

Seattle Times statement on bias

The Seattle Times strives for fairness, depth and balance and guards against bias, both real and perceived, in all facets of its news coverage. This effort is at the core of The Seattle Times' commitment to excellence.

Bias can present itself in everything from beat structure to headlines and cutlines to assignments, choice of sources, story and photo approach, play and organization. Bias can blind journalists to a full understanding of a subject and rob readers of important information.

Because The Seattle Times recognizes journalists bring an array of opinions and experiences to subjects, it relies upon established tools and safeguards against bias, among them maintaining a diverse staff, the use of multiple sources, multiple layers of editing to help ensure a complete report, and consistent staff training and education.

The most important safeguard, however, is a journalist's humility before a subject and an understanding that no one person or entity holds the truth.

Practicing bias-free journalism: A thinking guide for working journalists

What is my perspective?

- How do my values or life experiences affect how I approach a story (verbal or visual)?
- What steps have I taken to ensure those values or experiences don't unfairly influence my story?

What are my motives?

- Do I have a self-interest in or strong opinions about a story, subject or source?
- What steps have I taken to disclose or detach from any personal motives or interests?

What are my assumptions?

- Have I taken a mental inventory of my own knowledge about or reaction to a subject?
- What have I done to ensure that my assumptions don't unfairly limit or influence my story?

Who are the stakeholders?

- How might various members of the public be affected by my story?
- What steps have I taken to discover and address their perspectives?

How deep is my reporting?

- What questions or knowledge would various members of the public have about a subject?
- What steps have I taken to report beyond my comfort zone, and to develop sources with varying perspectives on an issue?

How impartial is my story?

- How might my story be perceived by various members of the public?
- What have I done to ensure that my story is free of loaded language or unintended slants?
- What steps have I taken to exercise independent judgment, detached from any agenda?
- What have I done to ensure my actions and work are free of the appearance of bias?
- Will my work process, and story, stand up to professional and public scrutiny?