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Patchwork Nation Project

Dante Chinni - Director

"\ "Nearly 305 million people live in the United States, according to the US Census Bureau. Yet in recent elections it.s all been about fitting into two categories: 'red states' that vote Republican and 'blue states' that vote Democratic. But this red/blue breakdown of political opinion doesn't explain what underpins the voters.\ "



-- Dante Chinni, explaining Patchwork Nation."

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About

Profile by Blair Miller, Missouri School of Journalism, in Nov. 2009

"\ Journalism has probably changed more in the last five years than it did in the preceding 20,\ " says Dante Chinni, one of the lead developers of the Christian-Science Monitor's Patchwork Nation Project.

The project is a coalition of the CS Monitor and PBS NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, all funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. It aims to be an easily navigated information source that can provide data both on the national and hyper-local scale at the same time.

"I think journalists and news organizations can use it to study trends," Chinni said, "but I also think there is a big group of people out there simply interested in where the nation is going."

The project was launched by Chinni and James Gimpel to cover the 2008 elections, but expanded to become a host for economic, demographic and voting information. On the Patchwork Nation site, you can find a county-by-county breakdown of foreclosures in June 2008 a click away from a map showing you every county with a Cracker Barrel restaurant.

"My goal for the site is to become one-stop shopping for a host of stats," Chinni said. But the project also aims to do much more. It has partnered with local public broadcasting stations to do a series of hyper-local profiles on various counties across the country.

"I felt there needed to be a new way of understanding the country," Chinni says. "We need to understand the places; the countries within the country."

The town of Eagle, Colo., was recently profiled on Patchwork Nation as an example of the domino effect of tax delinquencies in the town. A longtime local newspaper editor, Kathy Heicher, wrote the story.

Aside from the Patchwork project, Chinni still writes for the CS Monitor, a gig he landed after a stint with Newsweek and some time covering the environment in Washington D.C. As it stands now, Chinni says the project is best used in election years because of the hyper-local information and data it provides. However, down the road, he says his goal for the project is to become a "one-stop shopping" source for statistics.

\\"I've always been interested in different places and what makes them tick,\" he said. \\\"I got immersed in a world of data – how it works, and how to use it. I just married those two things in this project.\" He says he sees the project as a valuable tool for the public and its want for information.

\\\"[People] sense there is something bigger going on nationally and are looking for a way to understand it. That's what Patchwork is -- a tool for understanding the country at a moment of great change.\"

READ MORE:

[Here is a video of Chinni explaining the objectives of the Patchwork Nation Project on its website.](#)

[Click here](#) to learn more about Chinni's endeavors with the Patchwork Nation Project on the Knight's Digital Media website. It includes a bio of Chinni, a video, and other resources.

Links

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