



Dean Baquet

The New York Times

(May 14, 2014) In November 2006, Dean Baquet stood on a desk in the newsroom of The Los Angeles Times and announced that he had been fired as the paper's editor after refusing to cut newsroom staff.

Mr. Baquet has been named, seven and a half years later, to lead The New York Times, becoming the paper's only African-American executive editor in its 163-year history. He is replacing Jill Abramson, who was abruptly replaced on Wednesday after two and a half years as the newsroom's top leader.

"It's humbling to be asked to lead the only newsroom in the country that's actually a lot better than it was a generation ago", Mr. Baquet, formerly The Times's managing editor, told several hundred staff members who had gathered Wednesday afternoon in the newsroom.

Mr. Baquet, 57, takes over at a time of upheaval and uncertainty in the news business. Like many other newspapers, The

Times is struggling to find its way forward in an increasingly digitized media world, experimenting with a variety of new mobile products while working to maintain its commitment to the printed paper.

This is Mr. Baquet's second tour with The Times, having spent the 1990s at the paper, working as a metropolitan reporter and, eventually, national editor. He rejoined The Times as Washington bureau chief after being fired by The Los Angeles Times,

the culmination of a lengthy showdown between Mr. Baquet and the paper's cost-conscious owners.

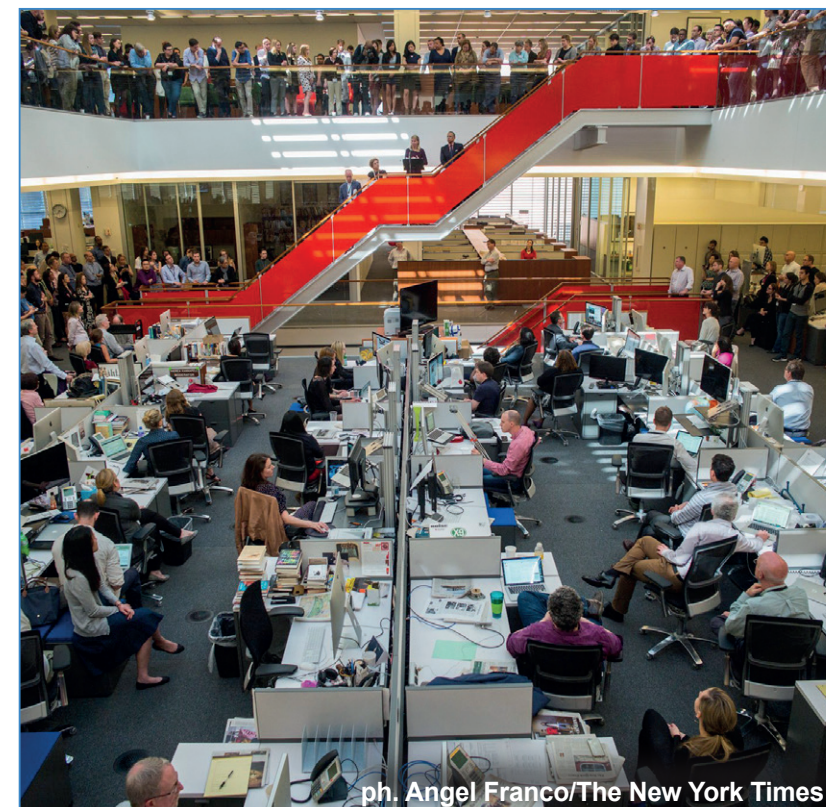
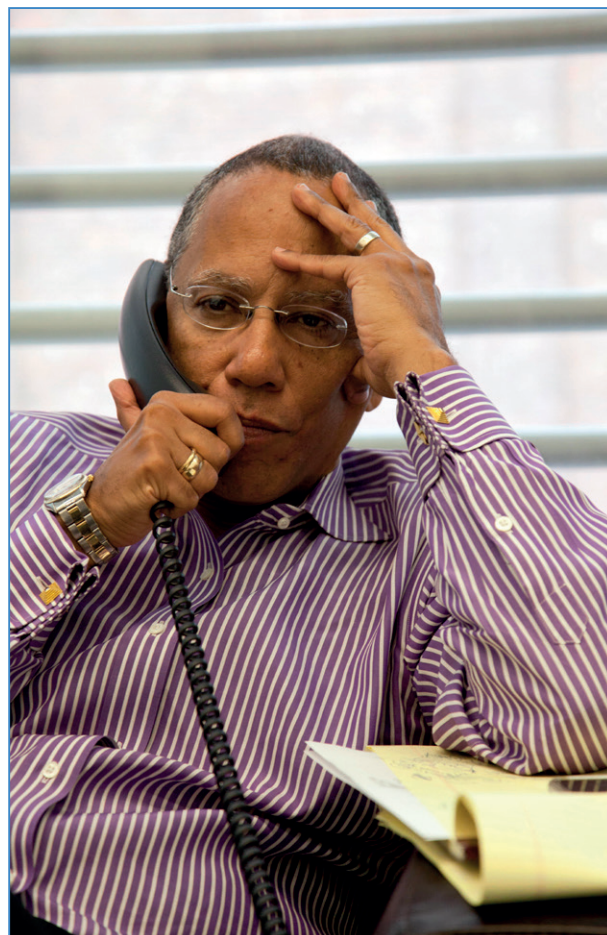
The fourth of five brothers, Mr. Baquet grew up in a working-class neighborhood in New Orleans. His family lived in the back of a Creole restaurant that his father - a former postal worker with only a grade-school education - owned and operated. He became addicted to newspapers at an early age, he said, largely because it was the best way to follow his favorite football team, the New Orleans Saints.

When Mr. Baquet went north to college at Columbia University, it was the first time he had left Louisiana. He never graduated. After his sophomore year, he had a summer internship at a local newspaper and had such a good time that he decided to stay in New Orleans and become a full-

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"The trick of running The New York Times is that you have to keep in mind that it is a very powerful print newspaper with a very appreciative audience" Mr. Baquet said in an interview after the announcement. *"You have to protect that while you go out there and get more readers through other means".*





time reporter, focusing his energy on uncovering local corruption. One of his articles led to a boycott of his father's restaurant.

In 1984, Mr. Baquet joined The Chicago Tribune, where he won a Pulitzer Prize four years later for his coverage of corruption at the Chicago City Council. The Times hired him as an investigative reporter in 1990.

Colleagues and former colleagues say that Mr. Baquet has lost little of his childhood passion for newspapers. "He has this infectious, positive enthusiasm that carries the day," said Martin Gottlieb, who worked with Mr. Baquet on investigative projects at The Times and now edits The Record newspaper in New Jersey.

Mr. Baquet tried to capture that enthusiasm as he addressed his staff. *"We will commit big ambitious journalism every single day and we will have an absolute, utter, unadulterated blast while doing it"* he said.

Mr. Baquet, pronounced 'back-EH', lives in Manhattan with his wife, Dylan Landis, a writer, and they have a grown son. He is known as a low-key, affable leader who likes to walk the newsroom floor, kibitzing with reporters and editors about stories. On Wednesday, he articulated his management style with a kind of informal mission statement.

"Let's take risks, let's not beat each other up when we fail, let's work together" he said. *"Let's not get paralyzed by guessing what Dean or anybody else wants. Give it a shot"*.

In the interview, Mr. Baquet said that he did not intend to make significant changes to the paper's news coverage. *"Most of what I want The New York Times to be, it already is"* he said.

At the same time, Mr. Baquet said the paper was going to have to continue to innovate and experiment with new ways to tell stories online in an effort to attract subscribers. *"The biggest change is a realization that we have to now go out and show our readers our stuff"* he said. *"We have to figure out ways for us to get read"*.

Jonathan Mahler