

Memorial Hall was filled to capacity on March 22 for our National Speaker Forum with Jenn White. WCC president Jeff Dey welcomed a crowd of 475 people, who included an array of elected officials—County Commissioner Denise Driehaus, Vice Mayor Jan-Michele Lemon Kearney, City Council Member Meeka Owens, former Mayor Roxanne Qualls and former Council Member Steve Goodin. He thanked WCC’s generous sponsors, including the Jeanette Rankin Foundation and Cincinnati Federal of Teachers, Manley Burke, Park National Bank, and 29 co-sponsoring nonprofit organizations.

Dey celebrated all the speakers from the past 30 years and paid tribute to Mary Wells, longtime WCC member, who initiated the National Speaker Forum in 1994 as a way to highlight women of national stature. He welcomed Ann Thompson, longtime reporter at WVXU and now Digital Media Producer for CET, who described Solutions Journalism, her new assignment. Thompson then introduced the evening’s featured speaker.

Jenn White, host of NPR’s morning talk show 1A, spoke on *Truth, Trust and Transparency in Journalism*. She noted how tough it is for the media these days. “We used to trust that our local news media was telling us the truth,” she said, “and we felt a connection with our local and national newscasters.” New technology has whittled away positions in local media outlets, and media have employed algorithms that decide what we want to hear. This has led to a breakdown in relationships between news and communities. Recent polls show that 32 percent of Americans do not trust the accuracy of the news they receive.

Truth in journalism requires looking at all sides of an issue. White follows the “Nothing about it without it” credo. Stories based on conjecture and self-promotion fail to tell the truth. “People involved in the story must participate in the story,” she says. “Your story matters, and we want to give the time and space to tell a story that reflects you.” She expressed concern that “young people are not ready for what they will inherit. “We are not preparing the next generation for what is coming.” Her comment that we need to return to teaching civics in our schools brought a round of applause from the audience.

White stressed that NPR is able to offer listeners unbiased stories with input from sources on all sides of an issue largely because it receives adequate financial support. When asked how thoughtful journalism can survive the algorithm-filled social media, White answered: “We need to pay for it. We must be willing to shine the light because democracy can die in the dark.”

Beth closed the event by thanking Jenn White and recognizing all journalists for their daily service in bringing us the news, seeking the truth and protecting our democracy. Media present, besides Ann Thompson, included Beryl Love, editor of the Cincinnati Enquirer; Mark Lammers, Executive Producer, and Sue Ellen Stuebing, VP and Chief Development Officer of CET; Dan Yount, editor of the Cincinnati Herald, and Laure Quinlivan, an independent documentary filmmaker and former Council Member. Harriet and Ben Kaufman provided photography.

After the presentation, about 200 enjoyed the reception catered by Catered with Grace. The event raised approximately \$14,000 to support the operation of the club.

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