

Esmé Deprez

Occupation and employer now and how long you've been there:

I'm a senior reporter on the Projects & Investigations team at *Bloomberg News* and *Bloomberg Businessweek*. I joined the old *Businessweek*, when it was owned by McGraw-Hill, in June 2009 as an intern, fresh out of Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. *Bloomberg News* acquired *Businessweek* in December 2009, and I've been working there ever since.

Prior to joining the P&I team in 2017, I was a national breaking news and feature correspondent focusing on mostly state and local politics and policy.

Hometown:

I was born in Damariscotta and grew up in Portland. I've been a resident of Santa Barbara, CA, since 2014, but have been staying, since March, amid the pandemic, at my late father's house in Deer Isle.

College (s) attended on Gannett scholarship and degree(s):

Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, to get an M.S. in journalism, magazine concentration, class of 2009.

Why did you want to be a journalist?

Some of the best career advice out there, I think, is to find a job that doesn't feel like work. I have always been nosy and loved finding out things before others. The idea of getting paid to constantly learn new things, to travel the country/globe, to meet new people and witness/experience their worlds, to have a ready-made excuse to accost strangers and ask them intimate questions? That never feels like work.

Why is journalism important today?

Hannah Arendt put it better, in a [1974 interview](#), than I ever could: "The moment we no longer have a free press, anything can happen. What makes it possible for a totalitarian or any other dictatorship to rule is that people are not informed; how can you have an opinion if you are not informed? If everybody always lies to you, the consequence is not that you believe the lies, but rather that nobody believes anything any longer. ...And a people that no longer can believe anything cannot make up its mind. It is deprived not only of its capacity to act but also of its capacity to think and to judge. And with such a people you can then do what you please."

Most memorable assignment:

As the presidential race heated up in the summer of 2016, my editor called me with what felt at first like an insane idea. Within weeks, I found myself aboard a Greyhound bus departing Philadelphia for Los Angeles with one goal: to take readers outside the Washington-New York bubble and introduce them to a slice of the electorate with whom they have little contact.

Over 3,041 miles and 11 states, a photographer and I dug into the lives of more than 100 voters. We rode as many as seven hours a day and loitered in bus depots to gauge the mood of this mobile community. It wouldn't be enough simply to meet people – we'd need to persuade them to share their most personal experiences, beliefs, and hopes while surrounded by strangers.

We experimented with form to best convey what we'd found, producing slice-of-life narratives, question-and-answer exchanges and voters' voices verbatim – while weaving in video clips, audio clips and photographs with each – producing 11 posts over 14 days. An email newsletter, along with constant posts on Twitter and Instagram, kept readers involved. Ten teams throughout the newsroom collaborated on the project, Bloomberg's first of this type.

Ten teams throughout the newsroom collaborated on the project, Bloomberg's first of this type. "Bus to November" gave readers special insight into an unsettled, angry electorate yearning to be heard. The value of mere conversation would prove prescient: As the horse race dominated coverage, it obscured the support that would propel Donald Trump to victory.

I remain proud of that insight we were able to share, and of myself for figuring out how to execute such a challenging, exhausting and at times daunting assignment. Upon reaching our final destination, I remember calling my editor and immediately bursting into tears, overwhelmed with gratitude to have had such a profound professional and personal experience that enabled me to see corners of this country I never would have otherwise and learn so much from/about its people.

What is your advice to future Gannett scholars?

Journalism is a terrifying industry in which to work (ridiculously unstable, poorly paid, much maligned, etc.). It is, also, the best, and I can't fathom working in any other. If you can't either, don't let anything stop you.

The late David Carr summed it up best in a [2009 column](#): "Journalists, for all their self-importance, are often a little naïve about the way the real world works. Sure, being a newsie is a grind, the hours are not great, and the public holds us in lower esteem than the women who work the poles at Satin Dolls down the road from the Tick Tock in Lodi, but it beats working by a mile. Every day is a caper, and most reporters are attention-deprived adrenaline junkies who care only for the next story. Journalists are like cops, hugging the job close and savoring the rest of their life as they can. The skills of finding out what is not known and rendering it in comprehensible ways has practical value in other parts of the economy, but the thrill of this thing of ours is not a moveable feast. The difference between a reporting job and other jobs is the difference between working for The Man and being The Man, a legend, at least, in your own mind."