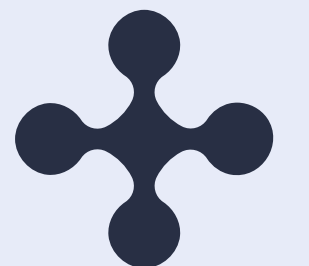




NATIONAL PRESS FOUNDATION
WIDENING THE PIPELINE FELLOWS
SEPTEMBER 8, 2025

AI for Community: Memory Meets Reporting

Featuring Davar Ardalan and Dr. Lucretia Williams





Davar Ardalan

Technologist and storyteller (NPR, National Geographic, White House Presidential Innovation Fellowship)

- Co-author of AI for Community
- Focus: embedding cultural context into emerging technologies
- Work: ensuring stories, languages, and heritage are preserved in the digital age



Lucretia Williams

Educator and Researcher Howard University

- Co-author AI for Community
- Projects: documenting African American Vernacular English, digitizing archives at Howard
- Focus: community involvement, inclusive datasets, ethical preservation



Purpose

Overview of today's discussion

- Show how AI can preserve memory
- Introduce the AI for Community framework
- Explore two case studies: Elevate Black Voices + My Name is Iran
- Discuss ethics and trustworthy AI
- End with practical tools: Creating Purposeful Custom GPTs

AI for Community

Framework

- Intention → What problem are we solving?
- Relevance → Why does this matter to the community?
- Human-Centered Design → How do we preserve voices, lived experiences, memory?
- Cultural Responsiveness → How do we ensure AI reflects lived realities, languages, and context?



AI for Community

Intention → What problem are we solving?

- Ground AI in real community needs, not tech hype.
 - Example: Howard University partnered with Google to improve speech recognition for African American Vernacular English. Howard owns the dataset, and community members were paid for their recordings, ensuring the work was rooted in equity and accountability.

Relevance → Why does this matter to the community?

- AI should amplify voices and priorities that are often overlooked.
 - Example: Elevate Black Voices helped ensure that Black speech patterns are accurately represented in media and technology.

Human-Centered Design → How do we preserve voices, lived-experiences, and memory?

- Design AI with people at the center, not just the model.
 - Example: In India, they are creating smaller, purpose-built AI tools, from Aadhaar's digital ID to voice services in local languages, can expand access for millions and make information more democratic.

Cultural Responsiveness → How do we ensure AI reflects lived realities, languages, and context?

- AI should adapt to communities, not flatten them.
 - Example: Te Hiku Media and NVIDIA worked with Māori communities to protect language, showing how AI can help revitalize cultural heritage.

Why Memory Matters in Journalism

Understanding AI's role in community

- Journalism = community memory in action
- AI can amplify forgotten or overlooked narratives
- Editorial responsibility: keep stories accurate, contextual, human



Extra Responsibility for Journalists

AI for Community matters because communities can archive their stories and heritage in new ways.

For journalists, the responsibility is to remember:

- These tools are powerful, but still nascent.
- AI outputs may be incomplete, they don't yet capture the full richness of community voices, whether that's farmers, faith-based groups, or other often-overlooked voices.
- Journalists must use AI carefully, always grounding their reporting in context, history, and lived realities.

In short: AI can support storytelling, but journalists ensure it remains authentic and complete.

Cultural AI, Contextual AI

- Cultural Responsiveness → AI adapts to community voices, language, and traditions
- Cultural AI → grounded in archives, oral histories, and diverse datasets
- Contextual AI → interprets meaning within social + historical context
- Together: ensures AI supports authentic, nuanced storytelling



Case Studies in AI for Community



Case Study One

Elevate Black Voices



Case Study Two

My Name is Iran



Elevate Black Voices & Digitizing Black Archives

XXXX

Building a large-scale data set of African American English to Improve Automatic Speech Recognition Technology

- Whose voices are being recorded and transcribed?
- Challenges journalist have with editing and fact-checking when using transcriptions of recorded interviews

Preserving Black Culture Through Archives

- Media's role in shaping public perception and accuracy on African-American culture
- Who should have access to and share this historical information?





My Name is Iran

A living, interactive archive

AI as Cultural Memory

Custom GPT built on open-source archives + curated oral histories

- Datasets: Persepolis tablets, Iranian-American oral histories, Persian poetry.
- Reliability: More reliable than general AI because of knowledge base.
- Longevity: Keeps stories alive when books go out of print, archives disappear, and links break
- Interactive: I can be heritage technology - preserving culture, elevating voices and bridging generations.





My Name is Iran

By Davar Ardalan 8

Ever wonder what Darius the Great etched in stone—or what Hafez whispered in verse? This GPT reads Old Persian cuneiform and Persian poetry alike, thanks to open data from royal inscriptions to centuries of verse. Memory speaks. Just ask.

What did the stones of Persepolis say?

What did Qajar women write in their diaries?

How did ancient engineers move water through...

What truths did Hafez pour into a cup of wine?

AI Link: <https://chatgpt.com/g/g-6857a8f042d48191879807c2ccd2a258-my-name-is-iran?model=gpt-4o>





My Name is Iran 40 ▾

What did Qajar women write in their diaries?

Qajar women's diaries offer rare windows into the interior lives of 19th-century Iranian women—revealing private reflections on family, education, faith, social customs, and power.

Their writings ranged from poetic expressions of longing and grief to detailed observations of court life, motherhood, illness, and love. Some recorded interactions with European visitors; others described navigating the strict boundaries of gender roles and the harem. These diaries weren't just personal—they were quietly political, offering counter-narratives to male-dominated histories.

One famous diarist, Taj al-Saltaneh—a Qajar princess and daughter of Naser al-Din Shah—wrote candidly about women's oppression, calling for education and equality. Her memoirs mixed Persian elegance with proto-feminist critique, creating a voice both intimate and revolutionary.

So what did Qajar women write?

They wrote themselves into history—one sentence at a time.



Ethics & Trustworthy AI

Key Principles for Journalists

- Privacy & Protection → safeguard sources and communities
- Editorial Oversight → fact check. AI aids & humans decide
- Fairness → accurate representation
- Transparency & Ownership → credit original sources
- Sustainability → mindful of energy use in AI systems
- Cultural Responsiveness → AI must adapt to context, not flatten it





Creating Useful GPTs



- **CAN BE BUILT FROM PDFS, REPORTS, OR ARCHIVES (NO CODE NEEDED)**
- **TAILORED TO BEATS LIKE EDUCATION, HOUSING, OR HEALTH**
- **SUPPORT REPORTING WITH CONTEXT + QUICK INSIGHTS**





Education Watch GPT

- **INPUTS:**

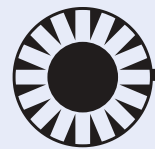
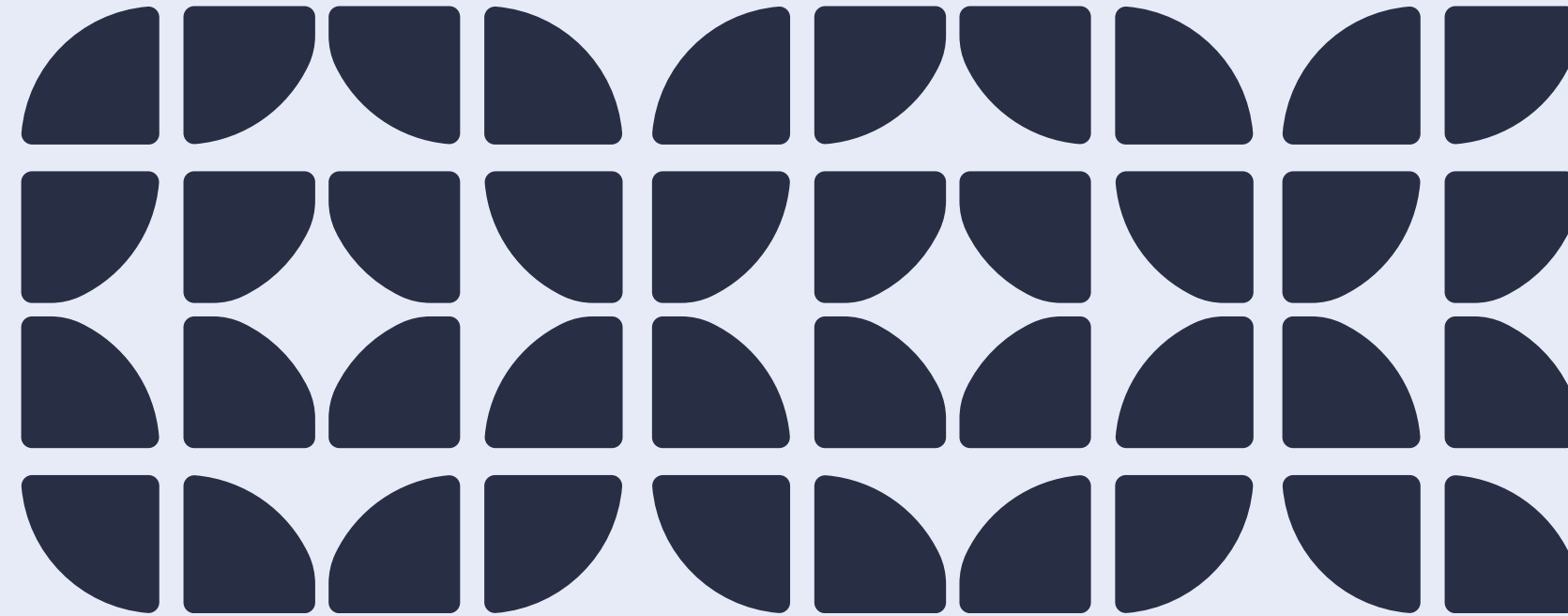
- STATE EDUCATION REPORTS
- BUDGETS
- TESTING RESULTS
- ENROLLMENT DATA

- **USE CASE:**

- “WHAT’S THE GRADUATION RATE IN MY DISTRICT COMPARED TO LAST YEAR?”
- QUICK COMPARISONS OF DISTRICT SPENDING AND OUTCOMES

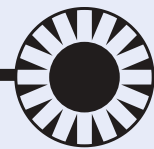
- **ALWAYS FACT-CHECK**

Key Takeaways



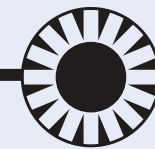
Augmentation

AI enhances reporting without replacing journalistic judgment



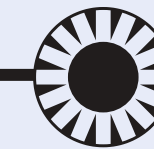
Trust

Trustworthy AI = privacy, fairness, transparency, sustainability



Authenticity

Cultural Responsiveness ensures AI reflects **communities authentically**



Alignment

Purpose-built tools should align with journalistic editorial values.



Your Questions

What opportunities do you see for AI in your reporting?

What risks or concerns stand out to you?



Thank you!

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