

TANASIA KENNEY

EXPLORING A CAREER IN JOURNALISM



Viviene Coello



Tanasia Kenney

About the Author

Hey! My name is Viviene Coello and I'm a student at Kennesaw State University majoring in Integrative Studies. My course work has included biology, chemistry, and psychology classes. After graduating in May, I plan on applying to a physician's assistant program. I was born in Miami, Florida but I've spent most of my life in metro Atlanta. My mother is from Costa Rica and my father is from Honduras. A life-changing experience I had was the two years I lived in Bayamon, Puerto Rico. It began my love of traveling, people, and immersing myself in different cultures.

Tanasia Kenney: Exploring a Career in Journalism

BY VIVIENE COELLO

Acta Diurna is the earliest known journalistic media, according to the Britannica encyclopedia. Carved on tablets of stone or metal and hung in public spaces, it reported on daily events in Ancient Rome. Today, the concept of journalism hasn't changed but the field has grown and evolved through technological advancements, especially with the invention of social media. To understand more about what a career in journalism encompasses, I sit down with a young, Atlanta journalist.

Tanasia Kenney is a journalist, self-described reality TV junkie, Kennesaw State University Alumna, and an old friend of mine. During her time at KSU, she served as the Chief Copy Editor of *The Sentinel* and graduated with a B.S. in Journalism and Emerging Media. She hopes to one day be a broadcast journalist reporting on "topics and stories that directly impact me or that I can relate to because if I can relate to it I know my readers can relate to it whether they look like me or not."

Amidst the coronavirus pandemic, we decided to have a video interview using Zoom. Surprisingly, I caught Tanasia in a time of transition. Working from home, it was her last day as a Social Media Reporter at Atlanta Black Star Atlanta, which describes itself as an

online media platform that "publishes empowering narratives for all people of African descent and everyone who adheres to our culture." Her job involved using social media to find and report on trending topics by gathering information using **aggregate reporting**, a type of reporting that gathers information from other outlets. They covered pop culture, entertainment, news, and social justice issues.

From Conception to Publishing

While I picture a TMZ-esque pitch meeting, Tanasia explains what it's really like behind the scenes. It starts by searching social media for what people are talking about. "What's the tea?" While keeping their audience in mind, the team of journalists each pitch their top 3-6 stories. The main editor chooses and delegates the stories and she's off! "If there needs to be any sort of interview or reaching out to a primary source for a quote or statement, I can do that via phone or email, and just gather as much information as I can before I start the writing process." She writes it using Wordpress and sends it to the copy editor who will edit it. Then the article is sent to the main editor for the final review. Occasional changes to the angle of the article are made if they

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deem fit. Once approved the article is put on the schedule to be published on their website.

Recognizing When to Move On

As a budding journalist growth is imperative to have a successful career. However, their niche audience left her with no free-range and a sense of repetitiveness in her writing. She recalled the growing anxiety in the workplace due to ongoing coverage of the 2016 police shootings and a growing feeling that she's pushing a certain agenda "which as a journalist you never want to feel that way about your work." After 4 years with no opportunities for growth and looking to improve her digital editing skills, Tanasia made the decision to look for employment elsewhere.

Challenges

Since aggregate reporting relies on accumulating information already written by other outlets. Tanasia explains that her biggest challenge when writing was presenting the same story in a different way without regurgitating the same things. Moreover, the challenges ahead include growing her investigative reporting skills.

Her new job is as a remote Real-Time News Reporter at McClatchy publishing company that owns multiple newspapers around the United States. Their focus is more on "original reporting" and she hopes here she'll get the freedom of reporting more on topics that she is interested in, like Wellness, Mental Health, and advocating for the African American community.

Tools of the Trade

With an exciting shift to a more original reporting style, I ask, where does the news get their news from? Apparently there are many ways from having someone listening to a police scanner, to using social media in combination with specialized programs that find patterns in large sets of data. This is called data mining and when used in conjunction with Twitter, generates tweets in real-time, from all over the world. News stations use this to see what everyone is talking about and it allows immediate contact with them for soundbites, quotes, or interviews. This helps facilitate the fast turnaround time we see in today's 24-hour news cycle.

Strives in journalism were always attributed to advancements in technology but the most important sources of breaking news come from your connections. The most important thing a journalist needs is a working contact list. Tanasia has been accumulating a list of contacts since college: ranging from local police departments, public relations offices, media relations offices, university connections, field-experts, hospital connections, and even personal connections (like how I got this interview).

Essential Skills

FROM TANASIA KENNEY

- Most Important: Writing, Reporting, Interviewing
- Grammar and Spelling: Proofread your articles as much as possible before submitting so it doesn't slow down the process
- Digital, sound, and video editing: Premiere Pro & Finalcut
- How to write scripts for TV

Advice: Network, Network, Network

- A career in journalism relies on connections. The best advice given to Tanasia was to find a mentor who's willing to teach, guide, and get you through the door. "If you don't have one watch others that are already doing what you want to do and don't be afraid to emulate them."
 - Jovita Moore is an American news anchor at WSB-TV
 - [Jade Jackson](#) is a Multimedia Journalist who posts videos on how to write scripts, report stories, shoots, and edit their own footage. Also known as a "One-Man Band"
- Set up a professional twitter specifically for networking and interact with others in the field.
- Join organizations and attend networking events to make connections in the field. Tanasia is an active participant of:
 - [National Association of Black Journalists](#)
 - [Atlanta Association of Black Journalists](#)

"Just Keep Going!" is the message Tanasia leaves aspiring journalists with. It is hard not to feel discouraged but if you keep writing and putting yourself out there doors will open up for you.