

WHERE ARE T

We caught up with past RTNDF scholarship winners to find

To coincide with the RTNDA/Ball State University Annual Survey on minorities and women in TV and radio (see page 26), we looked to past winners of three RTNDF scholarships to get their thoughts on diversity in the newsroom.

As a group, the past winners of the Ed Bradley, Ken Kashiwahara and Carole Simpson scholarships have done well.

After graduating, many followed their interest in broadcast journalism. Some have moved at lightning speed into the biggest stations and biggest markets, seemingly figuring out the system quite perceptively. Others are still grappling with what they want to be when they grow up. All have distinct views on the industry and equally distinct perspectives to offer.

Diversity and the Big Leagues

Five past winners are working in major markets and diverse newsrooms.

"I came from places where I was really nurtured and helped," says 1996 Ed Bradley scholarship winner Nischelle Turner. "Here, you're expected to be able to do your thing, and you should be." Here is KTTV in Los Angeles. Turner started as a general assignment reporter in September 2004. In January 2005, she added the title of anchor for Good Day L.A. Weekend.

"I really dig the morning show here," says Turner. "It's very conversational and fits me well."

After graduating from the University of Missouri in 1998, she got a job as a

reporter at WEHT-TV in Evansville, IN. She spent two years there before going to WVUE-TV in New Orleans, where she stayed for four years.

"I work with broadcast legends," she says, but credits the "amazing, really talented, good people" along the way who helped her learn and pushed her to do better.

She expects to make Los Angeles and KTTV her home for "a really long time."

For others, home is, ultimately, where family is, so the wanderlust inherent in the business may continue until they're back where they started.

That might be the case for Kiet Do, now a reporter for WAGA-TV in Atlanta.

"I didn't want it to go to an underserving person," he says of the Ken Kashiwahara scholarship he received in 1999 as a junior at San Jose State University.

His connection to Kashiwahara goes deeper than the scholarship. Although they never met, his family and Kashiwahara were on the deck of the same aircraft carrier leaving Vietnam. Do is the first U.S. citizen in his family, born on the U.S. Naval Base in Guam on the day Saigon fell, April 30, 1975.

In 2000, Do got a job as a bureau reporter for KOAT-TV in Albuquerque, NM. He says he learned a lot working on his own, and it was easier to make—and fix—mistakes as a one-man band. Later, he became a morning reporter at the station, and in December 2004, he moved to morning reporter at WAGA.

"Never in a million years did I think I'd be in Atlanta," says Do. "It's an amazing station. Everyone brings their 'A' game every day, and that raises your game." He adds that it is one of the most diverse newsrooms he's ever seen.

For Do, the morning has become his "niche," partly because it allows him to spend a little extra time on stories by staying a little later "to elevate the everyday story and make it memorable." The challenge, sometimes, is getting out of the station.

As an Asian American, Do says he also sees himself as a "two-way ambassador" from the newsroom to a sometimes skeptical Asian community and from that community back to the newsroom. At the same time, he says he doesn't define himself as a minority, but rather "just an American."

Do likes Atlanta and isn't sure what is next, but San Jose is home and his family is there.

On the other side of the continent in suburban Philadelphia, Joel Brown has long-term goals that will keep him on the Eastern seaboard.

Around eighth grade, Brown figured out that he "wanted to be Peter Jennings." He still does.

When he won the 2000 Ed Bradley scholarship, the 60 Minutes correspondent contacted him. "Ed Bradley said, 'Kid, it's going to be hard, but you've got something,'" says Brown. "I needed that. The image of a strong African American man is important for a guy like me."

A guy like him, Brown says, considers himself a journalist first but also

HEY NOW?

By Bob Papper

out what they think of the real world.

understands his responsibility as a black journalist to “offer input and a perspective within the newsroom on issues that I may have unique feelings on.”

After graduating from Howard University in Washington, he got a job as a reporter at KETK-TV in Tyler, TX, moving to a mix of reporting and anchoring.

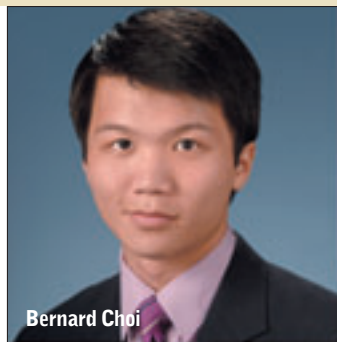
In November 2004, he moved from Tyler to Miami as a general assignment reporter at WSVN-TV.

“It’s a reporter boot camp,” says Brown, but he loves his job and the city and thinks that he has proven he can fit in with WSVN’s “run-and-gun, fast-paced, get-on-the-air-first” approach to news.

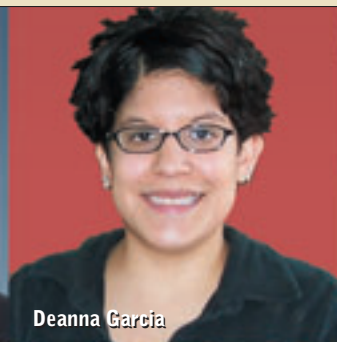
“People are genuinely nice, but the philosophy is tough,” says Brown, who admits to missing the anchor desk “a little,” though he enjoys the reporting duties. He’ll be 28 when his contract is up, and he’ll evaluate his next step then, but he does envision that network anchor chair somewhere down the line.

Home came to Vicky Nguyen in Phoenix, when her parents moved there to be with her. After recently buying her own home, the KSAZ-TV reporter says she has come a long way from a family of “boat people” who gave up everything when they left Vietnam in 1979 when she was eight months old.

“My career up to this point has gone by very fast,” she says. After graduating from the University of San Francisco, the 1999 Carole Simpson scholarship winner landed a job as a



Bernard Choi



Deanna Garcia



Jonathan Martin



Nischelle Turner



Joel Brown



Waliya Lari



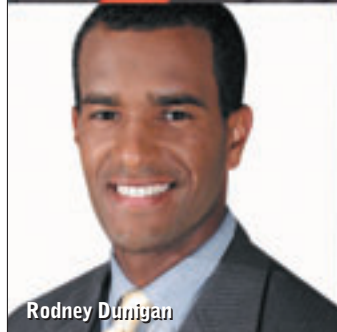
Stephanie Valle



Lanaea Parker



Vicky Nguyen



Rodney Dunigan



Kiet Do



Nadia Bashir

ON GIVING BACK

Three scholarship founders reflect on their role.



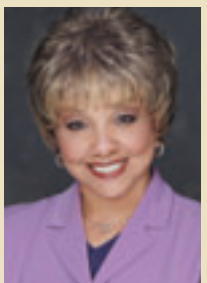
I created the scholarship to offer a helping hand. Throughout my life there were always people who were there when I needed that helping hand;

be it a word of encouragement, some good advice or financial help. For me, this was a way to give something back.—Ed Bradley



When I retired, I looked around for a way to give something back to a profession that had been very good to me. I was inspired by RTNDF scholar-

ships established by Ed Bradley and Carole Simpson and decided to add an Asian name to the program for needy minority students. My hope is that the scholarship will be the necessary boost the students need to graduate and succeed in a business in which minorities are still underrepresented.—Ken Kashiwahara



Perhaps because I came of age during the civil rights and women's movements, I developed the strong desire to help others of my gender and/or color. The money

I have given women and minorities studying broadcast journalism over the years is nothing compared to what these students have given me: pride and gratitude that I could play a tiny role in their growing accomplishments.—Carole Simpson

reporter at Central Florida News 13. Two years later, she joined KOLO-TV in Reno, NV, and in January 2004, she went to Phoenix.

Nguyen admires the “talented, smart journalists” she learns from daily and likes being able to “take a breath” and establish some roots, all the while keeping her original home in the San Francisco Bay area in the back of her mind.

Wet weather aside, Bernard Choi likes things just the way they are as “a kid in a candy store.” On his days off, he watches KING-TV in Seattle and still can't believe he's a reporter there. Especially since, early on, he didn't think he looked like the “TV type.”

Choi was born in Hong Kong but grew up in New York City. He won the Ed Bradley scholarship in 1998 and in 2000 graduated from the University of Missouri and got a job at KWCH-TV in Wichita, KS. Work that Choi participated in won the station a national Edward R. Murrow Award. In early 2004, he became a general assignment reporter at KING.

“As a minority, I feel I have to work harder during the first months of employment to prove my abilities,” he says. With what he fears is an “unspoken quota system,” the pressure is on to prove that he wasn't just a minority hire. At the same time, Choi says he feels a responsibility to represent “views, causes and/or issues important to minorities.” Doing so is not “beating a drum,” he says. It's being sensitive to the issues and bringing them forward.

“At my age—being where I am professionally—it couldn't have worked out better,” he says.

On the Way Up

While these recipients now in the top 25 markets can't believe their good fortune, others have been in the business only a few years and are still working their way up.

KVIA-TV in El Paso, TX, hired Stephanie Valle as a reporter on her 20th birthday in 2002. That was the same year she won the Carole Simpson scholarship and two years before she graduated. Valle credits her high school

broadcast teacher for helping her secure the internship at KVIA and for having the biggest influence on her career.

Three months later, Valle was working part time for the station in production and then part time as a reporter. In January 2004, Valle started anchoring Good Morning El Paso on Saturday and Sunday mornings, reporting the rest of the day and producing the rest of the week—all with a full load at the University of Texas at El Paso.

“I had no social life,” she says. “I heard about parties after the fact.”

After mastering the tough schedule, she plans to stay put for a while.

In contrast, Rodney Dunigan is working at his third station in three years. The 2001 Ed Bradley scholarship winner started reporting at WJTV in Jackson, MS, then at WAAY-TV in Huntsville, AL, and has spent the past year as the Greene County bureau chief for WDTN-TV in Dayton, OH.

He likes what he's doing, but the one-man-band aspect is “difficult at times.” He's doing a lot of stories, and he's doing them by himself. Investigative reporting interests him, but he knows that's not a possibility right now.

A Chicago native, Dunigan went to Tougaloo College in Jackson, MS, “just trying to get as far away from home as possible.” Now, he tries to get home every other week. He's hoping his next move takes him to a top-25 market in the Midwest and closer to family. He dreams of working in Chicago.

In radio, Deanna Garcia is doing exactly what she set out to do. The 2003 Carole Simpson scholarship winner wanted to work in public radio. She did that at home in Las Cruces, NM, while attending New Mexico State University. She got in touch with current RTNDA chairman and WTMJ-AM news director Dan Shelley for help with her resume. After graduating in 2004, she interned at National Public Radio in Washington and then took a job as reporter and local host for All Things Considered on NPR affiliate WXXI-FM in Rochester, NY.

“I got an offer I couldn't refuse,” says Garcia. She's excited to report on and meet newsmakers and learn from the experience of co-workers.

CALLING ALL WINNERS

Are you a previous recipient of an RTNDF scholarship or fellowship? Let us know what you're doing by contacting project assistant Irving Washington at irvingw@rtndf.org.

Rochester has been an adjustment, though, and Garcia says she appreciates the sun more than ever “because it’s such a rarity.” When she moved, she says she gave herself five years—and then she’ll reevaluate. She also wants to get a master’s degree eventually.

Lanaea Parker is working on her master’s degree now. She won the Carole Simpson scholarship in 2001. Upon graduating from Louisiana State University a year later, she accepted an internship at the International Center for Journalists in Washington. Today, she is a program officer for the Knight International Press Fellowships there, a program that sends journalists to foreign countries to train other journalists.

Although she’s not in a newsroom, Lanaea says she doesn’t think she’s left journalism. “Every day I’m in touch with journalists and newsmakers.”

She travels internationally for her job, especially to Latin America, and is working on her master’s degree in Latin American studies at American University. After graduating, she hopes to become an expert in the subject and maybe a newsmaker herself.

“Learning the Business”

More recent scholarship recipients are just starting out.

The Ed Bradley scholarship winner from 2003, Jonathan Martin, has been interning with WSB-TV in Atlanta and “learning the business” since he graduated from Auburn University last summer. He’s making a resume tape and looking for a small- to medium-market reporting job.

He’s hoping for something in Georgia or North Carolina because he has family there, but he knows he has to be prepared for anything. “You’ve got to start small,” he says. “You can’t be picky.”

No slacker, Martin won Alabama Associated Press student awards in 2004 and 2005. He keeps in touch with his Reginald Jones mentor and anchor at WTVY-TV in Dothan, AL, for his ongoing advice and counsel. And he recognizes and appreciates the diversity at WSB.

“I find it very encouraging to see minorities in management positions at a station and market like this one,” he says.

His immediate goal is to get that reporting job and become a “well-respected journalist.” His longer-term goal is to be a news director at a large-market station.

By the time this article is published, Waliya Lari hopes to have a regular job. She won the Ken Kashiwahara scholarship in 2003 and, since graduating from the University of Texas at Austin, has worked as a news associate at NBC News, a program that rotates participants through various news programs. While she’s learned a great deal, she says she sometimes feels like she’s “just doing television and not being a journalist.”

The one-year program often leads to jobs at NBC or NBC-owned stations for news associates. But nothing is guaranteed, so Lari is busy looking. Her main criteria: to be an “important component of the editorial decision-making and get to write.”

She sees herself as a producer, though she’s not sure whether local or network, and she eventually wants to become a news director. Whatever the job description, Lari says she’ll always have a responsibility to use her background and experiences to help produce better journalism.

“Growing up Muslim, it is my duty to use my knowledge of that segment of the population and serve them in the ways the media is not,” she says, while also vowing to give an honest depiction. “I cannot be a cheerleader for the Muslim and South Asian community and ignore their faults.”

Traveling Light

There are other past scholarship winners who have yet to get started on their career path, but they’re stockpiling life experiences.

Nadia Bashir won the Ken Kashiwahara scholarship in 2001 and graduated from Ohio University in 2003. From Pakistan, she took time to do some traveling, but she’s now back home in Cincinnati, helping her father

after his bypass surgeries and attending law school part time.

“Journalism is the most important thing in my life other than family,” says Bashir.

She still wants to be a reporter. “I love reporting,” she says. “It allows so much potential for connecting viewers and the community.”

Between school and taking care of her father, Bashir hasn’t devoted a lot of time to the job search but nevertheless says she is “surprised how unresponsive people are to minorities” and concerned that many in positions to hire may overlook what diversity brings to the newsroom.

Fellow traveler Terra Robinson won the 2002 Ken Kashiwahara scholarship, graduated from the University of Georgia in December 2003 and has spent much of the time abroad, studying, doing market research and seeing the world.

Now back home in Atlanta, Robinson is looking for a job, possibly at a magazine or in broadcasting, and thinking about graduate school. She says her parents have some concerns about her lack of employment, but she’s not worried.

“This is a good time to have those experiences, when you’re young and unattached,” says Robinson. “I have a long time ahead of me. Why worry about it now?”

Other past winners are as varied as this representative group. Some are reporters and some are out of the business entirely. Some work in far-flung locales like Thailand and some we couldn’t locate in time for this article. At least one has died. Hope Bartlett, the 1995 Carole Simpson scholarship winner, died in a boating accident in 1998 while on assignment for WJXX-TV in Jacksonville, FL. Northwestern University has a scholarship in her name.

Of the 13 we talked to, few have met those who endowed the scholarships they received. All, however, hold Bradley, Kashiwahara and Simpson in high regard as mentors who gave them the model, financial backing and confidence to succeed in any setting.—Bob Papper is professor of telecommunications at Ball State University and director of the RTNDA/Ball State University Annual Survey.