

People & Places

Media

Disability inclusion

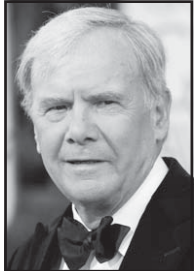
'Newsmen should get out of power centers'

NEW YORK, Jan 31, (AP): If **Tom Brokaw** has one piece of advice to leave for television journalists upon his retirement, it's to get out of more of the country - and not just to visit.

The Capitol insurrection is but one example of a story that might not have seemed as much a surprise if more journalists were attuned to communities outside of the power centers, the veteran NBC newsmen said.

Television news is "much, much too wedded to the East Coast and West Coast only" and needs to expand its presence across the country.

"Take some of the people who are only in Washington and send them to Salt Lake City or Kansas City, or St. Louis for that matter," he said in an interview with The Associated Press.



Brokaw

Brokaw, who turns 81 next month, announced last week that he's retiring from NBC News, where he worked for 55 years. He said he's been overwhelmed and heartened by the outpouring of good wishes from colleagues and people who watched him on TV for many of those years.

He's been away from the power centers himself, and hasn't been to New York since before the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. He has split time between homes in Montana and Florida.

His advice to the industry he's leaving behind has nothing to do with the sort of they-don't-make-'em-like-they-used-to criticism you might get from older people in any business. Brokaw said he's impressed with the work of young journalists at NBC News and elsewhere, and is invested in seeing them succeed.

He believes a reorientation can take place without a significant outlay of money for an industry that has seen a two-decade decline in local news coverage.

"I don't want to knock what they're doing now because they get on an airplane and go to these places and they do a good job," he said. "But I always found it was best to invest yourself in different parts of the country and get to know the politics and culture."

Pessimistic

He's pessimistic about a change in the public's attitude toward the press after four years in which President Donald Trump considered journalists the enemy.

"I don't think there will be a full recovery," he said. "I think this is baked in."

Brokaw has kept busy in the years since he stepped down as "NBC Nightly News" anchor in 2004, doing documentaries, appearing on "Morning Joe" and the network during news occasions for commentary and writing. He's finishing a book about his parents and their life growing up during the Depression in South Dakota.

For two decades, Brokaw, Peter Jennings at ABC and Dan Rather at CBS dominated television news - a period in which cable and digital news sources either didn't exist or weren't nearly as established as they are.

Brokaw recalled that when the late Jennings was asked whether the three men were friends he responded, "kind of." They were competitors but had a shared value system, Brokaw said.

"I grew up in Yankton, South Dakota, hoping that one day maybe I'll get to appear on NBC News with (Chet) Huntley and (David) Brinkley," he said. "And, by God, it was within three years I was on Huntley-Brinkley, first from Omaha and then from California.

"It was bang, bang, bang, just like that," he said, "and it frankly astonished me, astonished my parents and my friends back in South Dakota. I caught the merry-go-round and I was in the right place at the right time."

Asked how he was feeling, Brokaw said, "mixed, frankly." He was diagnosed in 2013 with multiple myeloma, an incurable blood cancer that affects the bone marrow, and this has led to painful back surgery. He got his first dose of COVID vaccine this past week.

Opportunities

Actors with disabilities will be included in auditions for each new film and television production at NBCUniversal, which becomes the second major media company to make such a commitment.

NBCUniversal said Friday that the pledge covers projects by the Universal Filmed Entertainment Group, Universal Studio Group, NBC network and Peacock streaming service.

The pledge was made in response to calls for change by the Ruderman Family Foundation, following a similar commitment the disability rights advocate received from CBS Entertainment in 2019.

"My hope is that other major studios in the industry will now see NBCUniversal and say, 'This is something that makes sense and we're also going to commit to this,'" said **Jay Ruderman**, head of the Boston-based foundation. Disney, Sony and major streaming services including Netflix and Amazon are among others the foundation would like to enlist, he said.

Opportunities

As more people with disabilities are seen in roles, "it will have ramifications throughout society," Ruderman told The Associated Press. Comcast-owned NBCUniversal signed on after a series of conversations with the foundation, he said.

The company is committed "to creating content that authentically reflects the world we live in, and increasing opportunities for those with disabilities is an integral part of that," said NBCUniversal executive vice president **Janine Jones-Clark**, whose portfolio includes film, TV and streaming inclusion.

Outside calls for action are important and "hold the industry accountable of the work we still need to do in order to see systemic change," Jones-Clark said in a statement.

According to the most recent foundation report, only about 22% of characters with disabilities on network and streaming shows in 2018 were "authentically portrayed by actors with disabilities." That's an improvement over 2016's finding that 5% of such TV roles went to actors with disabilities.

Actor **Kurt Yaeger** a member of the SAG-AFTRA Performers with Disability Committee, lauded the new agreement. "It's what I've been pushing for 10 years," he said, given how infrequently studios and producers open the door to people with disabilities.

Yaeger, who uses a prosthetic leg because of a motorcycle accident, has appeared as a guest actor in more than 50 TV episodes, including ABC's "The Good Doctor" and Netflix's upcoming "Another Life." That's more than most people who are auditioning regularly for continuing series roles, he said, adding, "I'd like more of those opportunities for me and my fellow performers with disabilities."



This image released by PBS shows Tamara Lawrence, (left), and Hayley Atwell in a scene from the miniseries 'The Long Song' which debuted Jan. 31 on 'Masterpiece.' (AP)

Television

Lawrance on using her skills to create work

'Long Song' actor makes her mark

LOS ANGELES, Jan 31, (AP): British actor Tamara Lawrence got on the phone from a movie shoot in Poland to discuss "The Long Song," a miniseries she filmed in the Dominican Republic as stand-in for Jamaica.

Both Lawrence and her career are on the move. In her first few years as an actor, she's played Viola in a stage version of "Twelfth Night" that screened internationally in theaters; portrayed a fictional girlfriend to Prince Harry in the 2017 TV movie "King Charles III," and was in an episode of filmmaker Steve McQueen's 2020 "Small Axe" anthology.

Glowing reviews met those and other performances, including in the three-part "The Long Song," which aired in Britain in 2018 and made its US debut Sunday on PBS' "Masterpiece" (check local listings for time). It's based on the acclaimed 2010 Andrea Levy novel of the same name.

The drama is set in the final days of slavery in 19th-century Jamaica and stars Lawrence as July, from her early years working in a plantation owner's house to liberation (with Doña Croll as the elder July). Lawrence has Jamaican roots - her mother was born there - but it was the chance to play the vibrant July as a fully realized character, not a downtrodden slave, that drew her to the project.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Lawrence discussed the meeting she was able to have with Levy a year before the writer's 2019 death; the value of being a triple-threat artist, and the fact-based movie she was working on in Europe with Letitia Wright ("Black Panther"). Remarks were edited for clarity and length.

AP: How did you prepare for the role of July?

Lawrence: This is a TV rendition of a book, so the first port of call is reading the novel. And I emailed Andrea Levy's agent to say, "Please pass on my thanks to Andrea, and if at any point I could speak to her that would be amazing." She invited me to her house and we had lunch, and she was gracious enough to talk about her process in writing a book and the research she did. I definitely remember her saying that July is not a victim. I took that to heart, that a slave is not a character. I'm not playing a slave. I'm playing July, and July is not a victim, she's a victor. She's a very formidable person. She's funny, she's attractive.

AP: The US and British entertainment industries have faced sharp criticism for a lack of inclusivity, ethnic and otherwise. When you thought about becoming an actor, what opportunities did you expect and what have you found?

Lawrence: I wanted to be an actor from an age before you think about such things. I wanted to be an actor out of a pure need for joy and for a very innocent fascination with the capacity to become someone else. It was only when I entered into my late teens that I came across teachers and extracurricular drama clubs where people would talk more about the vocational aspect to being an actor. And yes, I was told plenty of times, "Black people don't work, you're not going to get a job, blah, blah, blah." And I just would not talk to them. I had tunnel vision, be-

cause if this is all I want to do with my life, then what else is there to do?

AP: Is the British entertainment industry starting to change, become more inclusive?

Lawrence: I definitely think it is. There's an amazing energy among the actors of color that I know, an amazing focus and determination and excitement and also a proliferation of our own projects, which is equally exciting. People are seeing gaps in the market and saying, "OK, let's make this, let's do this." People are taking much more agency and not waiting around. Back in the day, they thought maybe actor-singer-dancer was the triple threat, but now I think it's actor-writer-director, or producer. People are very much multidisciplinary artists. If I'm not working on screen, I'm going to do something else with my time. I can use my skills in other areas to create work for myself and my peers.

AP: What project brought you to Poland?

Lawrence: It's called "Silent Twins," based on a book. The twins are notorious in British culture for having selective mutism. There was a sort of folklore around them, that one twin controlled the other. But actually, their decision to only talk to each other and not to anyone else was a product of the context they were born into: Black women in the 1970s in Wales, with immigrant parents and a speech impediment. They struggle to fit in and to belong, withdraw into their own world and then very scandalously end up in Broadmoor (an English high security psychiatric hospital) at the age of 19.



Actress Jane Fonda appears at the 71st international film festival in Cannes, southern France, on May 12, 2018. The Golden Globes will bestow the Cecil B. DeMille Award to Fonda during the 78th annual awards show. (AP)



Stewart



Lee

Variety

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. Rock icon **Rod Stewart** and his son have reached a plea deal to settle misdemeanor battery charges stemming from an altercation with a security guard at a posh Florida hotel.

Prosecutors and defense attorneys announced Friday that Stewart and his son, **Sean Stewart**, would not be going to trial for the altercation at The Breakers hotel in Palm Beach on New Year's Day 2020, the South Florida SunSentinel reported. Terms were not released.

Stewart, 76 and a member of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, is best known for such hits as "Maggie May" and "Tonight's the Night." The London-born singer was knighted by **Queen Elizabeth II** in 2016.

Security guard **Jessie Dixon** told police then that the now 76-year-old Stewart and his family were at the check-in table for a private party that they weren't authorized to attend.

Dixon said the group became loud and began causing a scene. Dixon told investigators he put his hand on the younger Stewart's chest and told him to back up and make space, the report said.

That's when Sean Stewart, the rock star's 40-year-old son, got "nose to nose" with Dixon.

Sean Stewart then shoved Dixon backwards. **Rod Stewart** punched Dixon in his "left rib cage area" with a closed fist, a police report said.

The police report said Sean Stewart told investigators he became agitated when they were not able to attend the event "due to Dixon's interaction with him and his family."

Palm Beach officer **Stephen Mancino** said he viewed security footage at the hotel and determined that the Stewarts were the "primary aggressors."

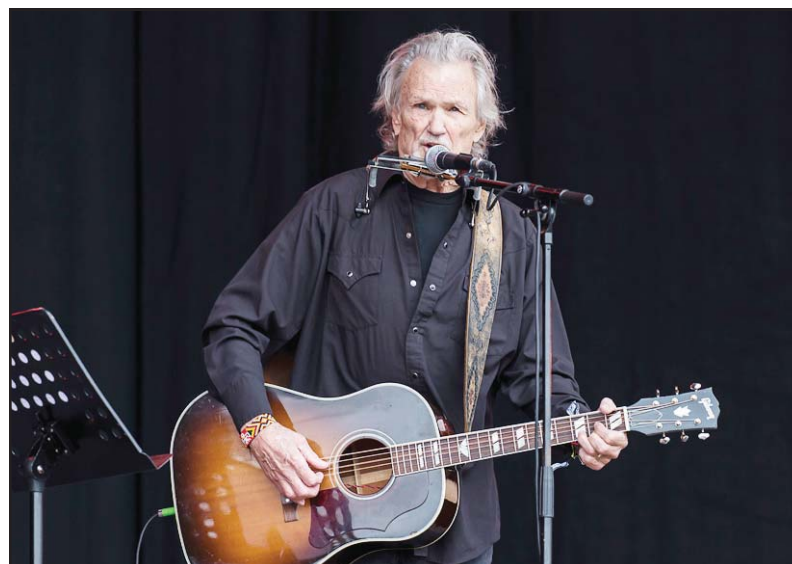
Two Breakers employees who were working the private event told police they saw Sean Stewart push Dixon and Rod Stewart punch the guard.

Dixon signed an affidavit saying that he wanted to press charges against the Stewarts. (AP)

NEW YORK: **Corky Lee**, a photojournalist who spent five decades spotlight-

ing the often ignored Asian and Pacific Islander American communities, has died. He was 73.

Lee died Wednesday in New York City's Queens borough of complications from COVID-19, his family said in a statement.



Singer Kris Kristofferson performs at the Glastonbury music festival at Worthy Farm, in Somerset, England, on June 23, 2017. Kristofferson has retired after five decades. A statement from his publicist said the Country Music Hall of Famer and Grammy winner retired in 2020. His son, John, stepped in last year to oversee his father's business including his record label. The Texas-born Oxford scholar brought introspective and poetic lyrics to country music with songs like 'Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down' and 'Me and Bobby McGee.' He was a member of the supergroup The Highwaymen and starred in 70 films over his career. (AP)

"His passion was to rediscover, document and champion through his images the plight of all Americans but most especially that of Asian and Pacific Islanders," his family said.

The self-described "undisputed unofficial Asian American Photographer Laureate," Lee used his eye to pursue what he saw as "photographic justice." Almost always sporting a camera around his neck, he was present at many seminal moments impacting Asian America over a 50-year career.

He was born **Young Kwok Lee** in New York City to Chinese immigrant parents. He was the first child in his family to go to college, graduating from City University of New York's Queens College.

A self-taught freelance photographer, Lee aimed his camera lens on a slew of subjects from anti-Vietnam war protests to police brutality. Over the years, his photos appeared in The New York Times, Time magazine, the New York Post, New York Daily News, The Associated Press and Asian American outlets. Most recently, he was documenting anti-Asian racism brought on by the pandemic.

Lee was there when Asian Americans took to the streets to protest the lack of jail time for the killers of **Vincent Chin**. The 27-year-old Chin was beaten to death in **Detroit** in 1982, a time when **Japan** was being blamed for the US auto industry's decline. The two laid-off white autoworkers who killed Chin - who was Chinese - assumed he was Japanese. They were convicted of manslaughter but got just three years of probation. (AP)