

Gary Castor, Jefferson City News Tribune editor

Interviewed by Caitlin Kerfin

CK: How do you think journalists can better cover the income gap?

GC: I think by talking to a number of people from a number of demographic areas. Getting out of the office and really experiencing...experiencing that.

CK: Have you seen it covered in the media very much, and if you have do you think it's accurate. Do you think it could be better?

GC: I don't think it's been reported that well, no. I mean I honestly don't know that I understand it that well. The closest that I know we've done recently is that there was a poverty simulator that the group came in and showed folks experientially what it was like to be poor.

CK: Interesting, how did they do that?

GC: They were assigned identities and so you might be an unwed mother, you might be a student, and then someone might come up and quote rob you and take away your tokens and you know... you have to choose between if you could have a place to live or what you're going to eat or things like that.

CK: How would you personally define the income gap? What do you think it entails?

GC: I think what it is is folks who can... basically make a living wage. They can afford... what they make doesn't necessarily sustain their life if that makes sense. They can't pay their bills; they have to make tough choices between medications and food, things like that.x

CK: How often would you say in your newsroom the topic comes up?

GC: Not enough. I'd say rarely and usually it's in the scope of aspects of government assistance being cut or you start talking about minimum wage increases or things like that and then you start looking at the effects it has on folks with lower incomes.

CK: And what is the kind of, what do you think the best mindset is for the newsroom is in going into that type of coverage?

GC: I think they need to be fair, I don't think there's a right or wrong answer. Everything has its price so for instance raising the minimum wage has affects on other segments of the population as well. So I think our job is basically to show the cause and the effect of these actions and tough choices that folks on all sides of the equation have to make.

CK: Have you found anything like source wise that has been helpful in coverage or do you kind of go as it comes up?

GC: Kind of go as it comes up I think there is a, yea, there's a dearth of that type of information.

CK: Do you think for other newsrooms, would be helpful to create a team dedicated to the topic or would newsrooms come up with completely new stories or make it a focus do you think that would help in the coverage?

GC: I think it might, but most newsrooms are so tight on resources. There are a number of topics that probably should be covered better but I think that's certainly one approach is to really have a team dedicated to looking at the issue and that's sort of one very good approach would probably be especially a paper my size would be a subordinate beat if you will. But yea it certainly ties in with social services and health care and education all of those beats have a voice in that.

CK: So do you think if a newsroom were able to create a team it would be helpful to have someone from different beats or have people that are just on that one specific type of beat?

GC: I think it would be important to have people from different beats. If only so that you have the perspective of lets say education you know the effect that it has on the learning environment.

CK: Have you have any feedback from your community over your coverage of what you have done about the income inequality gap?

GC: No, other than just folks responding, I mentioned that poverty simulator, folks who have experienced that chimed in that weren't quoted in the story but that had experienced it and offered their thoughts as far as comments in our comments section on our story.