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Case Studies: Media Pitches That Worked

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Pitches That Worked



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Redemption Story – Jackie Miller and Ted Suttan



In 1968, Ted Suttan rescued a 5-year-old girl from a makeshift fire. Nineteen years later, Terrelline Miller reunites with him at her



From this article



A mom, a disabled son and a home that blazed amid Baltimore's riots

May 18, 2015

The Subject Line



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- Get Out Your Hanky
- Catchy
- Short
- Story lives up to subject line



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The Pitch

Make It Personal



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Hi Pamela,

Have I got a story for you! This is definitely one of the best triumph over adversity stories I've run across in my whole career, with two lives completely transformed by tragedy. This is a fantastic story about facing unbelievable challenges and the wonder of redemption. I think this is a national story as it is still timely due to Dr. Sutton's line of work. I know it's early to commit, but let me know as soon as you can if you are interested. I am going to pitch this to broadcast media as well.

Best,

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The Pitch On Their Terms



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Into the Fire

Beginning May 20, Towson University will hand out more than 3400 diplomas and certificates of completion. On that Wednesday, Jacqueline Miller will be one of the proud recipients. It has been a challenging journey for the 24 year old who was severely burned in a house fire in 1996. As a result of that fire, Miller lost part of her hands. Ironically, it was writing that helped her through her ordeal.

"I always liked to write and read. It was writing that helped me deal with my feelings after the fire," Miller says.

Miller was not the only person who was saved that night 19 years ago. The life of her rescuer, Ted Sutton, was transformed as well. Sutton was a self-described thug and gang banger who happened by when Miller's house was in flames. He ran into the home and saved Miller and several other children. Unfortunately, four children and Miller's mother lost their lives.



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The Pitch On Their Terms



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Into the Fire (cont'd)

That rush into the flames was Sutton's Phoenix moment. He returned from the fire reborn. He put away his life as a gang member, and now heads [Sutton House](#), a non-profit organization that focuses on youth, community services & development and gang prevention & intervention. Now working on his second Ph.D., [Sutton has been much involved in providing direction after the recent Baltimore riots.](#)

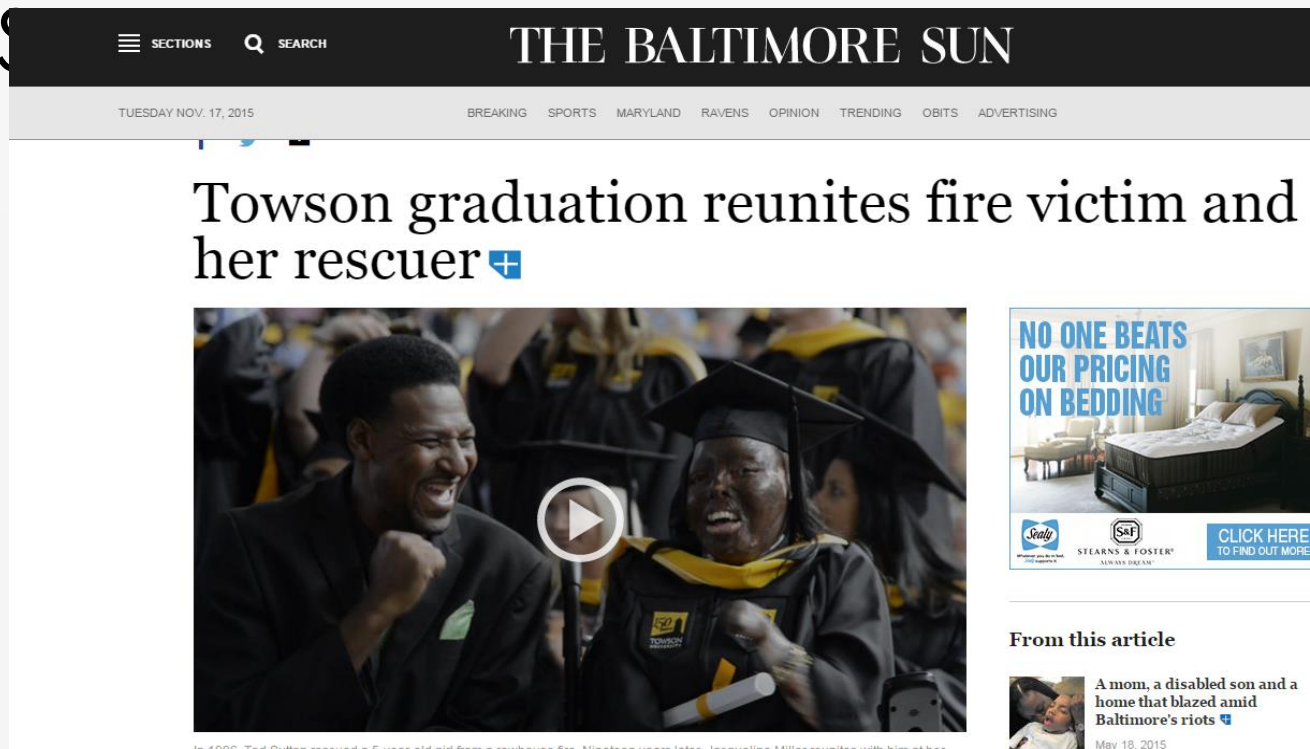
Sutton will be there to see Miller accept her diploma in recognition of completing her bachelor's degree in English. Miller plans to pursue a master's degree in clinical social work and hopes to work in a hospital burn unit where she can help other survivors.

Pitches That Worked



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Redemption Story – Jackie Miller and Ted S



In 1998, Ted Sutton rescued a 5-year-old girl from a warehouse fire. Nineteen years later, Jacqueline Miller reunites with him at her



From this article

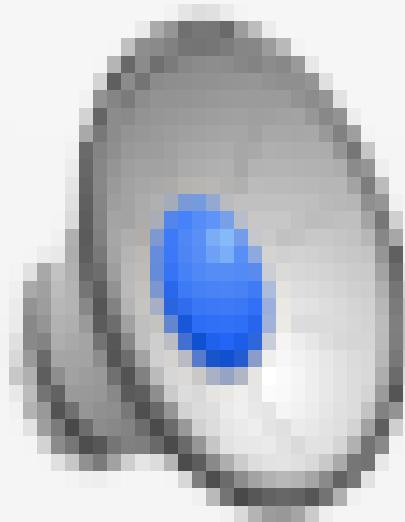


A mom, a disabled son and a home that blazed amid Baltimore's riots

May 18, 2015



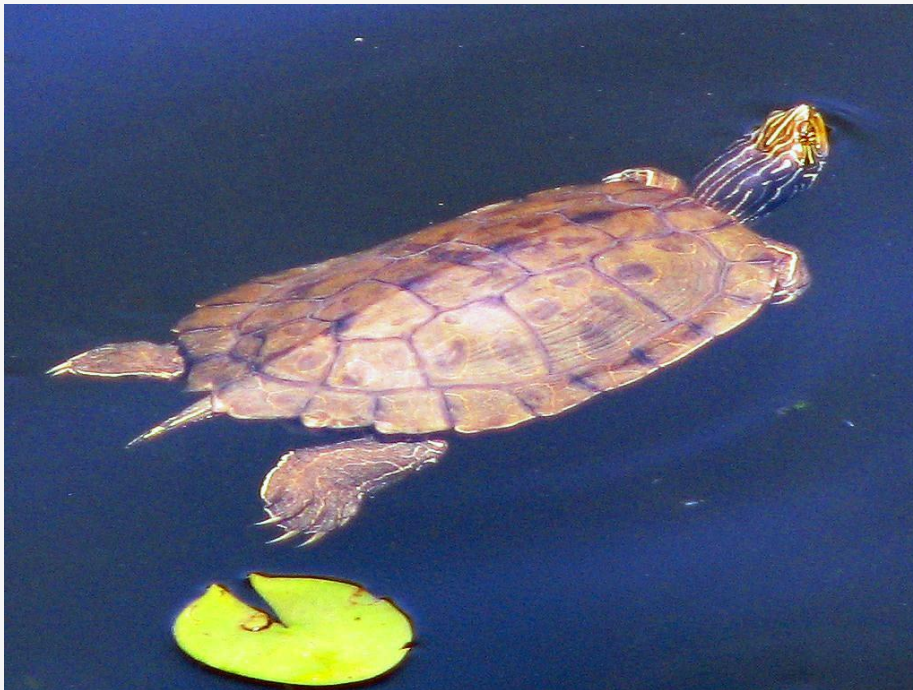
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Pitches That Worked



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Delayed
Gratification:
The Northern Map
Turtle & Nat Geo

History



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- Learned about map turtles late August 2012
 - Partnership with people of Port Deposit
 - Food and Wine Festival
- Began pitching in early September
- Caught interest of National Geographic in October
- Sent video of Rhonda
- Story gets pushed back by NG editor
- Bad timing – Winter sets in. Turtles hibernate
- [#powerofPR](#) [@TowsonUNews](#) Turtles come out April 2013

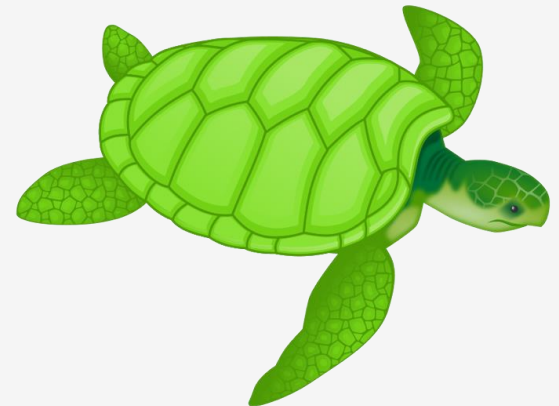


The Subject Line



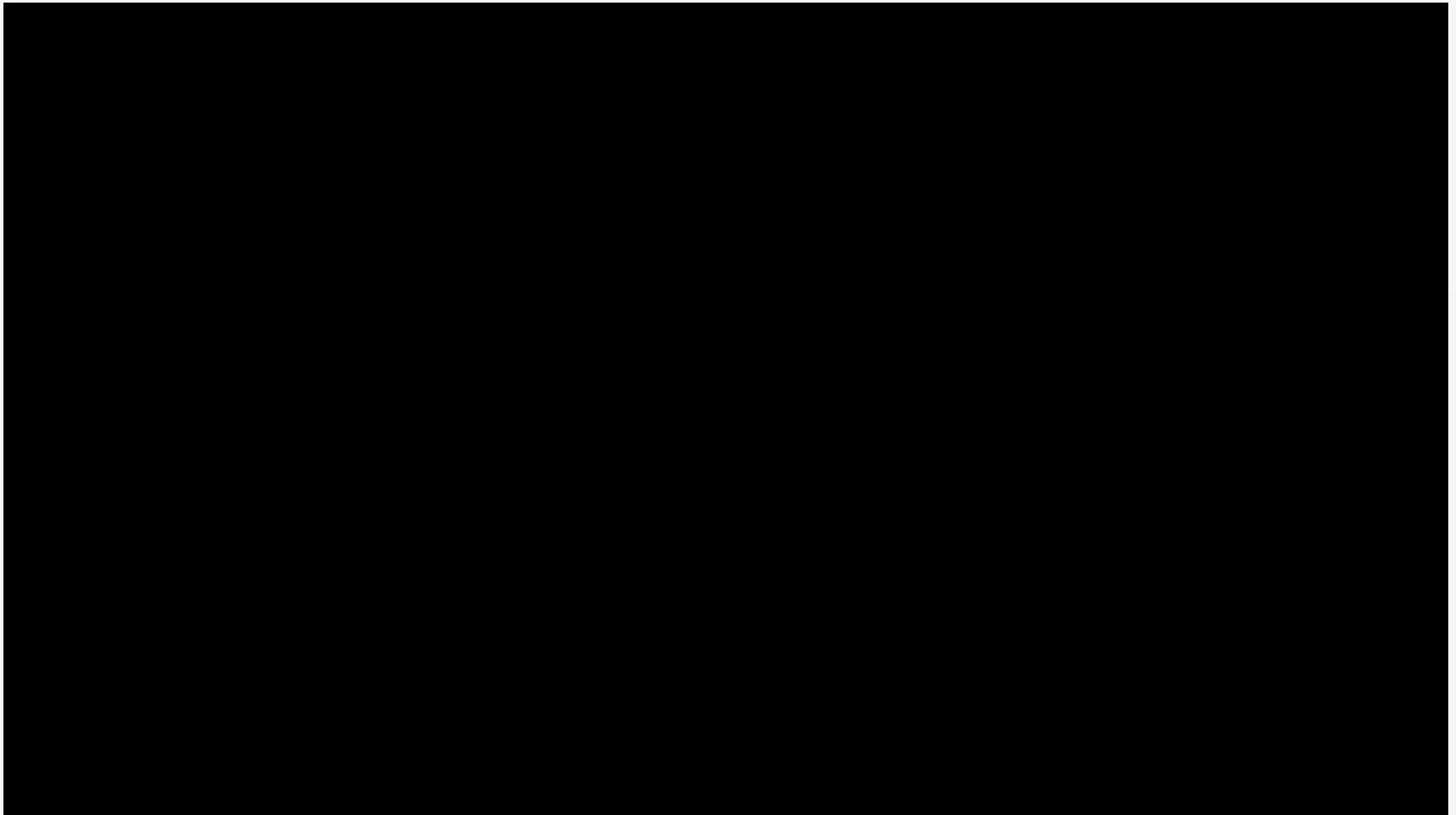
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- The Saga of the Endangered Northern Map Turtle
- Direct appeal to reporter's interest





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The Pitch



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Hello Brian,

I believe that I have a story that might interest you. In the historic small town of Port Deposit, MD, residents have joined Towson University professor Richard Seigel (conservation and population ecology of amphibians and reptiles) and his research team to save the northern map turtle, an endangered Maryland species. The northern map turtle once could have been found all along the Susquehanna River, but is now only found along the Conowingo dam. The dam opens every day at 2:00, the same time these turtles come out to sun themselves. Needless to say this has had a negative effect on the turtles. The Exelon Corporation that operates the dam has joined the town in supporting research to save the turtle.

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The Pitch



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Another hurdle for the turtle is that unknowingly, the town erected a memorial with a large brick walkway that covers a great deal of the turtle's nesting site. It is amazing to see the little scrap of land in Marina Park that this turtle has left to nest. There are now plans to dig up the memorial and relocate it. These are just two of the challenges facing this turtle's struggle to survive. I would love to fill you in on the rest.

Ta Da!



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VOICES Ideas and Insight From Explorers

BioBlitz

Ocean Views

Voice for Elephants

Cat Watch

Polar Bear Watch

Water Currents

Explorers Journal

Rising Star Expedition

Fulbright National Geographic
Stories



The Turtle and the Town: Freshwater Species of the Week

Posted by **Brian Clark Howard** of National Geographic on April 26, 2013



(8)



Like

372



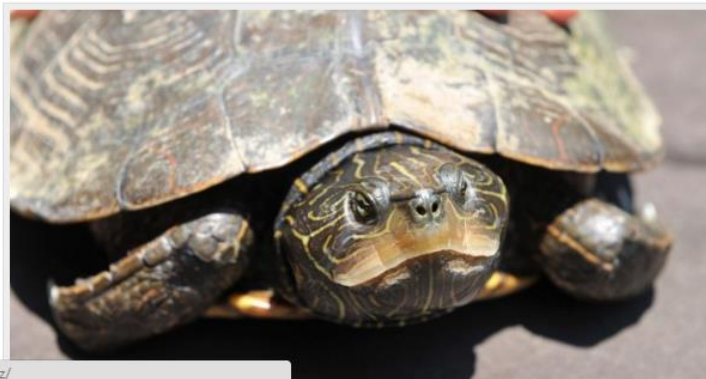
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3



More »



voices.nationalgeographic.com/blog/bioblitz/

April 26, 2013 –
Story published
[National Geographic](#)



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The Holy Grail



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Or how eight failed pitches landed TU in the Chronicle of Higher Education...

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

ADMINISTRATION

Campus Cops' Contested Role

Despite challenges to their authority, their focus on community may be a model

By Scott Carlson | OCTOBER 18, 2015

OXFORD, OHIO



To Wright for The Chronicle

Tell Sgt. Dustin Young he's not a real cop. He has broken up drunken brawls, pulled a four-foot snake out of a building, and investigated countless cases of sexual assault. A few years ago, he saw a young man walking toward tracks and an oncoming train. Sergeant Young raced



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The Chronicle of Higher Education



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sheriff's department, and a recruit straight from the police academy. In a force of 40, some have backgrounds in cybercrime, child abuse, and narcotics.



André Chung for The Chronicle

Bernhard Gerst, chief of police at Towson U., near Baltimore, oversees an \$8-million, state-of-the-art public-safety building outfitted with communications technology for use in an emergency.

oasis."

Bernard J. Gerst, Towson's police chief, spent 22 years in the Baltimore County Police Department before coming to the campus to run his own force. "A lot of the things you do in municipal policing you do on campus: community relations, crime prevention, high-visibility patrols, good, solid investigations," says Chief Gerst. "I believe there is a higher expectation for campus police. Parents want their sons and daughters going to a safe institution, and there is a perception that crime doesn't occur on campus, that it's an



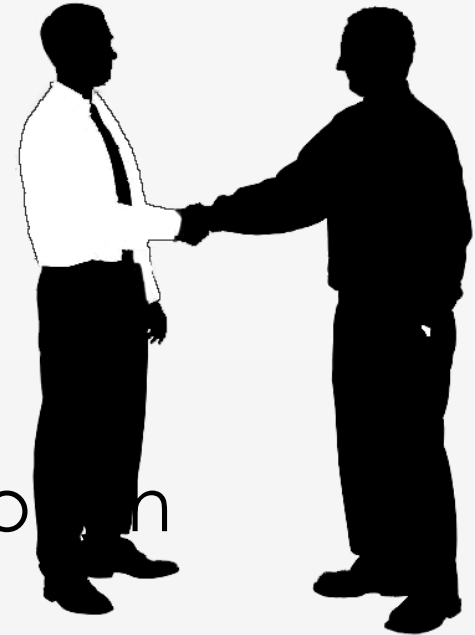
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Experts



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- Mostly local
- Media calls me
- National
 - Economy (Daraius Irani)
 - Notoriously difficult to break through
 - Trusted relationships
- Know their schedules and preferred mode of contact
- Give them what they ask for or suggest a slightly different angle (Holiday shopping)



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How'd She Do That?



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A yellow rectangular sticky note with a slightly torn bottom edge, tilted at an angle. It has the handwritten text "top tips..." in black ink.

top tips...



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Vet Your Story



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Is it news or is it a
journalist's pet
peeve?



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Think Like a Reporter



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Characteristics of News



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Impact



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Who cares?
Seriously.
Who will be
affected by
your story,
and how?

Timeliness



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- Is your story current?
- New Angle or new details to an old story?
- Bewc

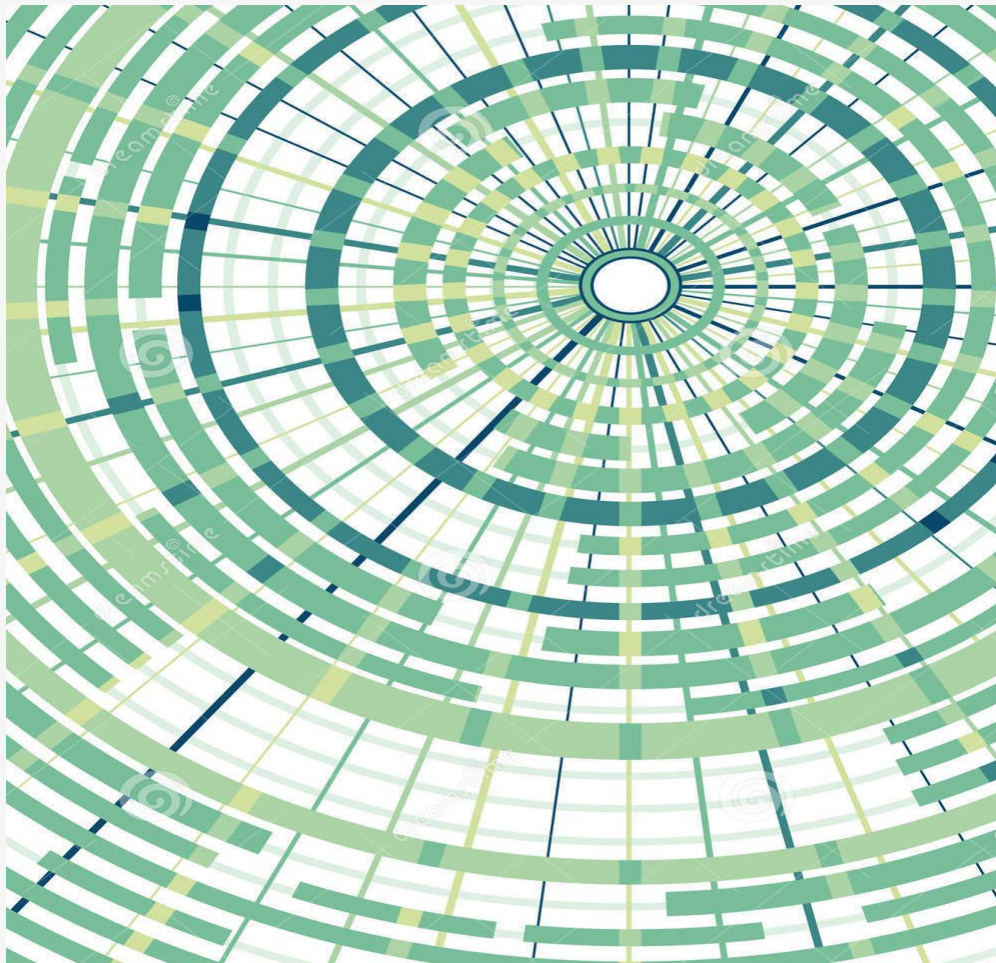


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Proximity



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- What geographic area will relate to your story?
- In general, people (and reporters) are more interested in events that happen close to home.

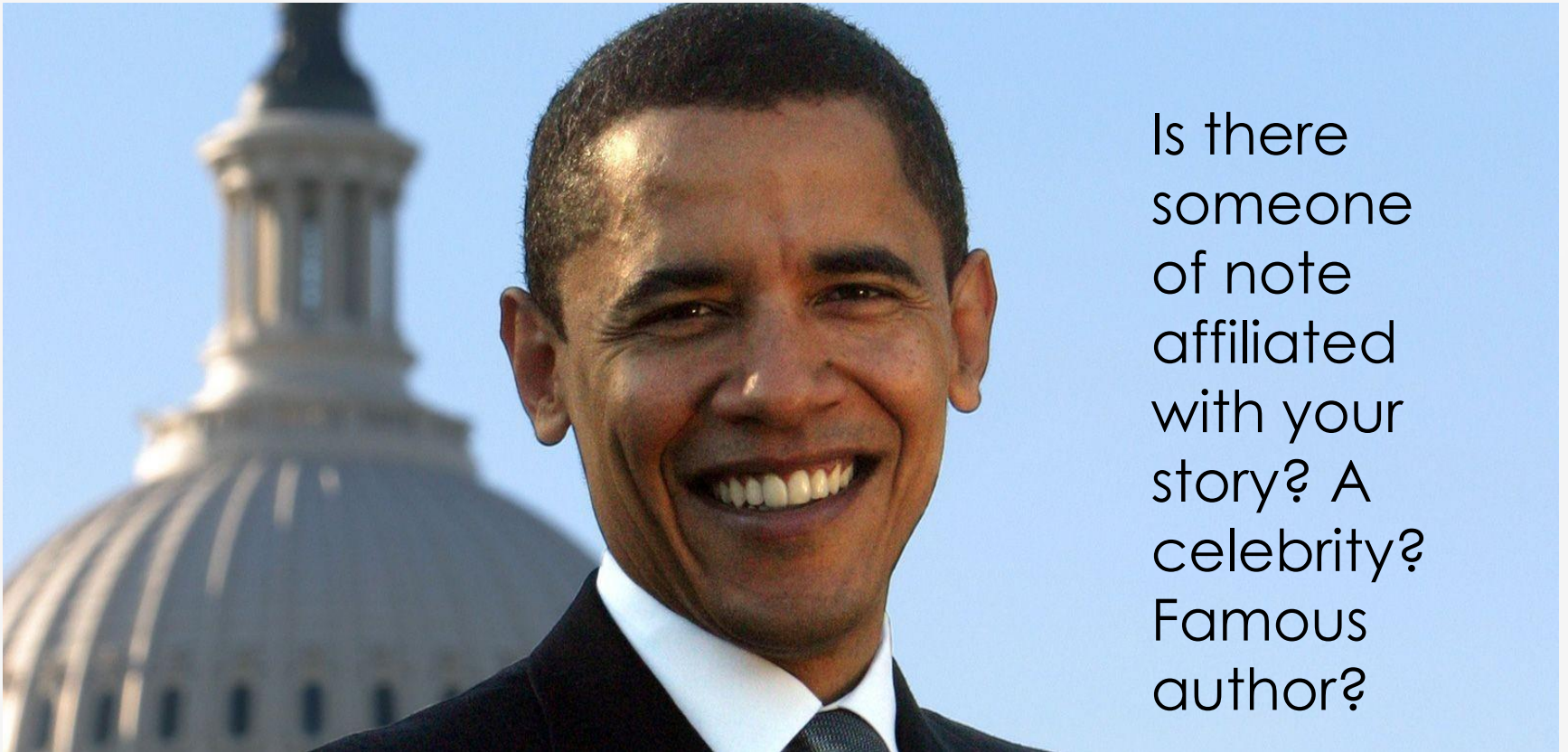


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Prominence



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Is there
someone
of note
affiliated
with your
story? A
celebrity?
Famous
author?

Human Interest



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Stories about unusual or interesting people, even if they aren't famous, can be of interest.



Novelty



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If your information (program, class, event) is old and predictable, it is not considered newsworthy.

Drama



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Mystery, suspense or heightened
emotion

Conflict – Drama's first cousin



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- Man vs. man (or woman)
- Man vs. nature
- Man vs. machine
- Studies that show differences between groups

136
comments

Study says women are worse drivers, get in more car crashes despite driving less than men



By Geoff Herbert | gherbert@syracuse.com
Email the author | Follow on Twitter

on July 07, 2011 at 10:18 AM, updated July 07, 2011 at 10:48 AM

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Email

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Reddit
Email



Li-Hua Lan/The Post-Standard

A University of Michigan study found that female drivers get in more accidents despite driving less often than men do.

Who's worse at driving? Men or women?

A new study suggests that women, in fact, may be more dangerous behind the wheel than men.

Researchers at the University of Michigan analyzed 6.5 million car crashes in the U.S. between 1998 and 2007. Female drivers were found to be involved in 68.1 percent of all crashes, according to [The Daily Mail](#).

CRIME IN CENTRAL NY



Police Blotter

Search for arrests by Syracuse and Central New York law enforcement agencies and New York State Police.

Map: Onondaga County crimes

Crime database: A look at stats

Crime & Safety forum



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Know Your Media Outlet



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- Read it! Watch it! Listen to it!
- WIIFT – What's in it for them?
- Who is their audience?
- What do they cover
 - What segment?
 - What section?
 - What producer?
 - What reporter?



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In Summary



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- Is your story really newsworthy?
- Test it against characteristics of news. Ideally, it should have at least four.
- Know your outlets. Pitch what & how they want.
- Develop an interesting subject
- Brief one – three paragraph pitch

