POLITICS

How The Guardian Lost America

The Guardian's US newsroom didn't become the voice of the Bernie left during the election. It didn't break huge campaign scoops. Years after winning a Pulitzer for the Edward Snowden story, Guardian US has slashed costs, leaving employees stewing about mismanagement, infighting, a sexual harassment allegation, and unrealistic business expectations.

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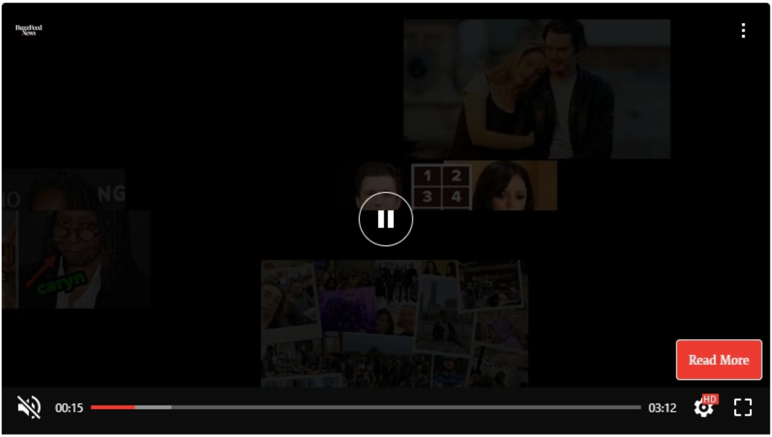

The Guardian needed a new US headquarters.

It was the morning of February 23, and staffers gathered at the company's office in lower Manhattan, an immense space that the British newspaper once hoped would be home to a 300-person-strong US digital arm.

Now the company — years ago a burgeoning news outlet with a shiny Pulitzer Prize and editorial ambitions to take on the titans of American journalism on their own turf — was in stark cost-cutting mode. In September 2016, Guardian US announced it was slashing 30% of its workforce.

The retrenchment necessitated a change of scenery, too. At the meeting, Guardian US editor Lee Glendinning announced that the company had signed a lease agreement to move to a smaller Brooklyn office.

It was a room full of journalists, so the questions flew. Where? What's the address? According to multiple people at the meeting, one reporter remarked that Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and senior White House adviser, owned some buildings in Brooklyn. Was this one of them?

A rattled Glendinning said sharply that it wasn't, according to the attendees. Reporters pulled up news articles, raising their phones to show that it was indeed property owned by Kushner, who divested some of his family real estate empire's holdings to join the White House.

"You see the cerebral cortexes trying to process this information," one reporter present told BuzzFeed News.

The newsroom was incredulous. Some wondered if the Guardian expected sources to feel secure communicating with reporters inside a Kushner building.

A month later, Glendinning announced a change of plans: Guardian US would instead relocate to Midtown Manhattan, a worse commute for many of its Brooklyn-based journalists but to a building without a White House connection. Interim Guardian US CEO Evelyn Webster told staff that the blunder cost the company about $250,000 — a figure that, according to a person familiar with the company's finances, reflected the loss of expected cost savings from the original move. (The company has denied the number.) Days later, Guardian US announced a new round of cost cuts — another 20%.

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In the newsroom, which has dwindled to about 45 people, the Kushner oversight was viewed as dark comedy, a telling coda capping years of mismanagement, tensions between Brits and Americans, poisonous internal politicking, poor business decisions amid a tough advertising market, and a failure to assert itself as the voice of the new American political left.

The New York Times and the Washington Post, with which the Guardian has hoped to compete, have thrived recently, racking up huge national security scoops, new paying subscribers, and a firm sense of place in a chaotic media environment. But Guardian US, many insiders believe, missed its core political opportunity in 2016 to align itself with the Bernie Sanders insurgency in the way its British parent paper has long been linked with the UK Labour left.

Glendinning lost some US employees' confidence not just over editorial matters, but also in the wake of a sexual harassment allegation against her former top lieutenant, Matt Sullivan (an allegation he denies).

To hear management tell it, the US operation is swimming against tough financial tides, with the Guardian’s global finances in repair mode and the US display ad market going sideways. This narrative, an investigation into the company reveals, is incomplete. Conversations with more than 20 current and former employees, internal documents, and financial figures paint a different picture — one of overspending and missed opportunities by those currently in power, particularly Guardian editor Katharine Viner, global CEO David Pemsel, and Glendinning. The thirst for global expansion was so strong, in fact, that the Guardian’s former US CEO says he was pressured to make unattainable business projections to fuel the growth.

Some former staffers spoke on the condition of anonymity for this story because they signed nondisparagement agreements when leaving the Guardian, while current staffers were granted anonymity because they are not authorized to speak about the company.

All of this — the money, the dissatisfied and reduced staff, the failure to compete — puts Guardian US on the verge of being a flameout as a US-based news operation, reduced to a glorified foreign bureau for the UK paper.

Through a Guardian spokesperson, Viner, Pemsel, and Webster declined to comment for this story. In a statement, Glendinning said, “We will keep reporting deeply and fearlessly in the US and continue to bring our outsider perspective at this critical time.”

The US operation is now struggling to find its identity beyond filling the Trump-sized hole in the Guardian’s UK print edition every day. And in recent weeks, Glendinning has introduced a confusing motto and guiding philosophy that Guardian US journalists say they find excruciating: "Covering America for the world, including Americans."

Whether Guardian US was doomed from the start depends on whom you ask, but the news outlet did have an early glory period.

The project launched in 2011 under the editorship of Janine Gibson, an ally to then-editor-in-chief Alan Rusbridger. (Gibson, now editor-in-chief of BuzzFeed UK, declined to comment for this story.) The effort was something of a reboot of Guardian America, the paper's existing news brand in the US market, where it derived a surprising amount of traffic. When the Guardian arrived, the New York media world was already familiar with its brand of liberal, crusading reporting on topics like WikiLeaks and the News Corp phone hacking scandal. According to Rusbridger, planting a new flag in the US with aplomb was mostly a business impulse.

"There was a feeling on the commercial side that the big money was in America in terms of advertising," Rusbridger told BuzzFeed News. "If we could build up a significant presence in America, you would have editorial ambition and commercial rewards."

The thought was that experienced editors who knew the Guardian's sensibilities should come over from London and then hire some American underlings who understood the local media landscape. Coverage was intended for an American audience — not, in the more classic foreign bureau tradition, a British audience wondering what's happening in America. The company conceived of Guardian US initially as a lean operation that would focus on subjects where Guardian reporters could distinguish the brand's prestige.

"We did not feel we could go into America and beat the New York Times and Washington Post on their own patch," Rusbridger said. "There could be an opportunity in covering a few beats really well and in a different voice."

While much of the media balked at Occupy Wall Street, Guardian US dug in on the story, live-blogging the event on a daily basis. The outlet was also among a group of digital newsrooms experimenting with interactive journalism, like a project in 2012 visualizing gay rights across the 50 states. A former employee described the Guardian US editorial ethos: "We can only justify being here if we were doing shit nobody else was doing."

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Then came Edward Snowden.

In the summer of 2013, the Guardian became the central publisher in the world when Glenn Greenwald, Ewen MacAskill, documentary filmmaker Laura Poitras, and other Guardian journalists began publishing astounding stories based on documents from Snowden, who had leaked thousands of classified NSA documents.

The Snowden period consumed a portion of the Guardian US staff. But some felt on the outskirts, and Gibson, who had previously been a hands-on presence across the newsroom, disappeared frequently to focus on the story. The Guardian shared in a Pulitzer Prize for public service with the Washington Post, cementing its status. But as things were winding down, the post-Snowden hangover hit hard.

"We were basking in the glory of winning a Pulitzer," said a former staffer. "It was a bit like, 'Oh shit, what are we going to do after this?'"

Meanwhile, the business side was still struggling to sell American advertisers on what the Guardian *was* exactly as it navigated the implications of its editorial success. "While Snowden put us on the map, it makes corporate clients very nervous about wanting to get big into the Guardian," according to a former executive.

As the US newsroom tried to determine what the Guardian would do next — how they could leverage the notoriety that Snowden had brought the brand — the leadership changed. In March 2014, shortly before the Pulitzer victory, Gibson and her deputy Stuart Millar, who also now works at BuzzFeed UK, were summoned back to London to resuscitate the paper's digital efforts; Viner relocated from running Guardian Australia to take over in the US.

Staffers quickly took to Viner, a dynamic, idea-generating editor who was committed to making a big impression in America, as she had done in Australia.

“She does her fucking homework, really gets stuck in, and she impresses everyone,” one former Guardian US journalist said. “She was a really good operator and gave a lot of people confidence. We were neglected for a while with Snowden.”

Instead of the emphasis of a handful of core topics, Viner expanded aggressively into new areas of coverage like theater, arts, and sports. Gone was a narrow focus on a few winnable topics like national security. Guardian US was to compete with the New York Times, MSNBC, and the Washington Post on every story and beat. It would cover all the news of the day. And it would grow, grow, grow.

“All of a sudden we tripled in size,” said a former employee. “We were like, ‘Holy shit.’”

Amid the search for a different identity in the United States, the hunt for web traffic and advertising dollars escalated. Editors were instructed to more closely monitor what search terms were surfacing in Google. A new ethos, according to one former employee, came to the fore: “We need to play the scale game.”

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Guardian employees tend to talk in terms of personal allegiances (“Janine people,” “Australia people”), and the shift in leadership also exposed the fault lines in the US newsroom.

Then, in late 2014, Rusbridger, who had led the paper for two decades, announced that he would step down as editor. Viner and Gibson were among the names raised for the position, and candidates had to make their case to the Guardian’s powerful UK union, which operated a nonbinding vote that determined the shortlist of candidates to be interviewed by the Scott Trust, a nonprofit behemoth that has backed the paper for generations.

“The Hunger Games began,” one former Guardian journalist said. “It was an entrenched political place. They all operated by building up their camps for the day they would fight for the throne.”

As the succession campaign heated up, Viner would regularly leave New York for London to rally her base, leaving Guardian US in the care of Glendinning, who at the time held the newsroom’s support. As the closely watched battle for the Guardian’s top editorship intensified, it became increasingly apparent that Gibson’s victory was far from certain and that Viner had made inroads.

“Kath is very, very good at corporate communications, and she wins over the union. What everyone thought was going to happen didn’t,” said the former executive.

In late March of 2015, the Guardian appointed Viner as its first female editor. Glendinning was named her permanent successor in the US, and Gibson resigned from the paper. Shortly thereafter, the Guardian promoted David Pemsel from deputy chief executive to CEO, replacing Andrew Miller, who in an exit speech reportedly alluded to *Game of Thrones*' fifth-season finale in which Jon Snow is betrayed, and stabbed, by his companions.

The freshly elevated regime had ambitious goals to continue the Guardian's expansion. The plan was to extend in every direction — including Canada to the north and California to the west ("The sun never sets on the British empire," one former reporter snarked about the heady goal). A San Francisco bureau opened. The Guardian sponsored the Telluride Film Festival. The New York office moved into an enormous new space in Manhattan's Financial District, which could eventually hold a planned 300 people. Traffic ballooned, peaking at 41.8 million unique visitors a month in June 2016, according to comScore. Pemsel, Viner, and then US CEO Eamonn Store set aggressive revenue growth targets for Guardian US, which Store now says were far too bold.

Meanwhile, over the past few years in London, the Scott Trust was selling assets to bulk up on cash amid fears that it might run dry in a decade, an unthinkable development just a few years ago. In March of last year, Guardian Media Group, the paper's parent, announced it would cut 250 jobs in an effort to break even within three years. As seasoned reporters and editors were pushed to take voluntary buyouts, Guardian News and Media lowered its operating losses from more than $70 million in the 2015–2016 fiscal year to less than $50 million in 2016–2017.

Including the US, the Guardian reduced its global head count from 1,800 to 1,500 by 2016–2017. According to a Guardian source, the total US operation has shrunk from a high of about 140 people to approximately 80.

According to financial figures obtained by BuzzFeed News, the Guardian's US operation brought in $10.3 million in revenue for the 2014–2015 UK tax year, up from $3.8 million the year prior, with operating losses remaining steady at $9 million. But for the 12 months ending April 2016, Guardian US had an operating loss of more than $15 million, with $15.5 million in revenue (as first reported by Politico). The company had set an even more formidable target for 2016–2017: $32.2 million, effectively doubling revenue. A Guardian spokesperson did not dispute the figures.

"That seemed excessive, and we were told, 'Don't worry your little heads about it, we've got it under control,'" one former employee said. Another said that staffers were told the goal was "borderline realistic."

Store, who left the company in January, says that Pemsel, eager to go big in the US, encouraged him to make the daring forecasts. "I should have put my foot down when we wrote that three-year plan, when my gut was telling me one thing and I was bullied into another," Store said. "That was my mistake." Store later clarified that he didn't feel intimidated or bullied, but that his own naïveté allowed him to believe in the over-optimistic growth forecasts.

The mistake compounded with an unforeseen macro development: the collapse of an already wilting print advertising market. GroupM, the ad-buying agency owned by WPP, estimated that spending on print ads in 2016 would have their worst year since the recession. Unlike in the UK, Guardian US was exclusively digital. But Google and Facebook's dominance in the digital ad market mushroomed, and ad-blocking software began to pose a serious threat to small and midsize publishers reliant on traditional web ads. (The Guardian, for its part, put up a plea to readers with ad blockers enabled to consider donating to the company instead.) More people started to read news on their phones and on Facebook's mobile platform, where publishers have less control. Much of the Guardian's hope for the future now rests on donations and subscriptions from readers (the company says it has 230,000 paying members as of March). The print paper will also switch to a tabloid format to slash expenses.

Pemsel also faced renewed pressure from the newsroom in London over the spendthrift US division, which was gearing up for the election season and still making new hires.

Some Guardian US employees say that reporters in London viewed New York, particularly ahead of the election, as little more than an extended tourism opportunity. Contracts for British ex-pats were in some cases subject to cushier UK union rules for foreign correspondents. Internally, American reporters moaned that the Brits who wanted to travel to US political events were doing so to get a good Instagram post.

For a time, the hope was that the US would become a financial powerhouse for the Guardian. But in an October meeting with US staff, after the first 30% reduction had been announced, Pemsel told the newsroom that it was unrealistic to think of the US as making a financial contribution to the overall enterprise, according to a memo obtained by BuzzFeed News. The internal rumor mill had the US newsroom bracing for a 50% cut, and Pemsel did not disabuse them of the idea that a final round would happen sometime after the election. "We felt like mercenaries," said a former reporter.

In a statement, Guardian spokesperson Brendan O'Grady said: "The Guardian's US operation has consistently grown our readership and our revenues in each of the past three years. During the course of 2016 it became clear that, like media organizations across the US and the globe, we were feeling significant pressure from the rapid changes taking place in the digital advertising market. Since mid-2016, we have carried out a thorough review of our US business. We have made some tough choices to reduce our headcount in order to fit our costs more closely to revenues. There remains a compelling opportunity for the Guardian in the US. We have loyal readers who are supporting us financially in ever greater numbers, and a unique, differentiated world view which appeals to readers as well as advertisers and other partners."

"The rapid growth in our reader revenues tell us that our unique editorial perspective is not only popular — it's making a real connection with Guardian readers in the US," Glendinning said in a statement. "We have never had more people supporting our journalism than we do today."

The Guardian's identity crisis has gone hand in hand with bitterness and recriminations over its financial situation. Current management has pushed a public relations line that pins the blame on Rusbridger, who originally championed the paper's global proliferation. This narrative — that spending on things like the Snowden story is responsible for the shortfall — can be seen in recent press reports in the Financial Times and Digiday. In May of last year, Rusbridger left the Guardian for good, giving up a planned role as chairman of the Scott Trust. After leaving the editor's job, he had battled with Pemsel and Viner, sources say, as reality set in about the extent of the Guardian's financial woes.

"When you look at the 2016 election, how many stories did the Guardian break? How many stories did the Guardian own? The Guardian was always *where other people were*," said a former employee.

Staffers current and former echo this complaint: Guardian US, five years after delivering a defining American political story, became anonymous during the most chaotic election in decades — though it wasn't for lack of trying or reporting talent.

Amid the financial concerns, Guardian leadership saw an opportunity in the election to bring the outlet to further prominence. But the strategy deployed mostly involved trying to keep up with deeply established political outlets like the Times and the Post.

"They put a lot of stock that people are going to want to hear our perspective on this," one former reporter said. "Actually, there are a lot of other places people can go for political coverage."

Guardian US became more preoccupied with logging datelines from along the trail — which is expensive and time-consuming — and matching the competition's stories more than it did scoops, the coin of the realm for any outlet hoping to get attention in a crowded political media environment.

Reporters say editors failed to stress digging further into the original stories that actually did generate mainstream attention, like one by columnist Lucia Graves interviewing Jill Harth, who spoke out about alleged groping by Donald Trump. Or a scoop from Jon Swaine, Lauren Gambino, and Richard Luscombe that revealed Steve Bannon had an active voter registration in Florida. Guardian stories about things like the Flint water crisis or Standing Rock didn't receive much internal support from management, rankling reporters. Guardian US's major investigative undertaking, an impressive project that tallied all killings by police in the US, was overshadowed by a similar project posted the day before by the Washington Post, which won a Pulitzer, devastating the Guardian's newsroom.

Journalists in the newsroom grouse that the Guardian should have planned out more robust investigations into issues like climate change, women's rights, and national security as they related to Trump. "Maybe that's what readers expect of the Guardian, and maybe that is something that should be cultivated," a former reporter said. "Life-and-death stuff."

Instead, journalists with various forms of expertise found themselves becoming classic foreign stringers, aggregating the New York Times for print Guardian readers back in the UK.

The Guardian disputes that characterization. "I think that's nonsense. We publish three times the amount of US political news that we would need for the print edition," O'Grady said.

When reporters did have scoops, they were occasionally turned down by editors for being too small or incremental, according to one reporter. Campaigns, likewise, viewed Guardian US as a British outlet. And since it wasn't breaking a ton of news, most weren't incentivized to offer access. "The campaigns had little to no reason to talk to us. Giving us scoops was not to their strategic advantage," said a former reporter. "They are trying to get information to voters, not information to Brits."

Worse, some feel there was a significant opportunity the Guardian missed: becoming the outlet for the Bernie faithful.

“You’d do a Bernie story and it would go crazy, and they didn't seem to extrapolate a trend from that.”

In the past, news organizations have used US election cycles to establish the brand and voice — breaking through with news and analysis to a core audience that expands as political interest spikes. Some outlets do this with straight reporting, like Politico in 2008. Others do it with a stated bent (ranging from pro-Obama slant of Huffington Post to the ardently pro-Trump boosterism of Breitbart in 2016). There was an opportunity for the Guardian, which has its roots in economic leftism, to play to a pro-Sanders audience already interested in the work they’d done on, for instance, Snowden and Occupy. But Guardian US, like others, was focused on the reality that Hillary Clinton would win the primary — even if her campaign wouldn’t grant an interview with her.

“When Bernie announced, we did cover it well,” said a former staffer. “It just seemed so obvious that that’s what we should do. But there was a breathless obsession with the horserace and just doing what everyone else was doing.”

“You’d do a Bernie story and it would go crazy, and they didn't seem to extrapolate a trend from that,” said another former reporter. (The anger from some over Bernie is reminiscent of the deep dissent within the UK newsroom over the paper’s relationship and treatment of Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.)

“We were early and passionate on reporting the Bernie phenomenon,” O’Grady, the spokesperson, said. “There are so many examples it's ridiculous.” The Guardian pointed to a profile written by Paul Lewis in June 2015, an August 2015 story about millennials’ interest in Sanders, and a September piece that year about how Sanders was winning over Democratic voters.

To highlight the quality of Guardian US’s election coverage in total, O’Grady flagged more examples: Ben Fountain’s series about “the phony” element of American politics, a video series called “Anywhere but Washington” looking into overlooked areas of the country, a story about an Indiana town’s relationship with the election, a report that tracked down the “Central Park Five,” as well as work from columnists such as Richard Wolffe, Thomas Frank, and Jessica Valenti.

In a statement, Glendinning said: “I'm so proud of our coverage of one of the most momentous presidential campaigns of our lifetimes. Our reporting, features, investigations and commentary were in-depth and insightful, and we were read by more Americans and readers around the world than ever before. We brought an outsider viewpoint in distinctive ways. We were early to chart the rise of the Bernie Sanders phenomenon, we had exclusives on Donald Trump's misogyny, Steve Bannon's voter registration and more, and we published detailed and nuanced reporting on the ground with projects such as Anywhere but Washington and The View from Middletown."

But in the newsroom, American reporters also were irritated by some of their British colleagues' lack of understanding of US politics and had to regularly explain procedural concepts — albeit strange ones — like superdelegates.

Meanwhile, multiple sources say sending staffers across the country, particularly to events that were also being live-blogged by other reporters, put Guardian US millions of dollars over budget. More than a dozen reporters and editors went to the Democratic and Republican conventions (where hotel rooms can cost hundreds of dollars per night, and thousands must be spent on space and internet).

"At a time when the Guardian in general was already tightening its belt and political reporters in London were being told to stop taking sources out, for them then in the US to be taking this whole troupe of people down there, including desk editors, Brits in it for the tourism, that caused a lot of anguish," said one reporter. "At that point, we knew that spending cuts were around the corner."

Post-election, despite a lack of exclusives or awards, reporters say that there hasn't been a ton of soul-searching at the top. In a notoriously leaky administration, Guardian US scoops have been largely absent during Trump's early days.

Staffers say that internal issues between reporters and editors have come to define the newsroom environment.

There is, for instance, the union. Guardian US was one of a handful of US digital news outlets to vote to unionize, in the summer of 2015. Some organizers say that the company has deliberately slow-walked negotiations — there is no contract yet, nearly two years later, though staffers acknowledge that throughout the buyout process, management has negotiated with the union in good faith as if an agreement existed.

The irony of a delayed union contract has not been lost on employees, since the Guardian has historically been a staunch labor rights advocate. "This is pretty central to the Guardian's self-identification," said a former reporter.

With the dust settling from the buyouts, the central source of the US newsroom's exasperation is Glendinning. Regarded as a quality journalist, Glendinning has proved to be an inexperienced and uninspiring leader in New York, more than a dozen current and former employees say.

Glendinning has also presided over a string of internal scandals, and has lost the faith of many in the newsroom, staffers say. In May of last year, for instance, a freelance journalist was discovered to have fabricated stories. The Guardian announced it had removed a dozen articles after an internal review, and after a detailed and eloquent public response from Glendinning, the incident received little outside media attention and no internal consequences were meted out, staffers say.

And at the 2015 holiday party, Glendinning's former deputy, Matt Sullivan, allegedly groped a colleague.

According to a company document obtained by BuzzFeed News, the complaint against Sullivan was filed on Feb. 17, 2016, and details allegations that Sullivan came up behind the colleague and put his hand underneath her shirt, on her torso and abdomen, and in the back pockets of her jeans. The woman, whom BuzzFeed News is not naming, confirmed that she filed a complaint.

In a letter, Andrew Brettler, an attorney from Lavely & Singer representing Sullivan, said the allegations were "false and defamatory" and "indicates that BuzzFeed's proposed story is based on little more than stale and unsubstantiated rumor from unidentified individuals who — if they even exist — evidently have an axe to grind with Mr. Sullivan and cannot be considered reliable sources."

The incident was well-known within the Guardian newsroom by the time the complaint was filed formally, seven current and former employees say. Other media outlets were chasing the story.

On March 2, Glendinning emailed staff that Sullivan had left the company. The email, which was obtained by BuzzFeed News, makes no mention of the allegation.

"During his time at The Guardian US, from the first quarter of 2014 to the first quarter of 2016, Mr. Sullivan was a young, hard-charging, and relatively unknown editor — not a public figure — in a competitive newsroom, who had a directive from upper management to improve The Guardian US and increase the quality and output of its newsroom," Brettler wrote in the letter. "For BuzzFeed to report — or even insinuate — that Mr. Sullivan left the company amidst media gossips 'chasing the story' after a 'generally known' office rumor would be false."

BuzzFeed News twice asked Sullivan why he left the company. Through his lawyer, Sullivan twice refused to answer.

Sources inside the newsroom viewed Sullivan as a key ally to Glendinning, and the incident damaged her standing internally. Beyond the holiday party incident, Sullivan was a controversial presence in the newsroom, current and former staffers say.

The Guardian confirmed Sullivan left the company in March of last year but declined to comment about the circumstances of his departure.

The turmoil in the US office over the past few years has caused morale to plummet. According to sources, Viner recently visited the New York newsroom to tell staffers to respect and support

Glendinning. Sources inside the Guardian say that they believe Glendinning still has the support of Viner, who prizes her loyalty.

In recent weeks, Glendinning has sought to convince the newsroom that it has in fact set itself apart in the Trump era, like through its coverage of late-night comedy and a feature tracking his first 100 days in office.

“We had a nice little graphic. Everyone has their own way of presenting it,” said one reporter. “Just to say we covered the first 100 days differently than anyone else, nobody really understood.”

“We have also gone deep in many areas where the Guardian has a significant amount of world-leading expertise: on the environment, on race, immigration, class and poverty, technology, gun crime, women’s rights, and the rise of the far right. Our reporters’ outstanding work has forced some of our competitors to raise their game in these areas,” Glendinning said in a statement.

Unexpectedly, the Guardian found itself in the spotlight last month when one of its reporters, Ben Jacobs, was body-slammed by Montana special election Republican candidate Greg Gianforte. The Guardian released damning audio of the altercation and, Gianforte, who went on to win the election, was charged with misdemeanor assault amid a media frenzy.

As the incident lit up Twitter, Glendinning released a statement standing by Jacobs. Employees say that they were generally pleased with how the Guardian and Glendinning responded. Internally, there was some chatter about suing Gianforte civilly along with press freedom groups, but that relatively tenuous idea appears to have vanished. Gianforte apologized to Jacobs and said he would donate $50,000 to the Committee to Protect Journalists. He pleaded guilty to misdemeanor assault and was sentenced to community service and anger management training.

For the time being, staffers in the US have been told that the cuts are done, and that their numbers are solid. But now reporters are attempting to figure out an amorphous strategy and meaning of the slogan “Covering America for the world, including Americans.” (Regarding the motto, O’Grady said, "We have a clear editorial vision, which the editor discusses regularly with the newsroom.”)

Mostly employees are left scratching their heads, performing a kind of unenviable journalism that they feel is antithetical to the aggressive, investigative Guardian spirit. And they feel as though a growing antiestablishment movement on the political left is passing them by.

“It’s run like a foreign bureau now,” said a former reporter. “It’s not like, ‘Let’s do our own reporting.’ It’s: ‘Here’s what happened today in America.’” ●

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