate. Understanding the many faces of the media is important, as it allows us to build on the challenges and opportunities that conference participants identified in two ways. First, it is important that we do not adopt media opportunities wholesale without evaluating their potential costs. But, second, we need to avoid rejecting media options wholesale. There is both promise and challenge in many of these media tools and the processes that media coverage can enable (and of course this is not an exhaustive list). By recognising these different dimensions, we can ensure that damaging, stigmatising coverage is not repeated and, at the same time, seize the opportunities offered to challenge negative representations of affected communities and promote new forms of journalism and citizenship.

**A. A disinhibitor or a protective force**

*A disinhibitor*

“The media” have been identified as having contributed to the unrest.<sup>(10)</sup> Conference participants believed that the first TV broadcasts of images of the unfolding disturbances could have played a key role in fuelling looting and related actions by rioters. Participants suggested that initial police inaction in various parts of the UK was motivated by politics, namely their opposition to the proposed government cuts to police numbers. As a result, young people saw an opportunity to loot with apparent impunity.

The “disinhibiting” effect of media coverage of an ineffective police response is explored by other reports on the riots, which link news showing “people getting away with it” (NatCen 35-6) – e.g., “the police lost control” and “Tottenham was left to burn” (Tottenham Citizens’ report). Rioters felt confident that the chances of getting caught were low enough to take the risk: *People didn’t think they’d get caught, thought there were too many people, that there was safety in numbers and someone else would get caught instead of you.*

(Young person, Peckham) (NatCen 51)

Multiple sources of information – television news, social media (Facebook and BlackBerry Messenger), text messaging – may not have necessarily triggered involvement, but certainly sped up the flow of information and shaped involvement by making people aware of what was happening locally (NatCen 36). *People could either see it from their house or saw it on TV. It was easy to find out what was happening. Sky had a live update.* (Young person, Peckham) (NatCen 36)

The Victims Panel report identified blanket media coverage as a defining characteristic of the riots. Along with the Home Affairs Select Committee, it agreed that the single most important reason for the spread of the disorder was the perception, relayed by television as well as social media, that in some areas the police had lost control of the streets. Social and broadcast media helped the riots to spread. (Victims Panel Final Report 22)

	On the one hand...	On the other hand...
A	A disinhibitor	A protective force
B	A tool for inciting rioting	A tool for calm
C	A vehicle of consumerism and the desire for brands	The voice of moral condemnation
D	A source of misinformation	A source of data
E	Stigmatising	Positive

*A protective force*

In contrast, media coverage has also been identified as a way to avoid involvement and as a protective factor. Because television coverage was “scary”, and in some cases social media gave information on riot-affected areas, people were able to avoid involvement (NatCen 36).

A number of police forces also used social media to engage with their communities and to provide reassurance, evidenced by the rise in their Twitter followers and website hits. (Victims Panel Final Report 137).

**B. A tool for inciting rioting or a tool for calm?**

*A tool for inciting rioting*

Well-publicised court cases have demonstrated the ways in which social media may have been used to encourage young people to take part in the disturbances. One conclusion of the conference was that social media should not be shut down by the authorities at any time, even during serious public disorder. One of the reasons participants provided was that information submitted to social media sites in any future public disorder could provide useful intelligence for the police.

This recommendation is shared across a number of recent reports including Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabularies report and the Home Office, and the Victims Panel report (22, 137). The latter also called for a quicker response on the part of police, using social media, to “rumours” about the death of Mark Duggan and for rolling out social media across all police forces as well as public services (115). Social media expert and conference participant Dr Mariann Hardey draws our attention to some of the challenging consequences of these new uses of social media. Individuals posting on social media are seen in an all too public domain, dramatically changing the relationship between what is public and what is private. The consequences are new and far-reaching: “these not-so-private displays are the subject of judges’ sentencing. There are important

consequences here for pre-existing forms of law and order, and political power” (Hardey 2011) that need to be thought about carefully.

Generally speaking, more evidence is needed about what kind of link exists between social media use and participation in the riots, and whether it is really possible to say that social media use “caused” the riots.

The **Reading the Riots** study, led by the Guardian newspaper and the London School of Economics, is analysing 2.57m tweets on Twitter sent around the riots themselves in order to shed light on their role. It is exemplary as a model of good practice in looking for evidence about the use of social media and involvement in the riots, rather than relying on assertions.<sup>(11)</sup>

*A tool to call for calm*

At the same time, the media has been identified as a potential tool to call for calm. Conference participants highlighted the positive uses of social and print media as well. These positive uses are echoed in reports, including the strategy of “counter posting” which involved young people using social and print media to call for calm in their areas. Mainstream local press also celebrated the absence of rioting in some areas. The National Centre for Social Research reports that young people in their study were very aware of these campaigns, which existed alongside coordinated responses in some localities by the police, local organisations and young people to discourage rioting and remove inflammatory posts (NatCen 36).

**C. A vehicle of consumerism and the desire for brands or the voice of moral condemnation?**

*A vehicle of consumerism and the desire for brands*

Media have been criticised for fueling consumerism, in other words, for promoting a “take-what-you-can society”. Across the political spectrum, public soul-searching has taken place over a culture of greed and “me first” hedonism.



Conference participants felt that the apparent motivation of young people to target and loot shops and brands like JD Sports, Foot Locker, Currys, Comet and PC World during the riots was strongly influenced by print and broadcast media. However, they also felt that this issue could not be adequately looked at without examination of the way in which the creative media industry, through films, music and video games, often glorified a criminal, gang or gangster-related lifestyle which some disadvantaged young people, including black males, then aspired to achieve.

Consumerism and materialistic culture have been linked to media specifically through advertising. Some young people have described *“the gap between what was portrayed in the media as representing the ‘good life’ to which people should aspire, and what young people in their communities could actually have, given the poverty of income and opportunity”* (NatCen 48). It is argued that this gap between aspirations and realities contributed to the unrest.

In the Sky News interview **Looters** that was shown at the conference and will be discussed in greater detail below, young men who had been involved in the riots pointed to this gap in their experiences, stressing their frustration at not being able to get a job despite their best efforts.

One interviewee explained that he had targeted a particular store because of the “disrespect” shown to him when he approached its staff looking for work; another interviewee explained that he looted Boots to get things for his baby because without work he was unable to pay. These testimonies further highlight the gap between aspirations and realities and the “poverty of income and opportunity”.

The Victims Panel report targets “brands” as an issue to be tackled (76-85). Because so many high-end brand businesses were targeted, the Panel wanted to consider what role brands and business can play in creating more resilient neighbourhoods and identified areas such as corporate social responsibility, responsible advertising and recognising the positive role of young people. But

this recognition of positive roles of young people is in the minority, in sharp contrast with the wide-scale moral condemnation that young people were so often subjected to in print and broadcast coverage.

### *The voice of moral condemnation*

“The mob that turned the centre of Tottenham in London into a smoking ruin were not seeking justice. They are criminal thugs who were hell bent on theft, arson and violence” (The Sun. 8 August 2011)

Many media outlets expressed deep condemnation of those involved in the riots. Conference participants asked whether the media (print and broadcast) should have condemned those who took part in the disturbances in August. What are the professional and personal profiles of these journalists and editors and what does that tell us? The social class and race of journalists were seen as influencing factors in media reporting of the riots, raising issues around impartiality and objectivity. In the call for action below we will explore the need for diversity in the media in greater detail.

We must also consider whose morality was being condemned in media coverage, in an era characterised also by the MP expenses scandal and the huge bonuses given to bankers at a time when many banks crashed owing to a culture of corporate greed.

### **D. A source of misinformation or a source of data?**

#### *A source of misinformation*

Media have also been criticised for spreading misinformation during the riots. Some conference participants felt that their role should have been to keep the public informed of the facts and explain events in context, although it was recognised that this might be an over-simplification and that it was unlikely that media ever play a neutral “just the facts” reporting role. Participants questioned whether the media helped or hindered public understanding of what was taking place. For

instance, their use of certain language and phrases like “feral underclass” to describe some young rioters was seen as problematic and unhelpful. The media platform given to controversial historian David Starkey and his contentious comments about white and black youth who took part in the disturbances was also criticised. Furthermore, participants concluded that police gave mis/(dis) information about the riots which media actors then reported as fact, beginning with the shooting of Mark Duggan and then spiraling out from this initial event. The ways in which journalists use – and sometimes reproduce rather than analyse and critique – official sources needs to be questioned. These concerns are dealt with in the text box, right, drawn from a new study (Dobson-Smith 2012).

Furthermore, participants believed that the media employed flawed methods of analysis when reporting statistics about rioters. It was broadly agreed that the figures quoted by the media were skewed because they were based largely on one group - those people who were arrested by the police - which was not an accurate reflection of the broader range of people who in fact participated in the disturbances yet were less likely to be arrested.

The Victims Panel report also called for accurate reporting and maintaining high journalistic standards: because of the role of trust in our broadcasters in “high stress” times, they argued, balanced coverage, accuracy and journalistic integrity are so important (138). However, as we will see in the second part of this report, the call for action here goes much further. Participants questioned whether the media should be regarded as a branch of the establishment, which defends the status quo, or as a force to challenge it. They proposed their own methods for holding journalists and other “establishment” actors to account.

### *A source of data*

Not all mainstream media sources covered events in the same way. The role of media as a source for information and social change has been recognised since (at least) the 1980s: *When the press chooses to*

NUJ President Donnacha DeLong expressed deep concern regarding the apparent reliance on official sources, claiming: *“One of the worst parts of the post-riots coverage was where the content of newspapers came directly from the police. It was about wanted lists, it was pictures of people, newspapers were doing the police’s job for them. Instead of analysing and going deeper into the story and finding out why it happened, they were simply helping the police arrest people.”*

*“That is not what journalism is for, that is not the job of a journalist and this is increasingly undermining the ability of journalists to do their job safely. If journalists are seen simply as being the mouthpiece of the police and of the state, nobody is going to trust us and in some cases people are going to react violently when they see a journalist.”*

*“If you haven’t got the time and the capacity to go out and do some interviews, but the police are happy to provide you with a direct line and provide you with their view of the story, too often that’s what ends up in the media.”*

Marc Wadsworth, journalist, editor of The-Latest.com and lecturer at City University explained that most journalists covering the riots had no connection with Tottenham and as such did not know where to find authoritative voices: *“They just fell back on lazy journalism, which was to rely on what the police was feeding them, what politicians were telling them and therefore not being the unbiased reporters they should be.”*

Sky News reporter Tom Parmenter defended the use of official sources, claiming that it would be foolish not to use them. However he went on to say that they should be used to complement other reliable sources and pointed out that where it wasn’t in the interest of the authorities, information wouldn’t be released, and so it was up to journalists to discover the full story.

He also criticised the suggestion that the media followed the line of the authorities, explaining that much of the coverage was “humiliating” for the police and generally produced negative results for the government, claiming what was covered made “uncomfortable viewing for the authorities.”

Source: Dobson-Smith 2012

*campaign on social issues and carry out major investigations into areas of social concern, it has a first-class ability to ferret out information and to bring about change' (Gifford 1989: 242).*

The **Reading the Riots** project has taken major steps toward achieving this objective in the way in which it practiced "data journalism", providing knowledge for anyone wanting to know what was happening where. A project member gave the following example: *"We compiled a list of every incident where there was a verified report, mapped it with Google Fusion tables, and allowed people to download the data behind it – possibly the simplest but most popular thing we did."* <sup>(12)</sup> In the storm of rumours and unevidenced assertions, however, this proved the exception rather than the rule.

#### E. Stigmatising or positive?

##### *Stigmatising*

Media were felt to stigmatise certain communities. The anger of conference participants at the way in which young people, particularly young black people, were represented in media coverage is a powerful message in itself. Keynote speaker Professor Gus John<sup>(13)</sup> expressed the view that much of the coverage was "simply disgraceful" and appeared to take the form of a "moral crusade" that was not colour-blind.

Others have made similar observations, criticising the way in which *"the media made out it was a black issue – black men doing the rioting and looting, but if you were there, it was people of all races... It was everyone"* (Young person, Birmingham) (NatCen 46-7). This was linked by others to ways in which the African Caribbean community in particular was misrepresented:

The lack of political representation is a problem as well as the misrepresentation of the African Caribbean community by the press. African Caribbean people are killed in custody which is overlooked. There are things going on in the community but the media overlooks everything

positive the African Caribbean community does. Birmingham Conference Report 2011.

Conference participants felt that big media tended to portray the disturbances largely as a conflict of black people against white business owners and that the voices of black business people who were affected by the riots were under represented in the mainstream media. Participants criticised what they believed to be the "racialisation" of the riots by mainstream broadcasters, where people of colour were largely blamed for the troubles in August. This was thought not to be evident in the black press.

Participants were angry and dismayed at the apparent "demonisation" by the mainstream media of black victims (mostly males) who died in police custody. Participants felt that there was often "character assassination" of black victims by the press and broadcasters before all true facts in each case had been established.

The unhealthy relationship between newspapers and the police in this context was of concern to participants as the police had been accused of leaking to the press of negative publicity (often false) about victims.

For instance, the case of Mark Duggan was discussed. After his death Duggan was accused of being a drug dealer by the police, with unnamed police sources claiming that he was a "well known gangster" and a "major player and well known to the police in Tottenham".<sup>(14)</sup> Some media sources stated that Duggan may have been a founding member of North London's "Star Gang", an offshoot of the Tottenham Mandem gang.<sup>(15)</sup> Conference participants pointed out that his family and friends have denied these claims.

While the Victims Panel mentions evidence that the media portrayal of "race riots" was "unhelpful" (Victims Panel Final Report 25), it sidesteps the deeper underlying issues connecting the violence that took place to long-standing experiences of racism. Notably, the issue of deaths of black people in police custody is discussed as "totemic" for the

black community in particular, and a “myth” that the police need to explode to improve the public’s trust in them since, in fact, it is overwhelmingly more white men who die in custody (Victims Panel Final Report 102-3).<sup>(16)</sup>

Yet this recommendation appears to miss the deep-seated anger and collective memory that is attached to these deaths, including a significant number of controversial cases that family members feel have not been satisfactorily investigated/explained.

Tottenham community activist and conference speaker Stafford Scott showed conference participants a picture of a group of black people and asked that they identify them. As the audience response demonstrated: “We are only remembered when we riot.” By this Scott meant that while all the people in the photos had a family member who died in police custody, the (non-activist) members of the audience could only identify those around whose death violent unrest broke out.

This was not to endorse these forms of violence, but to point to the connections made within collective memory and which are a source of longstanding anger. These connections are only dimly perceived from outside of affected communities and cannot be resolved through a “numbers game” that is blind to the over-representation of black victims relative to their share of the English population.

These events are connected within communities that have “a collective memory that encompasses Cynthia Jarrett, Christopher Alder, Roger Sylvester, Joy Gardner, Clinton McCurbin, Brian Douglas, Wayne Douglas and all the other three hundred of them, such that any new death while in the custody of the state must be seen to be handled with the utmost care and sensitivity.” (Gus John, Keynote Address).

The role of media should be to provide coverage that is sensitive to these memories and these connections. The ways to develop this sensitivity and reflect it in mainstream coverage are discussed below.

### *Positive*

Media coverage has also been identified as presenting community members who sought to contain the unrests, defend local businesses, and contribute to restoration efforts in a positive light. The main positive images around the riots were of the “Riot Clean-up” movement, the mop-and-pail brigade that was coordinated through socialnetworking sites and assembled large numbers of people to clear debris in affected areas.

While these efforts were well intentioned, this coverage did not necessarily counter more generally negative representations of young people in the media: “More young people were involved in the clean-up operation than the riots themselves – however, media reports generally did not reflect this. A recent submission to the Leveson Inquiry by the Youth Media Agency highlighted the ‘discriminatory attitude of the media towards children and young people during and following the riots” (Victims Panel Final Report 84)

“Riot Clean-up” coverage also arguably served to divide people into “good” and “bad” members of society: “The language used by the media typifies a process of “othering”; a process which provides the nation and not least the police and the courts with a justification for treating that section of the community as the “them” from whom “we” must be protected, as the alien wedge against whom the state must act on behalf of “us”, the “them” from whom every decent citizen in Cameron’s “big society” must distance themselves, preferably armed with broom and pail.’ (Gus John, Keynote Address).

There are other possibilities for positive media representations that do not divide people into “us” and “them”. One example is North London Citizens “work with the Council and Tottenham Traders Partnership to give greater energy and focus to the ‘I Love Tottenham’ campaign. This includes an extension into ‘Why I Love Tottenham’ where local communities and media run events celebrating what they like about the area” (North London Citizens 23).

There are also important ways in which people can represent themselves by creating their own media spaces to have their voices heard. We will discuss these possibilities of “citizen journalism” below.

### Summary

This section has mapped the ways in which the views expressed at the conference connect to current debates about the role of the media in the riots and how conference participants’ perspectives compare with and challenge the findings of other reports, journalistic reporting and public debate. In order to take advantage of the opportunities that have been identified, it is important to find a balance between accepting these processes at face value and throwing

the baby out with the bath water by rejecting the potential of news media outright.

We need to understand the challenges and opportunities involved in order to build a sound foundation for action. As we will now discuss in Part Two, action can aim to ensure that damaging, stigmatising coverage is not repeated, to challenge negative representations and to promote new forms of journalism and citizenship.

The focus of the report is to point to strategies and action plans to overcome these challenges.

*Plenary session at the ‘Media and The Riots’ Conference.  
November 2011.*



**How can alternative voices be brought into the public arena? What can be done differently?**

We have identified five action areas through which different actors – young people, citizens in affected areas, activists, journalists, professional journalism bodies, citizen journalists, educators – can act to use “the Media” to challenge stigmatising and unhelpful representations of young people and affected communities and to generate new spaces in which previously marginalised voices can be heard.

**1. Hold the Media to Account**

The media need to be held accountable to people living in affected communities. *Times* sports journalist Tony Evans powerfully articulated this need and criticised the ways in which biased coverage was not only unchallenged by other journalists but even celebrated. He refers here to Sky reporter Mark Stone’s iPhone coverage of looting in Clapham Junction,<sup>(17)</sup> where he lives. In a speech at a National Union of Journalists conference Evans described media coverage of the riots as a particularly grim period for journalism: “We saw Sky News reporters walking down the streets, filming people on their phones and saying, ‘I come from round here, I can’t believe what I’m seeing, are you proud of yourself?’ As if they were headmasters. That’s not journalism. Journalism should be the pursuit of the truth and the pursuit of knowledge. And we weren’t seeing knowledge there. We were getting the vicarious thrills of being in the middle of a riot. The Daily Mail’s view? ‘Give this man an award’.

*I don’t think it’s award-winning journalism personally – because it told me nothing...we have this situation where the government now is allowed to move the dialogue on and suddenly blame gangs. And the newspapers are rushing to report this, and agree with it... you don’t need to get beyond the surface, you can just point fingers...I don’t think there’s a will to understand in this country. And I also think there is an instinctive fear in some journalists – quite a lot of them – to actually confront the preconceptions of the mass of the British public...It’s easier to go along with public perceptions. But that’s not our role. Our role is to come up with the truth.”<sup>(18)</sup>*

# Part Two: What Now?

Some members of the public, as well as government bodies and reports, demand that the media be held accountable from the top down. A number of official reports have demanded an accountability process through which mainstream media, particularly broadcast media, should be made to ensure more balanced and accurate reporting.

The Victims Panel recommends:

That the link between the issue being reported and the accompanying images is clear. Throughout the four days of the riots media coverage was intense, especially across the 24 hour news channels.

Images of the huge fire in Croydon were repeatedly shown even when the journalists were covering events in other parts of the country. There is a careful balance between capturing the events and contributing to an “excitement” and “sensationalising” agenda.

Broadcasters should ensure that they review their editorial guidelines, especially continued use of images over a number of days and whether they accurately portray the unfolding news events, reporting events derived from social media platforms (i.e. rumours) as facts to only later have them stood down and to have effective editorial resource to ensure there is integrity to stories provided by citizens (138)

However, it may not be enough to rely on media to ensure balance in its own coverage. As one participant in the Media and the Riots conference identified the problem: *Expecting NEWS media (very different mandate from activist media) to focus on the human interest element/not focus on shock-value/not stereotype to make things easier for their viewership or readership to digest is like expecting the financial services industry to regulate itself. It's impractical and it does not work because it's about generating profit for the stakeholders...Who's making the decisions?*

*It would be naïve to ignore the public appetite that the media are responding to. The desire for sensationalism and the commodification of adversarial news are not new*

*phenomena, but arguably on the rise (Greer 2012).*

In another conference about the riots that took place in Birmingham in October 2011, participants agreed that “Media have to be held to account for sensationalism, labeling, stereotyping.”

However, they also pointed to different actors who could be undertaking this task. They pointed to the ways in which people, ordinary citizens, rather than government bodies or industry regulators, can do this themselves.

#### **Recommendation:**

- Engage with people at the grassroots level

From the bottom up, people in affected communities and other concerned citizens can demand that events be covered differently and even produce their own representations. This theme runs through the four other action points.

## **2. Engage with Journalists**

The news media need to represent better the views of “the unheard”, such as young people. Conference participants identified ways this can be done:

### **a. Enlist journalists to work with communities to develop more balanced coverage.**

First, members of affected communities could enlist journalists to develop ways to improve standards of reporting in the coverage of “bad news” stories such as riots and help them to publish “good news” stories.

At the Media and the Riots conference Sky News journalist Tom Parmenter presented excerpts from his much talked-about interview **Looters** and he was vigorously questioned afterwards by audience members. This was a rare opportunity for them to engage with a working journalist and this example could serve as a model for future actions (see box overleaf). The cases listed on page 19 are examples of good practice in radio and print journalism.

### CASE STUDY: Sky News 'Looters'

Tom Parmenter, a senior Sky News reporter, aired a clip from his extended interview entitled **Looters** in which he spoke with four young black men whose faces were covered and who were connected to/involvement in the riots. His motivation, as he explained it, was that he could see that everyone else was having a say but no one was talking to those involved. He described a massive range of negative and positive responses to his video which received enormous number of hits on YouTube.

The discussion that followed was heated. One participant took issue with the camera shots, which focused away from the men's covered faces to zoom in on their (black) hands. Others criticised questions he asked, arguing that they should have been better constructed to draw out the histories of the young men interviewed. Others pointed to the fact that young black faces are "only on Carnival and Crimewatch" with another person echoing that "there were never so many black people on TV as in the riots". A young man in the audience explained to the journalist that when two police officers passed by and listened to part of the interview, the reason why they did not arrest the young men who were speaking – a source of surprise and relief to the film crew - was because the camera was there.

In the view of one participant, with this heated intervention, the audience demonised a reporter (who is not a top decision-maker) and other feedback from participants emphasised that Parmenter was almost unique in giving these young men a voice, however problematic the way in which this was done.

While the exchanges were certainly heated, this intervention held the possibility for a journalist who was not part of the community that he covered to see his coverage through their eyes. Learning went both ways in that audience members also had the chance to think about what they expected from journalists. For instance, the journalist did not know what the longest jail sentence for MP expense scandals was compared to that for rioting, which caused a very negative reaction from the audience. What can be expected of mainstream journalists who are aiming to represent typically unheard voices yet are not specialised in particular issue areas? How can they be held to account?

In an interview with Parmenter produced by young people from the Media Citizens Sutton group immediately following the conference debate, this exchange was recognised as useful but "not the final chapter". Instead the producers argued that this was a first step toward what should not be "an investigation into young people but the opportunity for young people to express their views"<sup>(19)</sup>.



- **The Voice of Africa Radio – Space Clotley reported at the conference on the ways in which his black community radio station sent its reporters to Tottenham to report on what was happening**
- **Paul Lewis’s authentic on-the-spot reporting published in The Guardian. His journalist peers at other news media organisations commended him.**
- **Reading the Riots project by The Guardian and The London School of Economics – journalists and researchers working on this project have built impressive local partnerships to enable ‘unheard voices’ to reach public spaces.**

What distinguishes all of this reporting is that it took place on site in the affected communities, engaged with local people and enabled their voices to be heard.

#### **b. Defend local journalism**

Second, there is a need to promote sound local journalism. In her presentation at the Media and Riots conference, journalism professor Sarah Niblock found few examples of good practice in local newspaper coverage of August 2011. Her remarks were “not any kind of attack on the professionalism of journalists” but rather identified “a cultural sea change that has occurred when new financial priorities made local journalism remote from its readers” and which becomes a source of reactive rather than pro-active reporting.

*To the best of her knowledge “no local journalist was apparently on the march by Mark Duggan’s supporters at the police station on Tottenham High Road. I have not been able to find a single eyewitness journalism report of that event. If a reporter had been at the scene and reported on the exchange between the supporters and police on the steps of the police station then we might have more than rumour and speculation to go by. If the media didn’t know it was happening, then why not?”*

This is not what local journalism should be about, in her view. There was too much emphasis on law and order and an authoritarian stance, driven by too much reliance on official sources and binary notions

of good versus bad and us versus them. Instead, the status and watchdog role of local journalism needs to be rejuvenated, as a distinct sector with its own values where journalists stay and prosper, “living and breathing” their patch. Stafford Scott also referred to challenges of journalists who are parachuted into areas they do not know, are unfamiliar with the history and collective memories of community members – and are even too young to remember the 1981 Scarman Inquiry.

While local journalism cannot resolve all of the problems identified with media coverage of events of August 2011, longstanding relationships of journalists with communities can go a long way to more balanced and constructive coverage. Such coverage would engage with local history and collective memory and reflect the variations in what took place in August 2011, i.e., the different issues at stake in different parts of the UK.

These differences did not surface until much later, long after national public perceptions had been shaped.<sup>(20)</sup> Strong local journalism can provide accurate and sensitive coverage that acts as a counterweight to national spin that paints all events with the same brush, though they were in fact diverse events with their own causes and histories.

#### **c. Challenge unfair representations**

In cases of bad practice, it is important for communities to have information readily available on how to make press complaints. Key journalism codes and standards are provided in Appendix 4 of this report and it is important to note that step-by-step information is provided on how to go about making complaints (e.g. the Press Complaints Commission provides detailed guidance). More generally it would be useful for people wishing to make a complaint to be familiar with the type of language and principles that journalists are bound to uphold. The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) Code of Conduct provides a clear and succinct guide that can be drawn upon in making complaints, e.g.:

Article 2 [A journalist] Strives to ensure that

information disseminated is honestly conveyed, accurate and fair

Article 3 Does her/his utmost to correct harmful inaccuracies

Article 9 Produces no material likely to lead to hatred or discrimination on the grounds of a person's age, gender, race, colour, creed, legal status, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation.<sup>(21)</sup>

Advice and online discussion resources could be provided to guide people through these processes in order to make complaints effective and the procedures less time-consuming, sparing people the need to wade through masses of (sometimes very technical) material on websites. We recommend ways this can be accomplished below.

#### **d. Support as well as challenge journalists**

At the same time, the wider context surrounding journalists needs to be recognised. At the conference NUJ President Donnacha DeLong echoed Sarah Niblock's analysis, referring to the challenges faced by journalists from managers who make bigger and bigger demands on them in an environment where jobs and resources are being cut. Conference organiser Marc Wadsworth, a veteran print and broadcast journalist, insisted on the need for a constructive approach where journalists are held to account but at the same time the challenging conditions and broader structures that they work within are recognised:

"We need to defend journalism and at the same time uphold the highest professional standards. We need to think about the tremendous pressures journalists are under from their editors in the current economic climate. They have to produce more work, particularly scoops, more quickly with fewer resources than ever before. While this doesn't excuse bad practice, it puts our job in context and means that if we want to change the way news is produced then rubbish the work of individual journalists because we don't like what they've reported does not take us very far forward. It would be much better if we understand who makes the key editorial decisions,

insist on best practice and hold them to account."

#### **Recommendations:**

Community organisations, activists, youth groups, charities:

- Community quick response system, providing authoritative and representative "talking heads": people who can be interviewed by print and broadcast journalists rapidly who are young and old, male and female.
- Contact bases should be developed and sent to local and national media for different parts of London/other cities. These should be made up of lists of people who can speak about these issues from a range of backgrounds, and different generations. This avoids the same "rent-a-quote" individuals always being interviewed, who may not in fact speak for the communities they claim to represent.
- Making effective rebuttals quickly by emailing or telephoning a journalist, editor, programme producer and broadcast organisation duty officer.
- Produce a pamphlet/Facebook page/online discussion group on making press complaints, with concrete guidance on how to do this, and share with people in affected communities.
- Work with journalism training programmes to review training manuals/guides for young journalists to make them aware of the communities whose experiences they represent.

Journalism course providers:

- Teach and research about local journalism in universities and colleges.
- Work with community groups to review training manuals/guides for young journalists to make them aware of the communities whose experiences they represent.

Professional journalism bodies, broadcast and print employers:

- Investigate how local journalism can be made an attractive place to stay and prosper.
- Create workshops where members of affected communities can “peer review” coverage of sensitive issues and provide journalists with feedback.

### 3. Communicate with decision-makers – “No one listens”

There needs to be more opportunities for members of the public, particularly young people, to express their views to those in power.

Government and Riot Victim panel reports have highlighted failures in communication and incorrect information from official sources about the death of Mark Duggan that led to the spread of rumours. The Victims Panel cautioned against a “communications vacuum” (21) and recommended increased use of social media by police forces and public services so

“We trained 700 young people to build and sustain relationships, to get meetings with MPs. Young people feel powerless, their voices are not heard. We provide an alternative for voices to be heard legally and to provide a seat at the table with power players.

And people have pulled together: out of the tragedy there have been some positive outcomes. We can work on that momentum and think about the positives and how to heal the city.”

Sajida Madni, Birmingham Citizens  
(Birmingham Conference Report)

communities feel engaged and that their concerns are being responded to (105, 115).

But these are top down initiatives, and while important, they do not respond to another deep need: to create opportunities for young people to express themselves and be listened to so they can feel like they are influencing their lives, rather than “making trouble” in order to be heard (NatCen 46). This has sparked calls for more youth clubs, employment programmes and links to local businesses.

While valuable, these are not the only options. Conference participants and others have identified the need for local mechanisms and initiatives that build capacity and allow young people to represent themselves.

These initiatives can be built on to communicate media lessons from the past to authorities in co-operation with the community.

#### Recommendations:

Local journalists, community organisations, activists, youth groups, charities:

- Identify local examples of good practice through which bottom-up youth engagement takes place and ensure coverage of these initiatives in local news.

Community organisations, youth groups:

- Develop partnerships with government representatives and policy makers to build youth capacity so they can represent their interests and perspectives, particularly within media spaces.

### 4. Promote citizen journalism

Citizen journalism should be promoted for ordinary people to be able to tell their own stories.

Conference participants felt that mainstream media catered for the demands of the majority at the

expense of minority groups and alternative non-mainstream voices. They also discussed the ways in which young people could be encouraged to debate the issues raised in the media and in feature films about youth culture. Social media platforms could provide an opportunity for this.

Participants agreed that the ability of ordinary citizens to take photographs and record video on mobile phones was a very positive development as it meant that, for instance, the public could "film what the establishment don't want us (the public) to see." Participants felt it was wrong that the veracity of citizen reporting was sometimes questioned while mainstream media reporting was "filled with lies" but rarely scrutinised and held to account.

While acknowledging differences in the way individuals and communities consume media content and that some do not believe the news published by citizen journalists until the same news is published or broadcasted by big media,

participants nonetheless identified this route as an opportunity for young people to tell their own stories.

The original accounts of the experiences of those involved in the riots and the aftermath need to be published. Participants believed that these stories were "out there" on social media but were being ignored in the mainstream media.

Nonetheless, there is promise here in the idea of "citizen journalism", through which people make their own news and tell their own stories. Academics define this form of journalism as spontaneous actions of ordinary people who feel compelled to adopt the role of a news reporter.

"Armed with cell-phones, BlackBerries or iPhones, the average Joe is now a walking eye on the world, a citizen journalist, able to take a photo, add a caption or a short story and upload it to the internet for all their friends, and usually everyone else, to see."

### Citizen journalism - example

An example of the way in which citizen journalism can be a force for good and engage communities in positive action particularly in times of social unrest is The-Latest.Com citizen journalism website.

The news portal was established in 2006 in the UK and offers opportunities to blog, publish words and images and be involved in video streaming and podcasts. It has constantly updated community, national and international news and features instant polls on topical subjects open to all its visitors. Members have gone on to work for a variety of news media organisations as a result of the skills they learned on the site. It has pulled off notable scoops, including one that led to the firing of the Mayor of London's chief political advisor and spin doctor James McGrath, which went global. *Press Gazette*, the trade paper of the British newspaper industry, headlined a full-page article about McGrathgate: "Citizen journalism takes first UK scalp."

The-Latest.Com published a total of 17 stories and blogs written by members of the public about the riots (See Appendix 4).

## All-white newsrooms

*New Statesman* chief political commentator Rafael Behr observes that while newspapers were keen to report the decline of racism after Gary Dobson and David Norris were convicted for the murder of Stephen Lawrence, “there was something mildly ridiculous about a bunch of white men sitting in all-white newsrooms, asking white journalists on their staff if they knew any black people who might want to write about how racism is no longer such an issue”.

*The New Statesman's* senior editor (politics) Mehdi Hasan added:

“How long can newspaper editors carry on hiring and publishing columnists who have little or no experience of these lives, backgrounds, cultures or faiths?

“In 2012, 64 years after the arrival of the Empire Windrush on our shores, 36 years after the passage of the third Race Relations Act, 19 years after the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence, the great British commentariat is, in effect, a mono-racial, monocultural closed shop.”

Because citizen journalists are independent of the systems of rules that professional journalists have to follow, there is a chance to challenge dominant values and interests.

Participants felt that it was possible for big media, citizen journalists, social media and its enthusiasts to collaborate effectively. Mainstream media could use images, video footage and reports given to them by the public. This would ensure that stories important to and affecting local communities are widely publicised.

This is a different form of community engagement and involvement than is typically identified in existing reports and recommendations. It is an important civic response and a way for people to connect to the local and national community by telling their own stories rather than only monitoring and responding to the ways in which experiences are being represented.

### Recommendation:

Local journalists, community organisations, activists, youth groups, charities, educators:

- Provide and share information about possibilities for engagement in citizen journalism, especially for young people.

However, citizen journalism should not be regarded as a substitute for access to journalism as a full-time professional job, the final action point.

## 5. Ensure access to journalism

Greater diversity is needed in mainstream media.

There are significant barriers to access. Professor Niblock asked important questions about journalists who covered the riots: are they really part of the communities they represent? Reports by a number of bodies such as the educational charity The Sutton Trust reveal that journalists increasingly hail from the most privileged demographics – private school and postgraduate courses. Niblock explained that journalists are no longer trained on the job but have to shoulder the costs of pre-entry training themselves. Only those with affluent backgrounds can afford the requisite fees, living expenses and extensive periods of unpaid work experience.

## Community initiatives

New UK charity the **Citizen Journalism Educational Trust (CJET)** uses community-based journalism to further the personal and social skills of disadvantaged young people. The Trust successfully piloted a Journalism for All summer school course, funded by London local authority Southwark Council and a grant from The Big Lottery – Awards for All scheme.

A key goal of future CJET courses is the removal of obstacles to participation faced by previously excluded, disadvantaged young people. CJET courses endeavour to help disadvantaged young people come forward to take part in focused, work-related programmes and activities designed to assist in their development as adults. The Trust's training fills the gap where there was little on offer to previously excluded individuals in their locality, or what was on offer was not relevant to them and their interests.

CJET has worked with a number of partners in this regard: The-Latest.Com, Media Trust, Guardian Media, Sky News, the BBC College of Journalism, Time Out magazine, the South London Press, Morley College, Kids Company and the London College of Communication.  
<http://www.cjet.org.uk/>

**Reprezent 107.3FM** is a youth-led radio station broadcasting to more than 350,000 young people across London. Reprezent works in some of the most deprived areas in the UK. It helps create a positive change for young people, providing a platform for both underground and established talent to shine, and for young people to improve their lives.

Reprezent's innovative 'Off The Streets' project provides young people at risk of underachieving at GCSE level the opportunity to take part in a radio production course and gain transferable skills to improve their educational and employment prospects.

Young people on the project learn skills which enable them to take on volunteer roles at the Reprezent FM radio station, whilst also sourcing work experience placements during the school holidays, both in media related and office based roles.

The project addresses personal issues such as confidence and self-esteem, communication skills and motivation. By working with young people before they leave school, Reprezent can help them tackle barriers to employment before they enter the job market.

<http://www.reprezent.org.uk/about>

### **Journalism Diversity Fund**

[www.journalismdiversityfund.com/](http://www.journalismdiversityfund.com/)

Funds student study on the NCTJ (National Council for the Training of Journalists) course.

Conference participants urged more training courses in journalism, particularly broadcast media, targeted at young people who live in impoverished inner city areas. They suggested that advisory panels could be set up for this purpose.

Participants also suggested that mentoring schemes should be formed involving media professionals and young people in schools.

This would be a crucial way for decision-makers in the media to gain a better understanding of young people's concerns, especially black youth, and essential for young people's access to journalism.

Diversity in newsrooms and editorial decision-making could also promote a better understanding by politicians particularly of the black community and its family values.

Information about existing schemes could be more widely shared to make sure young people are aware of opportunities. Three examples are outlined on the following page as well as in Appendix 5.

It is essential to provide training and mentoring to help people, previously disadvantaged from getting media jobs, to work in journalism and become stakeholders with the power to lobby for change and influence the way the industry develops.

### Recommendations:

Journalists, community organisations, activists, youth groups, charities, educators:

- Share information about existing schemes through which young people can enter journalism, particularly mentoring programmes.
- Lobby schools to introduce "Media Ambassadors" alongside "Business Ambassadors" in school employment programmes / visits.
- Develop more mentoring programmes.
- Work with bodies such as the National Union of Journalists and CJET to review access to journalism programmes and draw on existing audits of accessing journalism (e.g. Sutton Trust project).

The-Latest.Com, CJET, professional journalism bodies:

- Launch a young journalist competition: Young journalists / activists can submit an essay / multi-media contribution about media coverage of the riots. High-profile journalists and activists should be on the panel. Top contributions should be showcased on The-Latest.Com and by other journalism outlets.



# Conclusion

This report has attempted to reflect the challenges and the opportunities identified during the Media and the Riots conference of November 2011. The focus of the report has been on its Call for Action.

Part One mapped the ways in which perspectives and suggestions made by conference participants connected with and challenge existing reports, reporting and public debate. It explored the many faces of media coverage and the processes they set into motion: as a disinhibiting or a protective force; a tool for inciting rioting or to call for calm; a vehicle of consumerism or the voice of moral condemnation; a source of misinformation or data; as stigmatising or positive. Understanding the promises and challenges of these processes helps us seize on opportunities without trusting in them blindly or rejecting them wholesale. Part One laid the foundation for a plan for action.

Part Two of the report outlined a five-point plan for action that builds on the issues and concerns conference participants identified:

1. **Hold the media to account**
2. **Engage with journalists**
3. **Communicate with decision-makers**
4. **Promote citizen journalism**
5. **Ensure access to journalism**

This plan and the recommendations in each section are addressed to a range of different actors: young people and citizens in affected areas, journalists, educators, citizen journalists and others. These action points aim to open up new spaces where previously marginalised voices can be heard.

The time is ripe for taking action. At this moment the culture, practices and ethics of the media are being publicly examined through the Leveson Inquiry and the relationship of the press with the public, police and politicians is under scrutiny. A window of opportunity is open to make the connections between this public soul-searching and the lessons that can be drawn from August 2011. This is a chance for media's social, rather than commercial, function to be fulfilled better by providing more representative, balanced, rigorous reporting and to promote new forms of journalism and citizenship.

People are already organising and coming together in a number of ways, particularly young people who have created new spaces to express themselves. The challenge and opportunity for citizen and mainstream journalists is to counter damaging representations that we have been condemned to repeat and, more importantly, to enable the telling of new stories.



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The views of participants cited in this report are drawn from conference notes, summary reports of breakout sessions and feedback solicited from all participants following the conference through a survey conducted by The-Latest.Com. Details on the audience and speakers can be found in Appendices 1-2.

Conference notes were used, as well as summary reports of breakaway sessions. Feedback was solicited from all participants through The-Latest.Com.

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**Appendix 1: MEDIA and the RIOTS national conference**  
Citizen Journalism Educational Trust and The-Latest.Com  
Saturday, November 26 2011, London College of Communication

Programme

9.30am: Registration

10: Welcome by London College of Communication Dean of Media, Karin Askham, Martin Shaw, Citizen Journalism Educational Trust, and Marc Wadsworth, Editor of The-Latest.Com

10.20: Key note introduction from Gus John, academic, community activist and government advisor

10.40: Questions and short contributions

11: Local coverage of the riots with Sarah Niblock, Brunel University. Questions and answers.

11.30: Viewing of Sky News "Looters" interviews and discussion with the reporter Tom Parmenter who conducted them.

12: Break-out sessions

1) Young Voices. Gabriella Brent, Doris Amankwaah and Sandra Ferguson, Head of Community Regeneration for the Metropolitan Housing Partnership.

2) Then and now. Have things changed since the 'riots' of the 1980s? Facilitators Maxie Hayles, Birmingham Racial Attacks Monitoring Unit, and Symeon Brown, Haringey Youth Empowered.

3) What was the role of social media? Facilitator Mariann Hardey, Durham University, a dynamic young academic.

4) Law and order. Did the news media side with the police and politicians? Facilitators Marie Stewart, psychologist

and diversity consultant, and Peter Herbert, Chair of the Society of Black Lawyers, a part-time judge and ex-member of the Metropolitan Police Authority.

A volunteer from each group to be the rapporteur who writes down key points and reports back to the general meeting via a panel discussion.

1pm: Lunch

2pm: Panel of rapporteurs from break our sessions  
Chaired by David Hayward, BBC College of Journalism.  
Reports, questions and contributions.

2.30: Space Clotey, Voice of Africa, the View from abroad.  
What did foreign media think of British coverage of the riots and how did they report the disturbances themselves?

2.45pm: Closing remarks. Stafford Scott, Tottenham community activist.  
Networking

**Appendix 2: Audience Statistics – Media and the Riots Conference**

More than 150 young people, broadcast, online and print journalists, scholars and community workers attended the Media and the Riots conference in November 2011 at the London College of Communication, Elephant and Castle, south London.

Where did they come from in the UK and abroad?

Places in London: Elephant and Castle (south-east), Peckham (south-east), New Cross (south-east), Blackheath (south-east), Islington (north London), Hackney (east London), Holborn (central London), South Norwood (south-east), Wood Green (north London), Tottenham (north London), Brixton (south London), Willesden (north-west London), Plaistow (east London), Uxbridge (west London).

Out of London: Birmingham, Leicester, Manchester, Sutton (Surrey), Thornton Heath (Surrey), Gloucestershire, Guildford (Surrey), Bristol, Wiltshire, Lincoln, York, Portsmouth, Hertfordshire, Kingston.

Abroad: Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, USA.

\* This information was sourced from the data provided by individuals and organisations that purchased tickets for the event using the Paypal system of payment and the attendance list.

What do they do?

At least 50 attendees were students between the ages of 19 and

charity Kids Company were between 16 and 20 years old, as were the three from the Sutton citizen media project. Students and staff attended from places of learning that included City

University, the London College of Communication, the BBC College of Journalism, who provided a facilitator for one of the plenary sessions, London School of Economics, South Bank University, University of Kingston, Brunel University, whose Professor of Journalism was a speaker, King's College London, University of Lincoln, University of York, from which an academic presented a paper (on social media), University of Bristol, London Goldsmith's College, University of West London, the School of Oriental and African Studies and the Sutton Citizen Media project.

Senior representatives from community and special interest groups at the conference came from the Metropolitan Housing Partnership, Beyond the Will Smith Challenge, BritishBlackmusic.com, the 1990 Trust, Operation Black Vote, the National Black Caucus, The Monitoring Group, Tottenham Defence Campaign, the Society of Black Lawyers, the Black Police Association, the Runnymede Trust, visionOnTv, who provided a "pop up" television studio, the Birmingham Racial Attacks Monitoring Unit, Kids Company, the Unite union, the National Union of Journalists<sup>3</sup>, whose President was a speaker, the Strategic Alliance of Communities Rejecting Youth Destruction, the Citizen Journalism Educational Trust and The-Latest.Com citizen journalism website.

A number of media attended the conference including independent TV producer Pam Fraser Solomon, ex-Fleet Street columnist Loanna Morrison, Voice of Africa Radio editor Space Clotley and photographers and reporters including Elizabeth Pears, a senior journalist at The Voice newspaper.

\*This information was sourced from replies of acceptance to the invitations sent out to attend the Media and the Riots conference as well data obtained from individuals on the day of the event who signed a register at reception and from those attending the conference break-out sessions.

### **Appendix 3: Examples of The-Latest.Com Stories and Other Citizen Journalism Websites**

Police shooting victim Mark Duggan's family speaking out  
<http://www.the-latest.com/police-shooting-victim-mark-duggans-family-speak-out>

Stop and search of black youth must change  
<http://www.the-latest.com/police-stop-and-search-black-youth-must-change>

Mark Duggan's family voice anger at his slaying  
<http://www.the-latest.com/mark-duggans-family-voice-anger-his-slaying>  
Black journalists urgently needed in snowy white newsrooms

[www.the-latest.com/streetwise-or-another-media-lynching](http://www.the-latest.com/streetwise-or-another-media-lynching)  
Mumbling mayor is back home  
[www.the-latest.com/uk-riot-latest-mumbling-mayor-boris-back](http://www.the-latest.com/uk-riot-latest-mumbling-mayor-boris-back)

British PM to return from holiday early for crisis talks  
[www.the-latest.com/london-riot-latest-pm-return-hols-chair-cobra-meeting](http://www.the-latest.com/london-riot-latest-pm-return-hols-chair-cobra-meeting)

Other examples of citizen journalism websites in the UK:

Blottr.com

[iwitness24.co.uk](http://iwitness24.co.uk).

### **Appendix 4: Press and Broadcast Codes of Conduct**

National Union of Journalists Code of Conduct

[www.media.gn.apc.org/nujcode.html](http://www.media.gn.apc.org/nujcode.html)

National Union of Journalists Guidelines on Race Reporting

[www.mediawise.org.uk/www.mediawise.org.uk/display\\_page\\_8a15.html?id=648](http://www.mediawise.org.uk/www.mediawise.org.uk/display_page_8a15.html?id=648)

Ofcom Broadcasting Code

[www.stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/broadcast-codes/broadcast-code/](http://www.stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/broadcast-codes/broadcast-code/)

Press Complaints Commission – Code of Conduct

[www.pcc.org.uk/cop/practice.html](http://www.pcc.org.uk/cop/practice.html)

### **Appendix 5: Journalism Diversity Programmes**

George Viner Memorial Fund set up by the National Union of Journalists

[www.georgeviner.org.uk/about.html](http://www.georgeviner.org.uk/about.html)

Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust and Daily Mail bursaries

[www.stephenlawrence.org.uk/bursaries/](http://www.stephenlawrence.org.uk/bursaries/)

[www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2083988/Stephen-Lawrence-charity-Daily-Mail-sponsors-drive-help-disadvantaged-youngsters.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2083988/Stephen-Lawrence-charity-Daily-Mail-sponsors-drive-help-disadvantaged-youngsters.html)

Scott Trust Foundation (Guardian Media Group) bursaries

[www.gmgplc.co.uk/the-scott-trust/bursaries/journalism/](http://www.gmgplc.co.uk/the-scott-trust/bursaries/journalism/)

The-Latest.Com

[www.the-latest.com/participate](http://www.the-latest.com/participate)

Citizen Journalism Educational Trust

[www.cjet.org.uk](http://www.cjet.org.uk)

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Dr Mariann Hardey, Durham University

Deborah Hobson, Deputy Editor, The-Latest.Com

Malcolm James, London School of Economics

Professor Gus John, Institute of Education, University of London

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Marc Wadsworth, Editor, The-Latest.Com

## On the Report

The analysis and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the author and do not represent or engage the University of Leicester.

## Notes

1. This term should be understood as having scare quotes around it. One conference participant pointed out that for many present the term "uprisings" may be more culturally appropriate.
2. See [www.dpm.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/riot-communities-and-victims-panel-announced-0](http://www.dpm.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/riot-communities-and-victims-panel-announced-0) and [www.riotspanel.independent.gov.uk/](http://www.riotspanel.independent.gov.uk/).
3. Media coverage was also discussed in the Scarman Inquiry (1981: p. 133) and (Gifford 1989: pp. 123, 240).
4. See, for example, 'Man killed in shooting incident involving police officer' The Telegraph 4 August 2011
5. "Mark Duggan did not shoot at police, says IPCC" The Guardian 9 August 2011. "London riots: the family of Mark Duggan says it has no trust in the IPCC" The Guardian 14 August 2011.
6. "London riots: the family of Mark Duggan says it has no trust in the IPCC" The Guardian 14 August 2011.
7. "Statement by IPCC Commissioner Rachel Cerfontyne in relation to Duggan family complaint" IPCC Press release 29 February 2012. [www.ipcc.gov.uk/news/Pages/pr\\_290212\\_duggan.aspx?auto=True&l1link=pages%2Fnews.aspx&l1title=News%20and%20press&l2link=news%2FPages%2Fdefault.aspx&l2title=Press%20Releases](http://www.ipcc.gov.uk/news/Pages/pr_290212_duggan.aspx?auto=True&l1link=pages%2Fnews.aspx&l1title=News%20and%20press&l2link=news%2FPages%2Fdefault.aspx&l2title=Press%20Releases)
8. "Mark Duggan death: IPCC says hands are tied over release of evidence" The Guardian 29 March 2012. "London riots: Mark Duggan inquest 'may not be held'" BBC 26 March 2012.
9. Nina Power is founding member of "Defend the Right to Protest", which was created in the wake of crackdown on student protesters in 2010. [www.defendtherighttoprotest.org/](http://www.defendtherighttoprotest.org/)
10. The Guardian/London School of Economics Reading the Riots data indicate that of those surveyed 72% of rioters and 73% Guardian/ICM identified "media coverage" as an "important" or "very important" cause of the riots.
11. See: [www.guardian.co.uk/uk/series/reading-the-riots](http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/series/reading-the-riots)
12. See: [www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/dec/09/data-journalism-reading-riots](http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/dec/09/data-journalism-reading-riots)
13. See Appendix 1 for Conference Programme.
14. "Man killed in shooting incident involving police officer" The Telegraph 4 August 2011.
15. Tony Thompson "When I grew up in Tottenham, we stole sweets: now it's revenge shootings" London Evening Standard 9 August 2011.
16. The Victims Panel report provides the following information "The Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody found there had been 294 deaths in police custody between 1 January 2000 and 31 December 2010. Black men accounted for only 16 of the deaths in total and only 3 of 11 deaths whose primary cause was restraint" (102).
17. See: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=XubCqBtaF4U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XubCqBtaF4U).
18. Ryan Gallagher "The media's willful ignorance over England's riots" Open Democracy 19 August 2011. [www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/ryan-gallagher/wilful-ignorance-media-journalism-riots-tony-evans](http://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/ryan-gallagher/wilful-ignorance-media-journalism-riots-tony-evans)
19. "Media and the riots: representation of young people" [www.the-latest.com/media-and-riots-representation-young-people](http://www.the-latest.com/media-and-riots-representation-young-people)
20. See: [www.guardian.co.uk/society/series/behind-the-riots](http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/series/behind-the-riots)
21. See: [www.media.gn.apc.org/nujcode.html](http://www.media.gn.apc.org/nujcode.html)
22. See for instance: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryceglqWWhi&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryceglqWWhi&feature=youtu.be) and [www.mimshaikh.wordpress.com/2012/01/28/london-riots-radio-documentary-why-what-and-how/](http://www.mimshaikh.wordpress.com/2012/01/28/london-riots-radio-documentary-why-what-and-how/)
23. See Allan and Thorsen 2009.
24. Peat, D. (2010), "Cellphone Cameras Making Everyone into a Walking Newsroom", Toronto Sun, 1 February in (Greer 2010: 1045).
25. See Castells 2009.
26. "Over half the country's top journalists went to private schools", The Sutton Trust [www.suttontrust.com/news/news/over-half-the-countrys-top-journalists-went-to-private-schools/](http://www.suttontrust.com/news/news/over-half-the-countrys-top-journalists-went-to-private-schools/)
27. "Ethnic minorities 'largely absent' from British media" 12th Jan 2012 [www.pressgazette.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=1&storycode=48542&c=1](http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=1&storycode=48542&c=1)