**"When journalists don't fully understand how power shapes language to serve its own ends, they inevitably become pawns to those who do. Power then takes the wheel of society, and drives it where it will." - Douglas McGill**

**Read the following:**

* [Holding the Powerful Accountable; Giving Voice to the Voiceless](https://www.poynter.org/news/holding-powerful-accountable-giving-voice-voiceless)

**ACTIVITY 1:**

In groups of four, develop a list of questions (and follow-up questions if available) for the following hypothetical interview with a city mayor.

You are about to interview a city mayor who is being questioned for the city’s dramatic decline in population over the past 5 years. Local organizations, businesses and residents believe it’s due to the increase in crime but the mayor has remained quiet or shifted the discussion. You’ve been granted an interview, but how can you develop a list of questions to hold the powerful accountable? What information should you retrieve before going into the interview? Crime rate statistics? Population statistics?

Are neighboring cities seeing the same decline in population?

As you create the list, develop questions that can lead to definitive answers or lead you to the source with the information.

**ACTIVITY 2:**

After you develop a list of potential questions, use them to interview your instructor who will play the role of the city mayor. He or she will answer the questions based on your questions. (The instructor will have background information on city results to help guide discussions.)

Students will then get together in groups of four to discuss how they believe the interview was handled. Answer the following questions with your group:

* Was there information missing following your interview? Any follow-up questions that needed to be asked?
* Are there other sources where you can gather information to help build a complete or thorough story?
* Do you think you held the powerful accountable? What does this mean?

**ACTIVITY 3:**

Working on your own, begin writing a story based on the information you collected. When complete, develop a list of unanswered or unclear information that may be helpful to your readers. Explain how you would get the answers. Would you go back to the same source? How would you word your questions?