



PRESIDENT'S AWARD
for Impact on Media

PERSEVERANCE **Leadership** AND DONUTS

BY
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PRESIDENT'S
AWARD WINNER
KIMI YOSHINO
INSPIRES HER
STAFF, AND
LEADS WITH
PRINCIPLES AND
ETHICS

Los Angeles Times Business Editor Kimi Yoshino is my boss, so I can say without hesitation that she's an exceptional journalist, a snappy dresser, kind to animals and a great humanitarian.

I can also say she's that rare manager who leads by example and who, when it's called for, is willing to make a stand for what's right.

It's no secret that Kimi ran afoul of a former Times editor-in-chief (collect them all) and that her suspension by that editor—no names, except it was Lewis D'Vorkin—played a role in the subsequent changing of the guard atop the masthead.

Here's what David Folkenflik of NPR wrote at the time:

"The business editor of the *Los Angeles Times* made a triumphant return to the newsroom to applause Thursday after several days away, telling colleagues she had been whisked away and suspended as part of the newspaper's investigation into the leak of taped remarks made by the paper's editor-in-chief in November."

Kimi was suspected by D'Vorkin of leaking embarrassing audio of him berating the newsroom staff, which she denied doing. Nevertheless, he suspended her pending an investigation, which prompted outright rebellion from business staffers. We submitted a letter calling for Kimi's immediate reinstatement.

She asked me not to dwell on the episode, saying she'd rather this profile be forward-looking and more focused on the future of the *L.A. Times*. But I don't mind saying: That whole thing with D'Vorkin highlighted the respect and admiration with which the biz team views their leader, and that's a big deal. These are uncertain times in our industry, to say the least, and it's nice to be reminded there are newsroom



Above: Showing t-shirts with Kim Murphy, now at the *New York Times*.

Below: With her husband, Saif.



figures who aren't just getting the job done but are doing so in a principled, ethical manner. The fact that Kimi brings donuts on Fridays is a plus.

"Kimi is the definition of what it means to be an outstanding newsroom editor in this complicated media era: demanding but fair," says Jim Kirk, the *Times'* editor-in-chief. "Someone who

#KIMIFREED



David S Holloway

Top: Signs welcome Kimi after her return from suspension. Her team had shirts printed with "Free Kimi."
Below: The Pulitzer Prize-winning group which won for exposing corruption in the city of Bell; the mockup shows a designer's take on the *Times*' entrance into the food realm.



puts accuracy and ethics above all else. She has an incredible way with reporters and understands what it takes to get the strongest work on the *L.A. Times*' platforms. She makes the *L.A. Times* better every day."

Kimi has been at the paper since 2000, after stints at the *Stockton Record* and *Fresno Bee*. Her career at the *Times* reflects both a diversity of talents and a drive to get stories told. She was a prime mover behind the popular L.A. Now blog, which garners an annoying number of daily hits (relative to, say, the paper's consumer coverage), and she helped oversee the investi-

gation into corruption in the city of Bell, which won a much-deserved Pulitzer Prize and was the kind of work all journalists dream of doing.

I told Kimi I thought it was particularly cool that she served for a spell as the *Times*' Baghdad correspondent, but she played it down. She told me she didn't think her published work from the Iraqi capital was among her best (she thought her more intimate letters to friends and family were better; today they'd be blog posts). In fact,



PRESIDENT'S AWARD KIMI YOSHINO



Clockwise, starting above: Kimi with her husband Saif's mother, sister and brother in Baghdad in 2008; Kimi with former LAT reporter Garrett Therolf at the Baghdad Bureau in 2007; Her last day at the City Desk before moving to the Business section; A reunion of *Los Angeles Times* Iraqi staffers.



it's no small thing for anyone to report from a war zone.

As business editor since 2014, Kimi has been relentless in rethinking and re-energizing our coverage. Not coincidentally, the section was recognized two years in a row for general excellence by the Society of American Business Editors and Writers. This year, we bagged no fewer than 11 SABEW awards, which was more than anyone else, thank you very much.

Lately, Kimi has been adding to her duties by also overseeing digital and audience-engagement activities, which she says have given her a "broader lens" as to how the *Times* can up its game.

Like pretty much every other newspaper, we're aggressively trying to go where our audience may be, which is everywhere—online, video, social media. That means it's no longer sufficient to write a story and slap on a photo. If a story merits a full-court press, it can mean podcasts, animated graphics, anything that adds texture to a tale.

"It's about a full and immersive experience," Kimi says. "I'm not talking about hits. I'm talk-

ing about letting readers know that we're serious about a story, and we're going to devote the resources necessary to tell it right."

Easier said than done, of course. All those bells and whistles can add to costs, despite an overall industry trend of belt tightening. Kimi says that's what the *Times* and other leading publications are trying to figure out—how to develop and devote the resources for state-of-the-art storytelling without breaking the bank.

I asked if that means doing stuff that isn't necessarily journalism. Kimi, to her credit, didn't hesitate to say yes, if that's where the money is. So the *Times* is getting into guided tours. We're into food festivals and show-biz-related events. We're doing whatever it takes to expand our horizons (and cash flow) so we can keep focusing on what we do best, which is making sure the public knows what it needs to know.

"We're never going to stray from our core mission," Kimi says. "But we need to embrace opportunities that allow us to fulfill that mission."

She didn't want me lingering over that D'Vorkin business, but the simple fact is that the best leaders aren't appointed, they're tested. Kimi passed that test as far as her staffers are concerned, and that's where it really counts.

I can think of no one more deserving of the President's Award for Impact on the Media.

Seriously. Donuts. Every Friday. 🍩