

**2024 NEW YORK HISTORY CONFERENCE**  
**New York State Cultural Education Center, Albany, N.Y.**  
**June 20-21, 2024**  
**Library Classroom**  
**Educator Workshop: New/Twentieth Century Media**



**Conference Sessions – Friday June 21, 2024**

**Session 1—9:00am-10:15am**

**-Rich Pyszczek, Buffalo Public Schools/NYPHT & NFCSS: “Rich Newberg Reports: Buffalo Black History Showcase”**

**[Presentation by Brandy Charles, Rich Pyszczek, Heidi Ziemer, Rich Newberg, Don Wildman]**

**RICH NEWBERG**

Racism has always been among my top concerns as a journalist, having come of age during the height of the civil rights movement in the 1960s.

I grew up watching CBS News and saw how TV news coverage of social injustice could help bring about positive social change. Murrow was one of my childhood heroes.

I learned something about story telling from the best. Rod Serling was my visiting professor at Ithaca College. His Twilight Zone story lines always delivered strong moral messages often dealing with the darker side of the human condition.

At Michigan State, where I got my Masters in News and Public Affairs, my mentor, Professor Tom Baldwin, insisted that whatever career path we would choose and whatever stories we might chase, the content needs to be “relevant.”

I never forgot that lesson, and now, with the help of my colleagues on this panel, my co-producer Tom Vetter, and enlightened management at WIVB-TV, where I spent 37 years as an anchor, senior correspondent and documentarian, I am able to select the most relevant segments of my social issue reporting, and repurpose that content for the classroom.

I am a strong proponent of tapping into the archives of local television stations as a means of teaching history to students. As it has been said, local reporters provide their communities with “the first rough draft of history.”

The Buffalo Broadcasters Association now has all three local TV network affiliates agreeing to allow their film and video archives to be digitized for educational use. Back in the 60s, the Buffalo Historical Society convinced the stations to allow it to store the daily news film that would have ended up in the dumpster. Since then, that living archive has been rescued time and again by veteran broadcast journalists who knew the importance of preserving our moving image history.

The Association of Moving Image Archivists has, for decades, been trying to convince local commercial TV stations to share their film and video archives with their communities. It's not an easy sell. News departments are more concerned with advancing the big stories of the day, as opposed to taking time to retrieve old footage on old formats that need to be digitized. Today's technology allows stations to report “breaking news” as it unfolds.

The big companies that own these stations are interested in monetizing archival footage, sometimes charging commercial interests thousands of dollars per minute. I've been able to demonstrate to WIVB and Nexstar that educational use of its video not only boosts the station's image in the market, but also provides the news department with digitized archival footage that can be easily accessed for deeper coverage of important and ongoing social issues.

As a member of AMIA's News, Documentary and Television Committee, I hope the success of our Buffalo efforts will help the Association achieve its goals.

The New York Public History Trust, under the direction of Don Wildman, knows the value of the moving image to make history come alive in the classroom. Especially given the short attention span of today's students.

Don is a great storyteller and his twenty-three seasons of “Mysteries at the Museum” brings to mind the quote by Mark Twain that, “Truth is stranger than fiction.” The time has come for us to teach truth to students in a compelling way, especially in this period of civil unrest and deep divisions within our country that threaten our basic freedoms.

Back in 1999, when I created the documentary unit at WIVB, one of our first projects featured Buffalo's storied role in the civil rights movement. Inner city students were unaware that history had been made in their own neighborhoods.

We revisited authentic Underground Railroad sites and presented the plight of enslaved people seeking freedom in a new light. We highlighted some of the great local civil rights leaders who rose to national prominence helping to create the Niagara Movement.

At the same time, we took a deep and unblinking look at inner city poverty and crime in Buffalo, segregated neighborhoods and schools, and the race riots of the late 1960s that occurred when frustrations boiled over.

Following the 2020 Black Lives Matter demonstrations that turned violent in Buffalo, I began producing an hour special, called “The Buffalo Story: History Happens Here.” We called the opening segment, “In Pursuit of Racial Justice.” The documentary won two New York Emmys, including one for Public Service. The piece finished first in its time slot and illustrated just how valuable archival news footage can be to a community searching for answers in the modern era.

I’d like to show you a short piece I put together that addresses the need to teach truth to students, and just how powerful TV news footage can be to accomplish that end in a compelling way. I borrowed the title from that first segment of “The Buffalo Story.”

[Show reworked version of “In Pursuit of Racial Justice”]

### **Presentation Links**

- [Vimeo Showcase Introduction](#) (organized through Vimeo platform)
- [Rich Newberg Reports Collection](#) (Buffalo and Erie County Public Library)
- [WIVB-TV Television News Film and Video Archives](#) (New York Heritage Digital Collections)
- [Buffalo Black History Project](#) (organized through Vimeo platform)

<https://www.nfcss.org/rich-newberg-reports.html>