

**SHAPIRO, from page 1**

years of work ahead of them, she has maybe 10 years of work ahead of her. And she told me "If I were hiring for a job, I might hire those college graduates, too." But, she says, "I feel like less of a person because I don't have the opportunity to do the work that I know that I'm able to do."

**J.Z.:** *You grew up in Portland and now live in D.C. — two bubbles on either side of the country. Did you see a side of America you were surprised at?*

**A.S.:** D.C. really is a bubble. And living in D.C., we hear and read a lot about the rest of the America. I think living anywhere you hear a lot about the rest of America if you're paying attention. But there's really no substitute for seeing it firsthand. And not just seeing it firsthand, but walking up to strangers and saying, "Tell me your story," and then hearing those stories. I felt so privileged that people were willing to talk to me about what was going on in their lives, sometimes in very personal ways, all over the country. And I just don't think you can get that experience without going out there and having those conversations with people.

**J.Z.:** *I was reading about your conundrum on not standing during the pledge of allegiance. ...*

**A.S.:** Oh yeah. That caused a bit of a dust up.

**J.Z.:** *Every reporter has been in that position where you're supposed to be just an observer, in this day and age when reporters are looking to brand themselves, as destination personalities with social media, etc. How do you balance your online personality with the journalist?*

**A.S.:** I try not to say anything on Twitter or Facebook that I would not want broadcast publicly. The tone of Twitter and Facebook is obviously different from the tone of NPR, but if I think there's something that would be inappropriate on NPR, then I'm not going to post it on Twitter or Facebook. I should rephrase that — inappropriate can mean different things. For example, on Twitter, yesterday, I used the phrase social disease, which I probably would not use on the radio — an antiquated term for an STD. But I'm never going to say on Twitter that was a terrible speech by Barack Obama or I love this policy proposal by Mitt Romney unless I would also feel comfortable saying that on the radio.

I think you can have more personality on social media, I think you can sort of think aloud on social media and get those glimpses of things that might not seem relevant on the radio. But I don't think you can be partisan on social media and be nonpartisan on the radio and pretend that because there's a distinction you're somehow insulated from accusations of partisanship.

**J.Z.:** *Turning to media in general, there has been a rising chorus of criticism that reporters*

*have become mere stenographers, and that the facts are now left to this new meme of fact checkers, often with their own agenda. What is your assessment on how media covers our government and politicians?*

**A.S.:** Certainly in the Romney press corps, for example, when Romney put out that completely bogus add about car manufacturers shipping jobs to China, every news organization called it out as bogus, with one or two exceptions.

We cover politics a lot better than we cover policy. I just read this great book by Michael Grunwald of Time Magazine called the "New New Deal" and the book is about the stimulus. The media paid so much attention to the fight over passing the stimulus, but then after the stimulus passed, everybody just sort of ignored what happened. And the story is what happens when the law gets passed, when you allocate all of this money to these different projects, and generally speaking, I think policy sometimes falls through the cracks because it's just so much easier to cover the political wrangling over policy than the implementation of that policy.

**J.Z.:** *Like the fiscal cliff.*

**A.S.:** Or once we get a deal to avert the fiscal cliff or go over it or whatever, what's in that deal?

We know that there's a huge package of spending cuts, but what exactly will be cut and then once those cuts are made, let's look at what the impact is on those organizations that have gone through the cuts. Don't just report on the wrestling match.

**J.Z.:** *With the election over, what are you looking for as the big news ahead?*

**A.S.:** I'm fascinated to see what happens to the Republican Party in the next couple of years. Because they, by all accounts, should have taken control of the Senate this year, and instead they lost seats in the Senate. They had every opportunity to win the presidential race, and instead lost big. They lost young people, they lost minorities, they lost women. And there's a part of the Republican Party that says we have got to change our platform in order to win these demographic groups back. But there is also a tea party base that says, no our problem was that we nominated a Massachusetts moderate. So I think there's going to be a real civil war in the Republican Party. You could look specifically at the issue of immigration. Where is the party going to go on this? To what extent are they going to play ball with the White House and Democrats. That's what I'm really interested in the next couple of years.

**J.Z.:** *But where is coverage on issues of affordable housing, on issues of poverty, on the cuts to the Bureau of Housing and Urban Development? You don't see that covered at the federal level. Where are those stories?*

**A.S.:** I think they're missing. We have a reporter, Pam Fessler, who covers poverty,

charity and philanthropy. And she does stories that a lot of other people are not doing. And it's striking to me that on the federal level, there's no dialogue about poverty. I can't remember the last time I heard President Obama talk about poverty. He talks a lot about the middle class. And Mitt Romney even said, "I'm not concerned with the very rich or the very poor, I'm concerned about the middle class." I think that's a pervasive attitude in both parties throughout Washington. There's almost a sense that in boom times, everybody is doing fine except for the people at the bottom of the ladder, so we should pay attention to them. And in rough times, when the people at the middle of the ladder start suffering, there seems to be this consensus in Washington that it's OK to stop paying attention to the people at the bottom of the ladder, but the fact is the people at the bottom of the ladder are doing worse than they were before as well.

**J.Z.:** *This may be a little strange, but I remember a colleague of yours, Ann Garrels, who covered the Iraq war and titled her memoirs about it "Naked In Baghdad" — a reference to filing reports naked in her hotel room as part of her cover. Any similar anecdotes from the trail we should know about?*

**A.S.:** There are so many things. The song "Born Free" played at the beginning and end of every Mitt Romney rally, so by the end of the campaign, we all knew the lyrics. They were haunting our dreams. I never broadcast naked, no. Frankly, our days were so long that we were on the bus and the plane the whole time, and if anyone had been naked in those venues there would have been a real problem with the Secret Service.

**J.Z.:** *How do you keep your singing chops when you're on an assignment like that?*

**A.S.:** I did not. I'm just getting back into that. In the past year, the only shows that I did with Pink Martini were in Europe over the summer. I took a couple weeks off and traveled with them. And this weekend I'm going to perform in Philadelphia, which will be my first show with them in six months. So I'm really excited to be back doing that.

**J.Z.:** *That's got to be such a release after the time on the campaign.*

**A.S.:** It's the best to be able to do such a creative thing with such talented musicians. It's such a different world from my day job. I love what I do at NPR, but to be able to do something that is completely different from it is so refreshing.

**J.Z.:** *And yet your moniker is "NPR correspondent."*

**A.S.:** I was worried about performing in Europe, because when I perform in the States, there's always this sense of novelty — "Oh, it's the guy we've heard on NPR, now he's up there singing" — so it didn't really matter if I was any good or not. But in

Europe, nobody's ever heard of me, so I kind of had to hold my own, and I was really delighted that it went well.

**J.Z.:** *No one could have blamed you for getting away from it all after the election, but one of the first things you did after the campaign ended was participate in a fund raiser on the 10th anniversary of OutLoud Radio. Tell me about that and why that's important to you.*

**A.S.:** They are doing such important work. They are giving LGBT teenagers, many of whom are — disenfranchised is such an academic word — but many of them feel like they are not part of a community, they're not part of society. In some cases they've been kicked out of the house, in some cases they're homeless. In most cases they feel like they don't have a voice. And OutLoud Radio is quite literally giving them a voice, and giving them an opportunity to tell their stories. And they have one project that I think is just so amazing, an intergenerational project, where they will pair an LGBT young person with a senior citizen in the LGBT community. And the young people will interview the elders and it values the experience of our elders in a way that society often does not. It gives young people an experience to see themselves as part of this intergenerational continuity, and just think it's such a great project. I was really happy to be able to support it.

**J.Z.:** *Was this something that you related to?*

**A.S.:** I came out as a teenager in Portland, at the end of my junior year at Beaverton High School. And, on the whole, had a very good experience. But of course, I relate to gay teenagers who are figuring out where they fit in the world. And as a gay adult who is doing radio, a group doing radio for gay teens seems like a natural fit.

**J.Z.:** *It reminds me of what Dan Savage did with the It Gets Better campaign.*

**A.S.:** I admire what Dan did with the It Gets Better campaign so much. He created a global movement that in some ways has become almost the brand of the gay rights movement today. In such a powerful way that everybody can get behind. From the president to celebrities to ordinary people. It's remarkable what he was able to do with that.

**J.Z.:** *The past few years have not been kind to news outlets. What do you see of the future of public radio?*

**A.S.:** It's funny, I think in some ways public broadcasting and Street Roots have not-that-different business models, which is basically saying to people do you like what we do? If so, will you open your wallets for us? It's the same basic fundamental premise, which is: Here is what we'll do and if you like it, we hope you will support it.

**JESUIT  
VOLUNTEER  
CORPS**   
**NORTHWEST**

Street Roots is a proud partner  
with Jesuit Volunteer Corps  
Northwest and Americorps.



Dignity



Poverty