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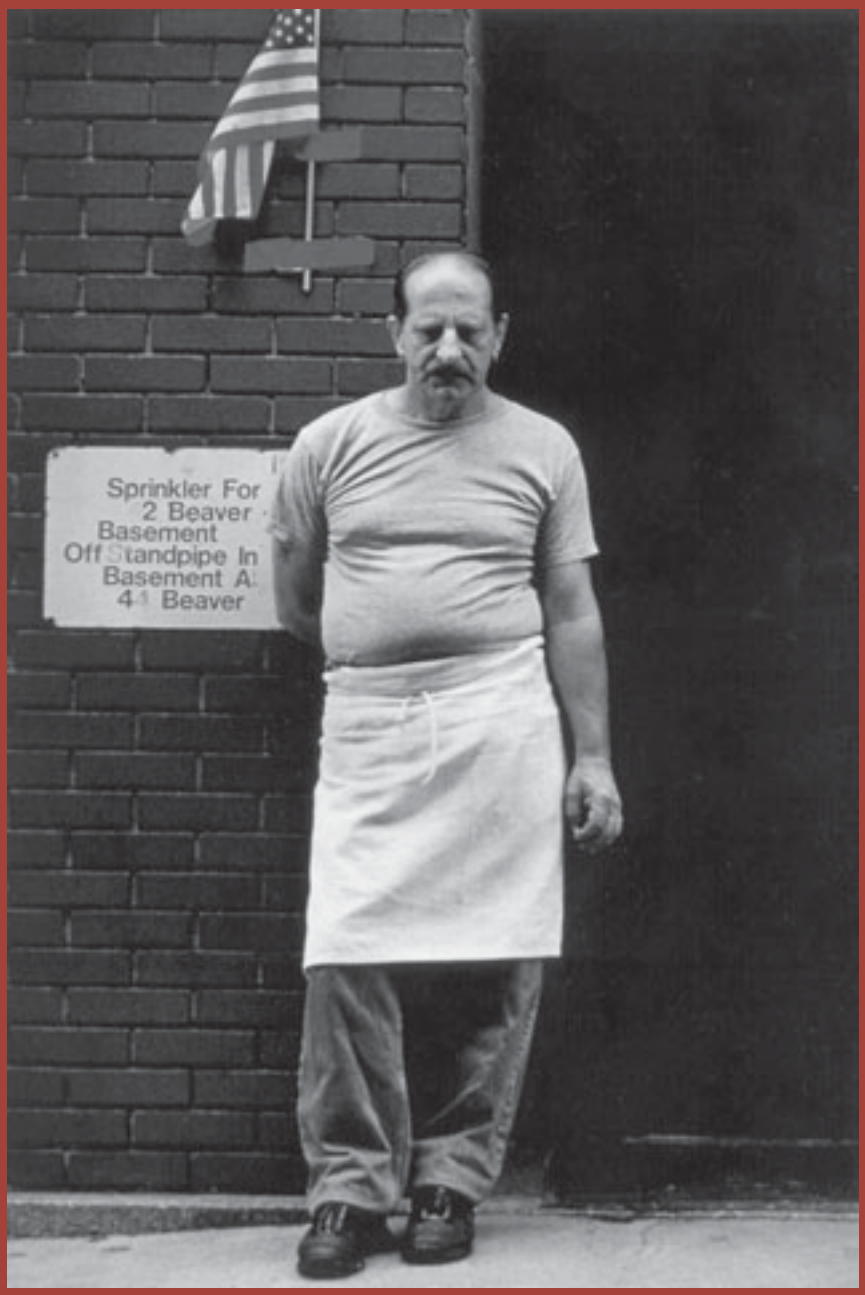
Coverage of Terrorism



'This is one of my favorite pictures, taken a block away from Ground Zero on the second day. This is a cook who works in a restaurant. What is interesting to me about this picture, aside from what it depicts, is how the human experience leaves a trace on body language that one could never invent theatrically. It never lies.'
—Peter Turnley, photographer.

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Cover photo by Peter Turnley.©

Reporting Clashes With Government Policies

'The watchdog role of the press is never more vital than during a national crisis.'

By Bob Giles

When the United States is on a war footing, there is a tendency to set aside many of our traditional checks and balances by a well-intentioned instinct for national unity.

Congress gives the President what he says he needs, with fewer questions asked. At the Pentagon and in media relations offices around the capital, secrecy emerges as a practice, if not a policy. Voices of dissent fall silent. Public debate is avoided. Americans are told to watch what they say.

Essential among many forms of patriotism that emerge in a time of national crisis is the duty of the press to be watchful over the exercise of power. With Congress on the sidelines, there is no forum for a national debate on our military and foreign policy. The press remains the single institution free to independently probe for facts the government wants to shield from American citizens.

During the cold war, this nation paid a heavy price for secrecy and deception used to justify military actions and for a pliant press willing to censor itself or unwilling to challenge the official version of events.

Nieman Reports is devoting much of this issue to an examination of reporting on terrorism, not only to demonstrate that it is an enormously difficult journalistic assignment but also to explore and explain how certain practices of the U.S. government are denying citizens important information.

The administration's impulse for controlling information is complicated by the nature of combat in Afghanistan. As cities and major regions of that country come under control of the anti-Taliban forces, the western press (though assuming great risk) can move more freely and provide eyewitness accounts and images of how the war is being fought.

This mobility of journalists—aided by advances in technology, such as videophones—has undercut one of the Pentagon's major strategies for managing how the press report the war: the Department of Defense National Media Pool. Institutionalized pool coverage was used in the Gulf War, effectively limiting independent movement by U.S. journalists. After the war, frustrated representatives of U.S. news organizations tried to negotiate a better arrangement but reluctantly agreed to continue the pool practice in future wars. The early combat in Afghanistan , absent U.S. ground forces, allowed journalists to move with great freedom and greater risk reporting a picture of the war unlike any since Vietnam. The pool was activated in December, igniting controversy in the selection of CNN over the networks to accompany commandos to Tora Bora.

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld says, "Open and independent reporting will be the principal means of coverage of U.S. military operations." Yet the government continues to seek ways to deny Americans information. It is blocking news media access to satellite images of Afghanistan and neighboring countries, including images that would enable journalists to evaluate reports of bomb damage that killed civilians. Pentagon staffers who discuss military operations with news media have been told that they are breaking federal criminal law.

The administration views this as a public relations war as well as a military war. It has chosen to deny Americans access to what it interprets as Taliban or Al Qaeda propaganda, rather than favoring openness in the belief that American ideas and ideals will prevail. At the start of the war, Voice of America was bullied into canceling a scheduled broadcast of an exclusive interview with Mullah Mohammed Omar, the leader of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban and a defender of Osama bin Laden. And the administration persuaded television news organizations to engage in self-censorship that deprived the public of a newsworthy statement by Osama bin Laden. Major daily newspapers and wire services wrote stories about the statement, but failed to print a text giving readers a fuller context of his message.

President Bush's regrettable decision to try accused terrorists in secret before military tribunals would deprive the world of the evidence presented against bin Laden and his aides and risks undermining the legitimacy of any verdict.

When the war against terrorism goes well, the public is more likely to accept official explanations that national security interests justify exceptions to transparency and accountability. Opinion surveys show that the public is content to allow the Pentagon to decide what is news. Thus, the mood of the country seems resigned to the possibility that the search for truth once again is an acceptable casualty in this time of war.

The watchdog role of the press is never more vital than during a national crisis. It is an unpopular role when the approval ratings of the President are so high or when the Pentagon asserts that the national interest requires secrecy.

Monitoring our government at war goes beyond asking technical military questions or probing instances of bad judgment or miscalculation. Yet with the majority and minority in Congress and the nation silent for the most part, the press is obliged to examine the larger issues and build the foundation for debate on fundamental policies that politicians are now so willing to shy away from. ■

Coverage of Terrorism

Through the night of September 11, 2001, photographer **Peter Turnley** took refuge in a second-floor office in a clothing store, its windows blown out by the force of the attack on the World Trade Center. As he tried to absorb what he was seeing, he documented the devastation. At dawn, he moved close to the site and fastened his journalistic eye on faces whose expressions evoke our feelings of loss. From covering war, Turnley knew that "the most important pictures…are after the battle, when one sees the human impact."

This photographic glimpse at the human impact of that tragic morning opens Nieman Reports's exploration of the challenges journalists confront as they tell the stories of that day and report on its still-unwinding reverberations.

"Language always matters," writes Trinity College professor **Beverly Wall**, as she examines difficulties journalists have in finding words adequate to describe what happened on that September morning. "When journalists' impulse is to describe a news event as 'indescribable,' perhaps they should pause and remind themselves that language does matter and the exacting search for words should not be abandoned."

Ted Gup, author of "The Book of Honor: Secret Lives and Deaths of CIA Operatives," takes us inside the tension between government and the press when secrecy is employed as part of a wartime strategy. "It is precisely in times of such crises that reporters should be wariest of government invocations of secrecy," he writes. **Stanley W. Cloud**, former Washington bureau chief for Time and one of five journalists who, after the Gulf War, negotiated an improved way of handling pool coverage of U.S. military combat, writes about the interaction of the Pentagon and the press. **Maud S. Beelman**, who directs the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and covered the wars in the Balkans for The Associated Press, contends that "For reporters covering this war, the challenge is not just in getting unfettered and uncensored access to U.S. troops and the battlefield—a long and mostly losing struggle in the past—but in discerning between information and disinformation." **Nancy Bernhard**, author of "U.S. Television News and Cold War Propaganda, 1947-60," reminds us of a time during the cold war when Harry Truman asked journalists for "ideological support for the national security state" and, as she writes, "none of the assembled newsmen blanched at this enlistment to propagandize." As **James Bamford**, author of "Body of Secrets: Anatomy of the Ultra-Secret National Security Agency," examines the Bush administration's crackdown on civil liberties and the limitations on press freedoms—some of them self-imposed—he finds "potential for good, penetrating, investigative reporting." But, he writes, "The question is, is the media up to these investigative tasks? Judging from past performance, the answer is not likely."

Bamford uses media coverage of anthrax as one example of how the press is failing the American public. **Philip Caper**, a physician who lectures at the Harvard School of Public Health, explains how reporting on anthrax and related public health issues could be handled more responsibly by journalists. And Stanford journalism professor and former St. Louis Post-Dispatch editor **William Woo** explains what foreign news would be like if it were covered in "a serious way."

John Owen, who directed The Freedom Forum European Center until its closure this fall, tells the story of a British journalist, untrained in the coverage of war, who nearly loses her life in Afghanistan as a reminder of why training—that is now available—is so critical for reporters whose job takes them into hostile environments. **Nate Thayer**, an investigative journalist, uses his experiences from years of reporting in Cambodia on Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot to explain why today so many staff journalists rely on the legwork of freelancers to bring context to their foreign news coverage. American University professor **Christopher Simpson** offers us his expertise about satellite images, explaining what information these photographs can give journalists and why the U.S. government is blocking reporters' access to them. **Joanne Miller**, art director at The Charlotte Observer, describes how her newspaper uses graphics to help readers better understand the coverage of the terrorism story.

During the Nieman Foundation's **Watchdog Conference** in September, Harvard Law School professor Charles Nesson moderated a discussion about how journalists ask probing questions, focusing on coverage of terrorism and whether journalists are asking "the right question."

Boston Globe photographer **Stan Grossfeld** went to New York City after September 11 and returned with images that probe the human spirit in the midst of destruction.

Geneive Abdo, a longtime Tehran correspondent for The Guardian, illuminates the difficulties Western journalists confront in reporting about the Islamic world. She observes that many American reporters "reveal an intellectual laziness and a general unwillingness to cover the Muslim world in a way that allows readers to view it on its own terms without moral judgment, which is, after all, the way in which understanding is deepened." Williams College professor **David B. Edwards**, who is working to preserve a vast archive of reporting about Afghanistan during the 1980's, shares photographs taken during an earlier war as part of a controversial journalism project. **Reza**, a photographer who has traveled often to Afganistan, offers his look at the country's fighters and her people. **Fazal Qureshi**, chief editor of Pakistan Press International, writes about the forces of intimidation that play upon his country's independent press. Suffolk University professor **Abdelmagid Mazen**, an Eygptian by birth, explains what it is like to experience dual coverage of the war on terrorism as he switches between Al-Jazeera's satellite feed and American news coverage. **Danny Schechter**, executive editor of Globalvision's mediachannel.org, describes how his Web-based global news service helps readers dig deeper and broader for answers to questions such as why the events of September 11 happened. And **Dale Fuchs**, an American who works for the national Spanish daily, El Mundo, shows us how her native country is portrayed to people living in Spain—"as a high-tech bully wreaking havoc on the poor with its array of terrible toys"—then explains why. ■

September 11, 2001: Telling Stories Visually

'What moved me was a sense of a life being transformed by an experience in a way that there was no going back.'

Photographer Peter Turnley was in Cambridge, Massachusetts on the morning of September 11. Having used his camera during the past two decades to tell stories about conflict and refugees, about natural disasters and human revolutions, Turnley, a 2001 Nieman Fellow and Pulitzer Prize-winning photojournalist, knew he had to get to the site of the World Trade Center attack. He shared with current Nieman Fellows his story of how he came to be one of the only photographers to capture images of the catastrophic devastation through the night of September 11 and into the dawn of the next morning. He also spoke about the role visual representation plays in helping us try to comprehend the toll of this experience on people who have been touched most directly by it. Excerpts from his remarks accompany a gallery of photographs Turnley took during 10 days he spent near Ground Zero.

Looking out at this unbelievable sight, I was struck by the way that the night lights delineated this incredible scene. I imagined that the same scene in daylight might have been much more diffuse, with the foreground blending into the background.

I'm very passionate about visual storytelling. Always have been, and I don't miss any occasion to promote the power of visual storytelling because in journalism, particularly when it comes to photography, it's a bit of a service industry, often used to illustrate words. I feel very strongly that when photography is well done, it can be a very full-bodied compliment to words as a form of storytelling and communication. To those who work in newspapers and magazines and who are not photographers, try to think of visual storytelling in a different way.

I knew this was going to be a tough logistical story to cover. I figured Manhattan would be closed off, and I was going to be late. Journalists know what it feels like to be late on a story, but that's often a misnomer because there is no time frame. When I left for New York, I told myself, "You're definitely not early here, not with a city full of photographers." But this story was going to be around for a long time. Particularly in war situations, the most important pictures are not in the midst of the bang-bang; they are after the battle when one sees the human impact.

As I am driving, I'm imagining what this is going to be like, what it is going to look like. I'd covered four earthquakes, so I had a sense of that, but each time I heard the news on the radio ("Today, planes have hit the World Trade Center, another has hit the Pentagon, and another plane has crashed in Pennsylvania."), it would hit me and I'd think, this is just unbelievable. That was really an important part of that drive down for me, that notion of incomprehensibility.

It's now about five p.m., I'm in Manhattan, and it's getting dark. Manhattan was like a ghost town; there were no cars on the road. I drive toward the World Trade Center, and I get to a point where I can't go any further and start to see television satellite trucks and lights about 15 blocks from Ground Zero. And nobody can go beyond this point. So I put my cameras under my dark coat and try to walk past some policeman. I get about 10 yards past and somebody says, "Hey, stop. What are you doing?" He brings me back to the barrier. I start to think about how I am going to get to where I need to be. I don't feel like because I'm in New York City, with American laws, that my sense of purpose in needing to document what has happened is going to change any more than if I was in Ceaucescu's Romania trying to show what oppression looks like there. It looks dark to my left, so I started kind of going around streets, heading east.

This picture was taken the next morning at about seven o'clock. Many of you have probably seen that look that is called the thousand-mile stare. So many people had that look. This guy really moved me. What moved me was a sense of a life being transformed by an experience in a way that there was no going back. You could never be the same person after that night. And this man will certainly never be the same person.

This picture was taken of three young women who were doing an all-night vigil on Canal Street, I think on the second night. The scene was starting to change a bit, for me as well, as I started to get less interested in the Ground Zero situation. I always loved photographs that depict humanity, that depict people and people's lives and how their lives are touched by an event or by a situation and, at that point, I started to wander around the city a lot.

All photos and captions by Peter Turnley.©

I get to a place where ambulances and fire trucks and rescue workers and police cars are going. I start to walk that way, and I don't want to blow it because, as I say to myself, "I'm getting real close. This is not the time to get thrown out of here." At one corner where there were a lot of policemen, I hid underneath an awning and just watched what was going on for about a half an hour. I didn't see a single cameraman or photographer or journalist. But I did see two people wearing fire and police jackets with cameras so I asked them whether there were any photographers at the site. "Not a soul at this point. Everyone's been thrown out. There's not a single photographer there."

Turnley managed to get to Ground Zero by about 6:30 and was surprised to see very few other journalists or photographers there. After looking around for a while, he found his way to an office on the second floor of Brooks Brothers, just across from the site. He described his surroundings as "surreal:" Computers flashed, cash register drawers were left open, and two inches of dust encased the clothes. "I had a view right on Ground Zero," he said.

I covered the Armenian earthquake in 1988, then one in Iran and in Turkey. In Armenia, there were 35,000 people killed. I was totally unprepared for what I saw; I had never seen death on that level. There were bodies everywhere, coffins everywhere. The first thing I expected in looking out over this site was to see a lot of human suffering, a lot of human destruction. I

Funerals began about a week after the attacks. I went to two funerals on Staten Island on consecutive days. There were a large number of firemen that were killed from Staten Island. What struck me was the first day when I saw this woman. I just think that people's strength and courage and some of the code of behavior is so fascinating. If you notice, she's actually being held up by someone. She was literally falling down with emotion, but she had it within her to make that salute, which was a gesture of honor and such a dignified tribute to her husband. And I remember, when I saw her, feeling this overwhelming sense of sadness for this young woman.

I think often the richest moments are second and third degrees from the main action. When they took the casket out of this church, I turned around and I saw these two men, and I was really struck by this guy. Afterwards, I went up to him and said, "Excuse me, are you a fireman?" and he said, "I am a fireman, but today I'm just a citizen and I just want to pay tribute to a friend." And he walked away. There was just such a sense of humility and humbleness.

wasn't seeing that anywhere. I was standing where they'd set up a triage center and makeshift morgue, right where Brooks Brothers store is. I still had my cameras underneath my coat and was just hanging out. At that point I see a photographer arrive, take a picture, and immediately get thrown out by the police in a very forceful way. And I said to myself, "Just lay low. You're late getting here but this is a really important scene to shoot tonight. And if you're here all night, you'll be here at first light tomorrow morning and no one is going to be able to get back in this area. And that's going to be a really important scene to see and document."

I spent the whole night by myself in this office looking out at this scene, at one of the biggest disasters of my lifetime, sitting by myself. It was an incredible experience of solitude, a chance to think. What struck me absolutely, sitting there at midnight, was looking at these rescuers. It's cold, really windy, smoky. And I say to myself, "Look how many human beings, decent people, working-class people, have gotten out to do the right thing with their lives, to use their skills to help." Welders were busting their butts to cut through beams. It was dangerous and dirty. Beams were flying through the air. I was so impressed by how quickly they were organizing themselves and using their skills to put wire around the beams and lift them up. I actually asked myself the question whether I had that kind of strength and courage. And I wasn't sure, but I hope I do.

There was this humming silence. It was very quiet and that really added to this sense of profound destruction, of the world coming to an end. Just quiet, but the quiet was punctuated by the humming of these welding generators. The smell was very acrid. It burned your nose. The smoke burned your eyes and there was dust everywhere. That next morning I stayed until about 11 o'clock and then I did get thrown out by police. I had a whole night of film in my pocket, and I was ready to leave. Every day after that, for the next four days, I made my way back in and spent several hours at Ground Zero each day.

When a Nieman Fellow asked Turnley if, in taking these and other intimate shots of people, he was ever accused of preying on their grief, he responded by talking about how he works to relate to the people he wants to photograph.

There's no principle, no rule. It has to do so much with one's self, with the person who is behind the camera. There's nothing objective about that dynamic. You can most definitely show someone in your eyes and in your face and in the way you look at them that

I like this picture very much. This was taken outside of Yankee Stadium the day of the big memorial for the families of the victims.

The first Sunday after the attacks I got in my car and drove to Harlem. I was driving on about 128th street at about 9:30 in the morning and suddenly I heard this beautiful rendition of "God Bless America." I stopped the car and saw this all-black procession following a preacher with an American flag, walking out of this small brick church. I followed them as they sang the song at least 10 times as they walked until they got to an outdoor basketball court where they made a circle and for an hour said prayers and speeches and sang for the victims of the World Trade Center. I was the only journalist there, but I wish national television had been there that morning to show these people feeling the way they did about this incident and their city.

you want to honor them, that you're not taking something away. If you avoid their glance, of course they will be angry. I think it's a wonderful dynamic because that lack of objectivity means that it's all about that sort of sense of interrelationship with people. So a lot of people are surprised that people all over the world, in situations of suffering, want other people to know and to feel and to think about their suffering. They want people to take heed of it. They want them to consider it. And, very often, they're in fact honored by the presence of a camera, if it's wielded in the right way. In New York, I didn't encounter any hostility.

Turnley, in responding to a question about whether there are moments when he is taking photographs that he feels he could be doing something to help people, rather than taking their pictures, talks about the value of the work he does.

I'm fascinated by the human experience, and I don't feel a sense of guilt about that. I hope that the reason I do what I do is not so I can go home and look at these pictures in a closet and get some sort of kick out of it. It's to communicate with you, so that we can think of this as a collective experience, that this doesn't just stay there. That events in your country or something that might have happened to someone in your family, if it had a dimension beyond only the private matters of your family that other people could contemplate and maybe it could help them take their lives further. I've very frequently picked up victims and gotten them to a hospital in difficult war zones. If I have the option of whether I knew I could help someone or make a picture, I can't imagine that I would not choose to help them.

At the World Trade Center, there were other people who were much better prepared than I was to rescue these victims. I felt that what I could best do with my energy was, in fact, pay tribute to the men and women who got out in those difficult conditions and made those gestures of help. The reason I would justify that cameramen and photographers and journalists be present in these situations is not because they're making money or because they're parasites—it's because 50 years from now, it's important that people contemplate the decency that so many people demonstrated in trying to do the right thing in a situation that was difficult. I don't know how that can be communicated without images, without words, without film. ■

Language Matters as We Try to Describe What Happened

'By accepting language's failure, we surrender our understanding and the complex meaning of events to silence. . . .'

By Beverly Wall

Virtually everyone agrees that on September 11 something significant happened, and its reverberations are felt by citizens and journalists alike. Yet for those whose job it is to report news of this event it has been difficult to name this "something" and figure out how to talk about the events of that day and their aftermath. This dilemma of language persists despite the immense visibility, dramatic scale, and far-reaching dimensions of the events and despite the flood of words generated in print, online and on the air.

The notion that what happened is "beyond words" has become, in fact, the dominant theme in the news and public commentary. Words like "indescribable," "inexpressible," "unspeakable," "inexplicable" and "unimaginable" are employed when more precise, descriptive words seem inadequate to the task. A headline on a column by Ellen Goodman reads: "At Times Like This, Words Fail." At "The Days After," a Web site created by the University of Chicago Press, the homepage begins, "At the moment of catastrophe we fall silent. Language fails." On television, a young San Francisco artist, who is trying to create a work of art to capture the emotion of the experience, says that September 11 lies "out of the reaches of grammar." Even Nobel laureate Toni Morrison expresses this theme in a eulogy appearing in a special edition of Vanity Fair: "To speak to you, the dead of September…I must be steady and I must be clear, knowing all the time that I have nothing to say—no words stronger than the steel that pressed you into itself; no scripture older or more elegant than the ancient atoms you have become."

This theme exposes a very natural reaction in the short term. But, in the long term, it can become a dangerous assumption. By accepting language's failure, we surrender our understanding and the complex meaning of events to silence or, perhaps worse, to the ready-made, sometimes muddled, sometimes manipulative words of others. James Baldwin writes, "People evolve a language in order to describe and thus control their circumstances, or in order not to be submerged by a reality that they cannot articulate. (And if they cannot articulate it, they *are* submerged.)"

We must find ways to articulate this experience, both as individuals and as a society. Not to do this is to miss the full meaning of what happened and is happening now. Or, if we fail to name what we have experienced, we might be overwhelmed by the sheer terror and horror of the wordless visual images of towers collapsing and people holding hands as they jump from windows. It is hard work to get the words right, but we should not be willing to settle for the language of cheap sentiment or agenda-laden ideologies.

Language always matters. Words signal more than their simple dictionary denotations; key terms and metaphors help us to construct a framework of connotations, historical associations, and cultural implications, as well as offer us guidance in connecting concepts and generating actions. Take, for example, "Ground Zero," the phrase used to designate the site of the destroyed World Trade Center. This term is rooted in the first uses of atomic weapons in the mid-1940's and refers to the point of detonation of a nuclear explosion or the point of impact of a missile. This term doesn't accurately convey what happened, although it might reflect our horrified sense of the devastating results—a degree of destruction and mass dissolution to match our worst 20th century nightmares of nuclear war. At other times, this site is also referred to as "The Zone" and "The Ruins." Zones suggest war zones, of course, and ruins are associated with the disconcerting notion of societies in decay or cultures in decline. Do these words tell us the story that we believe we are experiencing?

Other examples can be found in the confused clusters of words related to "war," "crime" and "terrorism." Are the events of September 11 described best as acts of war? Or are they crimes, as Hendrik Hertzberg has argued in The New Yorker? Perhaps they are crimes against humanity, as others suggest. Whether acts of war or crimes, are the people who committed these acts best called "terrorists?" Or do we agree with Reuters—which cautioned its correspondents against indiscriminate use of this loaded word—that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter?"

In his address to a joint session of Congress on September 20, President George W. Bush variously referred to these men as "terrorists," "our enemies," "enemies of freedom," and "murderers." In a key opening sentence, Bush cast the dilemma this way: "Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done." This demonstrates the neatly turned phrase that speechwriters love; a classical rhetorician would call it "antimetabole," or an artful repetition of words in reverse grammatical order.

To "bring justice to our enemies" invokes the language of war. Even the words "a new kind of war" suggest military action, with an associated framework of words and deeds—enemies, ground troops, battlefields, frontlines, attacks and counterattacks, bombing strikes, collateral damage, retreats, cease-fires, victories and defeats. In contrast, when we think of bringing criminals (not "enemies") to justice, we invoke the notion of a police action, and this carries with it a very different framework of terms and actions—perpetrators, victims, detectives, crime scenes, investigations, interrogations, witnesses, arrests, evidence and testimony, trials and sentences or acquittals.

By using this overlapping language as he did, President Bush implied that words don't matter. But, of course, they do matter. To confuse language reflects perhaps a confused situation, perhaps confused thinking.

In a 1946 essay, "Politics and the English Language," George Orwell calls on everyone—not just professional writers—to care about how language is used in public life. It's an argument for civic engagement that is easy to agree with but hard to realize in practical terms. Journalists have a unique challenge, and perhaps bear a special responsibility, to help people—through the careful, logically consistent use of language—find ways to articulate what our shared experience has been.

Journalists don't necessarily know all the ways to do this but they are, by vocation and avocation, people who should have a special care for words and know how to generate them and analyze them. Most of all, because journalists often provide our first link in connecting individual experience to the broader perspective of society, they need to take seriously the implications of their rhetorical choices. When journalists' impulse is to describe a news event as "indescribable," perhaps they should pause and remind themselves that language does matter and the exacting search for words should not be abandoned. ■

Beverly C. Wall is an associate professor and director of the Allan K. Smith Center for Writing & Rhetoric at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. She is founder of the Intercollegiate E-Democracy Project and has been a commentator on political rhetoric and the media for C-SPAN's "Washington Journal," Reuters, BBC Radio London, and National Public Radio's "The Connection."

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Secrecy and the Press in a Time of War

'If we guard our toothbrushes and diamonds with equal zeal, we will probably lose fewer toothbrushes and more diamonds.'

By Ted Gup

I once asked the late Scotty Reston, the legendary New York Timesman, if there was any story he regretted printing. Without hesitating he spoke of a time during World War II when he violated the censorship code and reported that a Nazi submarine had seriously damaged a British cruiser. "I think that was unethical," Reston reflected. "That was a case where my fastball was better than my control. I'd like to take that one back."

Reston's remorse confirms the conventional wisdom that reporters in times of war often find themselves torn between the instincts of a journalist and the duties of a citizen. Silence and forbearance do not come naturally to most reporters. Neither does giving government carte blanche in determining what can and cannot be reported. The problem today is even more complicated both by advances in telecommunications and by a government that habitually abuses the stamp of secrecy.

Government would have us believe that secrecy and national security are Siamese twins that share a common heart. In truth, secrecy, taken to excess, poses its own dire threat to national security. It creates fear and distrust, allows rumor to fill the void of information, disenfranchises the public from the sacrifices asked of it, and ultimately plays squarely into the hands of those who wish us ill. It is precisely in times of such crises that reporters should be wariest of government invocations of secrecy.

Today that secrecy is epidemic, by one count (that of the federal Information Security Oversight Office) growing at a rate of more than eight million new secrets a year. Deferring to the Pentagon, the White House or Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to decide what is fit to print would itself be a grave abrogation of responsibilities, as damaging to national security as any violation of wartime censorship. Time and again government has demonstrated its willingness to invoke secrecy to mask failure and impotence, to minimize losses, and to exaggerate gains. Its lofty appeals to patriotism often conceal baser motives—not the safety of troops or ships or the homeland, but the management of news. Left to its own devices, the Pentagon and CIA would be only too happy to choreograph and script the coverage of the current conflict. But as every reporter knows, nothing resists such efforts like a "good war."

It was William Tecumseh Sherman, commanding general of the Army in 1876, who advised an ambitious general setting out in a punitive campaign against the Sioux, "to be prudent, not

to take along any newspapermen, who always make mischief." The headstrong general ignored Sherman's advice. His name was George Armstrong Custer. The battle was the Little Big Horn. The lone civilian casualty of that slaughter was the newspaperman who accompanied him.

The current war against terrorism brings old conflicts into high relief. In an age of advanced technology, when Predator drones prowl remote landscapes, when satellites gather reconnaissance, and cruise missiles and smart bombs lead the attack, the journalist often finds himself or herself profoundly marginalized, remote from the action—and ever more at the mercy of Pentagon briefers. Emboldened by its successes in the Gulf War, the Pentagon now holds an even tighter leash on the news. Much video footage comes not from independent camera crews, but from the eyes of weapons handpicked for theatricality. In such a war there are few if any Ernie Pyles sending back dispatches from the front. Indeed, there is scarcely a front at all. Not only are our enemies' whereabouts unknown, but also sometimes even their identities. There are no flags to be raised over Suribachi—just one Pork Chop Hill after another. Neither Kabul nor Osama bin Laden are the prize in any final sense.

The more amorphous and murky the military goals, the more government can control information and propaganda to define victory. In the absence of clear objectives, it is easy, operating behind the curtain of secrecy, to conceal setbacks and pronounce progress. In the early going, the government discretely let it be known that numbers of Taliban warriors were defecting to the Northern Alliance or deserting from lack of spirit. The reality is otherwise. There were no material defections at the times of those reports. Later there were government leaks suggesting that Pashtun leaders in the south of Afghanistan were fomenting counterinsurgencies against the Taliban. These too appear to be just wistful notes sounded in an otherwise bleak landscape, hopes floated out there by those practiced in the art of psychological warfare and deception. Here we were on familiar ground. The only leaks that offend the generals are those that contradict them.

Today, it is not only distance and technology that conspire to put journalists at a disadvantage. It is also the smothering use of secrecy that obstructs the gathering of news. Just how far the government is willing to go to keep unsettling truths from the public was illustrated at the outset of the current campaign. Not long after CIA briefers met with a select audience of Congressional members, news leaked that they had been told there was a 100 percent chance terrorists would again strike the United States. Now if this is not information to which the American public is entitled, what is?

But the response to that leak was President Bush's threat to limit the members of Congress given access to classified information. Such obsessive restrictions on information may help explain why Americans were blindsided by the September 11 events. Threat assessments of the intelligence community have long been deemed too unsettling to share with the public.

The issue is often not one of secrecy but of control. It is no coincidence that in World War I the same office that oversaw press censorship also oversaw propaganda efforts. The British journalist Phillip Knightly records that in World War II, a government censor was asked what he would tell the American people. His response: "I'd tell them nothing till it was over and then I'd tell them who won."

In World War II, censorship often took ludicrous twists. Announcers covering baseball games were not even to report that the game was halted because of rain. There are of course legitimate occasions for secrecy. In times like these of heightened vulnerability, real-time troop deployments, pending operations, and "sources and methods" of intelligence gathering are all widely accepted by reporters as legitimately sensitive areas. The generals always argue for more secrets, the reporters for fewer. In World War I, the military came up with a list of more than 100 kinds of secrets the press was to stay away from. The list was whittled down to a scant 18 and printed on a six-by-12-inch card that was handed out to every editor and city desk in the nation. Compliance was voluntary. Then as now, secrets seeped out on their own. Shipping news was a no-no, though arrivals and departures were posted in every hotel lobby. Construction of new defense factories was to be ignored, though they occasioned banquets by the local Chamber of Commerce.

"Was there any other answer than secrecy at the source?" asked George Creel, the journalist who served in World War I as a kind of national censor as chairman of the Committee on Public Information. "If such information came to the ears of a reporter, most certainly it could be learned by any spy worth his pay." Reflecting years later, Creel noted "In 1917, fortunately for us, the radio was not a problem." In the age of the Internet, there is no delay upon which the reporter can draw comfort or defense for reporting genuinely security-sensitive materials. All reporting today is real time.

But many of the most sensitive secrets are themselves rarely newsworthy. It is the outcomes of troop deployments and the fruits of that intelligence-gathering that interest the public. The wider threat to national security comes not from reporters ignoring appeals to discretion or breaching formal censorship codes like those faced by Scotty Reston. Rather it comes from the government's wholesale and wanton overclassification of information. Ironically, it is that which undermines the government's capacity to conceal those bone fide secrets whose disclosure might actually damage national security.

Today, no one has lower regard for secrecy than those in government who actually wield the stamp of classification. They know from experience that it is used more often than not to lend a certain cachet to documents and that, without that stamp, memos and correspondence would be lost or ignored in the tsunami of paperwork that engulfs all bureaucracies, particularly that of the defense and intelligence communities. It is why former CIA Director

John Deutch felt comfortable putting such sensitive operational materials on his unsecured home computer. Such disregard is the natural byproduct of obsessive secrecy. Abuse of secrecy breeds contempt for the system. It is like inflation. The more of it there is, the less it is valued.

This is a lesson lawmakers refuse to learn. Instead, their knee-jerk reaction is to respond to each leak with the threat of tighter strictures. While the CIA frets about press leaks or bemoans the aggressiveness of this or that reporter, the next Kim Philby or Aldrich Ames may already be plotting to milk the system. The keepers of secrets have always had trouble distinguishing between contretemps and treachery. In the end, they worry more about safeguarding secrets than security itself. "If we guard our toothbrushes and diamonds with equal zeal, we will probably lose fewer toothbrushes and more diamonds," observed former national security advisor McGeorge Bundy.

Much of the tension we see today between disclosure and secrecy is familiar. Foster Hailey covered the war in the Pacific in World War II for The New York Times. In 1945 he wrote, "There have been some correspondents who were easily discouraged in their fights with the censor and the gold braid and contented themselves with writing pretty stories about generals and admirals and movie heroes who happened to be wearing uniforms. Or they were content to sit around the rear bases and write only what the public relations officer brought around to them."

Today, it is less a matter of contentment than containment. But then as now we journalists have less to fear from the censor than from our own natural inclination to identify with and further the interests of our fellow citizens. It is not our role to help maintain the fighting spirit, to cushion the blows, or airbrush reality. We serve our country best when we report objectively and dispassionately, not as citizens of but one nation, but as stateless chroniclers promoting no agenda and serving no purpose but to inform. "In a free country," wrote the late E.B. White, "it is the duty of writers to pay no attention to duty." That is a particularly stern commandment, one that requires a near-absolute faith in the sanctity of information and the maturity of our nation's leaders and citizenry to put that information to good use.

"Loose lips sink ships," it is said. But sealed lips may suffocate entire democracies. Reporters have no taste for putting their fellow citizens at risk or compromising national security. Where a story may put Americans in peril, the rule remains: "When in doubt, leave it out." But, among the millions and millions of secrets in this war against terrorism, there may be but one *ultimate* secret that our government would least like the American public or its enemies to know. That secret, I fear, is that they are in possession of no secret so valuable or insightful that it holds the promise of an end to our vulnerability. ■

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The Pentagon and the Press

Several 'principles' of coverage became victims of the war against terrorism.

By Stanley W. Cloud

Since the end of the Vietnam War, whenever the U.S. military has swung into action, American war correspondents, with few exceptions, have found themselves hog-tied and blindfolded, utterly unable to provide their readers, viewers and listeners with adequate coverage of actual combat. As the "war on terrorism" unfolded following the attacks of September 11, the pattern seemed to be repeating.

Vast journalistic resources were committed to covering the war from a distance, often with impressive results. But in the early stages, at least, much of the fighting took place in secret, far beyond journalists' eyes and ears. Once again, reporters from the freest country on earth were begging the Defense Department for permission to cover a war firsthand. Again, to a large extent they had to rely on "pools" and briefings for details, such as they were.

Military commanders, of course, have never been very enthusiastic about having journalists around during combat. (It's a different matter afterward, when heroics and medals are under discussion.) The main objections haven't really been that journalists are anti-military, or ignorant of military matters, or can't be trusted to abide by reasonable ground rules that protect secrets and lives. Those are the arguments of spin-doctors and right-wing commentators. The military's objections have been more basic: Reporters and photographers can get in the way, and when things don't go well, they have a tendency to tell the whole world.

In Vietnam, the first and only modern U.S. war that was completely free of press censorship, the problem between journalists and the military had little or nothing to do with the accuracy of the reporting, let alone the military's desire to maintain operational security. Mostly, it had to do with reporting

that cast doubt on all the "light at the end of the tunnel" rhetoric emanating from the Pentagon and the White House. (On the question of who was right, by the way, most historians seem to be siding with the press.) Nevertheless, in certain military and civilian circles today, the myth prevails that an irresponsible press somehow "caused" a U.S. "defeat" in Vietnam. As a result, when fighting has broken out since then, a firewall has been built between the military and the journalists trying to cover it.

The wall first went up when the United States invaded Grenada in 1983. Before that, I doubt that anyone in the Pentagon or the press ever contemplated that the United States might invade another country and permit no press coverage of any kind. But that is exactly what happened in the bizarre Grenada episode. (A small group of enterprising journalists hired a boat to go to Grenada on their own, but the military promptly arrested them and held them incommunicado until the fighting, such as it was, ended.) The post-Grenada outcry from journalists led to an internal Defense Department "study" and to negotiations between an ad hoc group of Washington bureau chiefs and the Pentagon—negotiations that ended with the creation of what was officially dubbed "The Department of Defense National Media Pool."

As originally envisioned, this ungainly, unnatural creature was intended to facilitate coverage of the initial stage of a military action. A representative pool of reporters and photographers would be permitted to accompany U.S. troops into battle in return for their agreement to play by whatever rules the Pentagon chose to set. At the time, there was a great deal of self-congratulatory enthusiasm among many Washington journalists that the so-called Pentagon Pool would go a long way toward preventing a repetition of the Grenada unpleasantness. Few voices were raised in opposition to the whole idea of institutionalized pool coverage. Indeed, at regular quarterly meetings in the Pentagon, the journalists and the brass would amiably discuss the kinds of restrictions to be imposed on the pool members.

As it turned out, the Pentagon Pool was a disaster not just for journalists but for anyone who believes that in a democracy the people should know what the military is doing in their name and with the lives of their sons and daughters. Several early tests of the system clearly indicated that the Pentagon saw the pool not as a way of enabling more and better combat coverage but, on the contrary, as a way of controlling, limiting and, if necessary, preventing such coverage. When the United States invaded Panama, for instance, the pool members were kept in a guarded military building and subjected to lectures on Panamanian history while U.S. troops tried to locate and arrest the country's dictator, Manuel Noriega.

The Principles of War Coverage

In 1992, journalists and the Pentagon agreed on nine principles to govern coverage.

After the Persian Gulf War, five journalists, appointed by the ad hoc Washington bureau chiefs organization, met with representatives of the military to negotiate an improved way of handling pool coverage of U.S. military combat. As Stan Cloud, one of those journalists, writes, "Our task was to try to undo as much as possible of the damage done by the creation of the Pentagon Pool and its application during the Gulf War." What emerged were the following nine principles and two statements, one from the news media, one from the Department of Defense. As the war on terrorism began, it was these principles of engagement that were in place.

Principles that should govern future arrangements for news coverage from the battlefield of the United States Military in combat:

- Open and independent reporting will be the principal means of coverage of U.S. military operations.
- Pools are not to serve as the standard of covering U.S. military operations. But pools may sometimes provide the only feasible means of early access to a military operation. Pools should be as large as possible and disbanded at the earliest opportunity (within 24 to 36 hours when possible). The arrival of early-access pools will not cancel the principle of independent coverage for journalists already in the area.
- Even under conditions of open coverage, pools may be appropriate for specific events, such as those at extremely remote locations or where space is limited.
- Journalists in a combat zone will be credentialed by the U.S. military and will be required to abide by a clear set of military security ground rules that protect U.S. forces and their operations. Violations of the ground rules can result in suspensions of the credentials and expulsion from the combat zone of the journalists involved. News organizations will make their best efforts to assign experienced journalists to combat operations and to make them familiar with U.S. military operations.
- Journalists will be provided access to all major military units. Special Operations restrictions may limit access in some cases.
- Military public affairs officers should act as liaisons but should not interfere with the reporting process.
- Under conditions of open coverage, field commanders will permit journalists to ride on military vehicles and aircraft whenever feasible. The military will be responsible for the transportation of pools.
- Consistent with its capabilities, the military will supply PAO's with facilities to enable timely, secure, compatible transmission of pool mate-

But the Panama experience was nothing compared to the Gulf War. In that one, the military succeeded in creating the most rigid control of combat coverage in American history. Using the Pentagon Pool concept as its starting point, the Defense Department decreed that the entire war—not just its initial stage—would be covered by a complex system of rotating pools. Participation required that journalists acquiesce to an onerous set of rules governing, among other things, their freedom of movement, their freedom to photograph, and their freedom to conduct interviews. Worse, they had to submit their copy for "security review." Ostensibly this was to be a benign search for classified or sensitive information, but it became a fairly rigid system of censorship that resulted in the deletion of merely embarrassing facts or in the delay of their transmission until a report had lost virtually all news value.

In the midst of all this, the Pentagon's chief spokesman, Pete Williams (now an NBC correspondent), wrote in The Washington Post that the Gulf War was the best-covered war in U.S. history. In fact, by any objective standard, it was the worst, and had the war gone badly for the United States, the American people would have been among the last to know.

In the aftermath, another series of negotiations between the press and the Pentagon brass was conducted. I was one of five journalists appointed by the ad hoc Washington bureau chiefs' organization to represent them in the negotiations. With me on the committee were Michael Getler, foreign editor of The Washington Post; Clark Hoyt, Washington bureau chief of the Knight Ridder newspaper chain; Jonathan Wolman, Washington bureau chief of The Associated Press, and George Watson, Washington bureau chief of ABC News. Our task was to try to undo as much as possible of the damage done by the creation of the Pentagon Pool and its application during the Gulf War.

The negotiations with Pentagon officials dragged on for eight months. In that time, it became clear on our side of the table that our interests were not always identical. Wire services and television news, for example, with their fierce competition and short deadlines, tended to be much more dependent on pools for early stories and pictures than, say, newsmagazines. They were thus much less inclined to disband the Pentagon Pool altogether and simply tell the brass, as Getler put it at one point, "that we'll see you at the next war." Bridging the differences among ourselves and still accomplishing our goal was a major challenge.

In the end, we and the Pentagon representatives managed to agree on nine general principles "to be followed in any future combat situation involv-

rial and will make these facilities available whenever possible for filing independent coverage. In cases when government facilities are unavailable, journalists will, as always, file by any other means available. The military will not ban communications systems operated by news organizations, but electromagnetic operational security in battlefield situations may require limited restrictions on the use of such systems.

- These principles will apply as well to the operations of the standing DOD National Media Pool System.

Accompanying Statement on Security Review

News Media Statement: The news organizations are convinced that journalists covering U.S. forces in combat must be mindful at all times of operational security and the safety of American lives. News organizations strongly believe that journalists will abide by clear operational security ground rules. Prior security review is unwarranted and unnecessary. We believe that the record in Operation Desert Storm, Vietnam and other wars supports the conclusion that journalists in the battlefield can be trusted to act responsibly. We will challenge prior security review in the event that the Pentagon attempts to impose it in some future military operation.

Department of Defense Statement: The military believes that it must retain the option to review news material, to avoid the inadvertent inclusion in news reports of information that could endanger troop safety or the success of a mission. Any review system would be imposed only when operational security is a consideration (for example, the very early stages of a contingency operation or sensitive periods in combat.) If security review were imposed, it would be used for one very limited purpose: to prevent disclosure of information that, if published, would jeopardize troop safety or the success of a military operation. Such a review system would not be used to seek alterations in any other aspect of content or to delay timely transmission of news material. Security review would be performed by the military in the field, giving the commander representative the opportunity to address potential ground rule violations. The reporter would either change the story to meet ground rule concerns and file it, or file it and flag for the editor whatever passages were in dispute. The editor would then call the Pentagon to give the military one last chance to talk about potential ground rule violations.

The Defense Department believes that the advantage of this system is that the news organization would retain control of the material throughout the review and filing process. The Pentagon would have two chances to address potential operational security violations, but the news organization would make the final decision about whether to publish the disputed information. Under Principle Four, violation of ground rules could result in expulsion of the journalist involved from the combat zone.

Adopted March 11, 1992 ■

ing American troops." The first of these—"open and independent reporting will be the principal means of coverage of U.S. military operations"—was by far the most important. It reestablished the idea that the Pentagon Pool was to be used primarily, if at all, in the early stages of combat.

We failed, however, to resolve the question pertaining to "security review." After long negotiations, we simply agreed to disagree and attached to the list of principles two statements. Ours said: "…[We] strongly believe that journalists will abide by clear operational security ground rules. Prior security review is unwarranted and unnecessary…. We will challenge prior security review in the event that the Pentagon attempts to impose it in some future military operation." The Pentagon's statement said: "The military believes it must retain the option to review news material, to avoid inadvertent inclusion…of information that could endanger troop safety or the success of a mission…."

Two of the nine agreed-upon principles—numbers three and five—are especially important now. Number three reads: "Even under conditions of open coverage, pools may be appropriate for specific events, such as those at extremely remote locations or where space is limited." Number five reads: "Journalists will be provided access to all military units. Special Operations restrictions may limit access in some cases." After the "war on terrorism" was declared by President Bush, the assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, Victoria Clarke, said the Pentagon would abide by the nine principles, but there was precious little "open and independent" coverage or "access to all military units." Moreover, like their predecessors in the Gulf War, pool reporters on certain of the Navy ships involved in the initial cruise missile attacks complained of being isolated and unable to file timely reports.

Doubtless the military, which had the public—and, for that matter, a too often flag-waving press—on its side in this war, has good geopolitical and military reasons for imposing the limitations. Certainly the type of combat seen in the early phase of the war did not appear to lend itself to open coverage. And the instant communication technologies that journalists can carry into battle today—digital cameras, videophones, e-mail, Internet connections—create entirely new challenges. Coming up with guidelines to deal with them will require perseverance and understanding on both sides. Moreover, it needs to be said that coverage of actual combat, important as it can be, is a supplement to, not a substitute for, serious analytical reporting that military correspondents can do—and are doing—far from the battlefield.

Still, the broad constitutional issues remain. No government can be depended upon to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—especially not when that government makes mistakes or misjudgments in wartime. The natural inclination then is to cover up, to hide, and the press's role, in war even more than in peace, is to act as watchdog and truth-seeker. To do that effectively, it must rely as little as possible on the good wishes, good graces, and good offices of the government. ■

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The Dangers of Disinformation in the War on Terrorism

'We actually put out a false message to mislead people.'

By Maud S. Beelman

"In wartime," Winston Churchill once said, "truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies." Two weeks after the September 11 terrorist attacks, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld evoked Churchill's words when asked for assurances that neither he nor his lieutenants would lie to the media as the United States pursued the war on terrorism and the bombing of Afghanistan. Though Rumsfeld quickly added that he could not envision a situation in which lying would be necessary, this is indeed a "different kind of war," and the always-present risk of disinformation is heightened precisely because of that.

For reporters covering this war, the challenge is not just in getting unfettered and uncensored access to U.S. troops and the battlefield—a long and mostly losing struggle in the past—but in discerning between information and disinformation. That is made all the more difficult by a 24-hour news cycle, advanced technology, and the military's growing fondness for a discipline it calls "Information Operations." IO, as it is known, groups together information functions ranging from public affairs (PA, the military spokespersons corps) to military deception and psychological operations, or PSYOP. What this means is that people whose job traditionally has been to talk to the media and divulge truthfully what they are able to tell now work hand-in-glove with those whose job it is to support battlefield operations with information, not all of which may be truthful.

At the core of a civilian-controlled

military and a free press, these blurred roles are fueling an intense debate within the uniformed ranks. "It's one of the biggest issues now that has to be resolved," said one military spokesman. "The reason public affairs has been so successful is because reporters trust us. You destroy our credibility and you take away our usefulness."

"The idea was the battlefield can be shaped by information, so it's necessary to conduct robust information operations in support of the battlefield," said another military official familiar with the IO doctrine. The problem, he added, is that "everyone has a different idea of what it means.... We have created a sort of a monster."

In August 1996, the U.S. Army issued field manual 100-6, outlining its vision of Information Operations. "Information and the knowledge that flows from it empower soldiers and their leaders. When transformed into capabilities, information is the currency of victory," the manual said. It noted that "the Army has shown considerable strength in applying both PSYOP and deception to military operations," adding that "PSYOP elements must work closely with other [command and control warfare] elements and PA strategists to maximize the advantage of IO." The manual stated that IO "does not sanction in any way actions intended to mislead or manipulate media coverage of military operations." But that risk is precisely what worries those familiar with this doctrine.

In peacetime, public affairs and PSYOP both deal in the truth, military spokesmen insist. "There is no black information," the military official said, referring to deception. "But in a war situation, it's different." In 1988, during the Iran-Iraq war, Pentagon officials leaked word that a U.S. aircraft carrier would be delayed in departing for the Persian Gulf. In reality, it headed to the region immediately.

"We actually put out a false message to mislead people," Jay Coupe, former spokesman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, explained to The Washington Post in a September 24 article. "The idea was not to give information about the movement of our carrier. We were trying to confuse people." In a letter to the editor four days later, Coupe sought to clarify that "no public affairs personnel were involved in the message's preparation or release. It was a strictly internal message put out within military operational circles with the expectation that it might be leaked. And that is exactly what happened." In his experience, military public affairs officials "never lied to journalists," Coupe wrote. "That distinction is important, and I am confident it will remain the military's policy."

The shift in U.S. military policy on information can be traced to the "information-control techniques" employed by the British military during the 1982 Falklands War, according to a 1991 study of U.S. military media restrictions from Grenada to the Persian Gulf by Jacqueline Sharkey and the Center for Public Integrity. The British model—influenced by the Pentagon's experience with media coverage of Vietnam—was based on the premise of "pre-censorship," whereby media access to military operations and information was restricted, the study said.

Ten years later, during the wars in former Yugoslavia—where a previously entrenched international press corps made access restrictions nearly impossible—the British military sought to manage the message, truthful or otherwise, in support of the United Nations and NATO mission. Put simply, they routinely lied to reporters and did so with vigor and the conviction that the importance of an accurate and independent press was subordinate to military strategy and success.

That the United States and Britain are now the two major executors of the war on terrorism further raises the risk that reporters will be subjected to disinformation. This is worrisome enough, but it becomes even more so with advanced technology and the voracious 24-hour news cycle.

In the summer of 1997, a group of senior Pentagon officers and military reporters gathered for a retreat aimed at improving their often rocky relationship. The Pentagon was 18 months into a successful Bosnian peacekeeping deployment, and reporters were getting good access to the troops. The mood was upbeat, and it appeared, for a while, that historic tensions might have eased. That is until talk turned to psychological operations, disinformation and public affairs.

One of the guest speakers at the conference showed how video images could be created and/or altered electronically, and without detection, unless the creator inserted an electronic watermark to indicate it was a fabrication. But if the creator's intent was to misinform, the presenter said, then there would be no watermark, and the doctored image would be indistinguishable from reality.

With the Pentagon's fleet of EC-130 "Commando Solo" aircraft—capable of inserting radio and TV programming into national broadcast systems—the implications of such electronic wizardry were obvious. First, journalists monitoring local media in a war zone would need to question constantly whether what they were receiving was U.S. military disinformation. Assuming they asked, would the military take the reporters into its confidence to spare them from spreading the disinformation? The officers at the retreat responded that they would not.

If Information Operations is a battlefield strategy, then information is the weapon. Rumsfeld has publicly warned Pentagon staffers against discussing military operations with the media, saying those who did so would be breaking federal criminal law "and should be in jail." His deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, issued a memo urging staffers to "exercise great caution in discussing information related to DOD (Department of Defense) work, regardless of their duties," making no distinction between classified and unclassified information. And Victoria Clarke, a former public relations executive who is Rumsfeld's spokeswoman, is focusing on "message development" in dealing with the press.

Controlling the message in a 24-hour news cycle is a key element of Information Operations. While not necessarily disinformation, nonetheless it is a media management technique employed by the military that

results in limiting critical reporting, especially in crises, when news departments that have cut defense beats rush inexperienced reporters to the front.

This technique was used to great effect in NATO's air campaign over Kosovo in 1999, an operation in which "spin doctors" from Washington and London agreed on "the message" and then through a series of sequential briefings at Alliance headquarters in Brussels and in London and Washington fed the 24-hour news machine. "They would gorge the media with information," said one spokesman. "When you make the media happy, the media will not look for the rest of the story."

In the war on terrorism, Washington and London have established 24-hour information centers at the White House and 10 Downing Street, with a third center in Pakistan, in a similar model of across-time-zone briefings to keep the message on point.

Major Gary Pounder, the chief of intelligence plans and presentations at the College of Aerospace Doctrine, Research and Education at Maxwell Air Force Base, has noted the "cultural gap between the public affairs officer and the 'information warrior.'" But, in an article in Aerospace Power Journal, he concluded that "despite reservations about lost credibility, PA must play a central role in future IO efforts—the public information battle space is simply too important to ignore." Pounder went on to observe that "IO practitioners…must recognize that much of the information war will be waged in the public media, necessitating the need for PA participation. PA specialists…need to become full partners in the IO planning and execution process, developing the skills and expertise required to win the media war."

So the war on terrorism is also an information war, and the implications of that for the media are daunting. "Call it public diplomacy, or public affairs, or psychological warfare, or—if you really want to be blunt—propaganda," former U.N. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, a message meister when he was special envoy to Bosnia, wrote in the October 28 issue of The Washington Post. Arguing that the United States had to better define the war on terrorism for the Muslim world, Holbrooke called for, among other things, the creation of a special White House office to "direct" public affairs activities at state, defense, justice, the CIA, and Agency for International Development. "The battle of ideas…is as important as any other aspect of the struggle we are now engaged in. It must be won."

One can only hope that the truth will win, too. ■

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President Harry Truman Enlisted Journalists in the Cold War

Are there parallels between then and now?

By Nancy Bernhard

In 1950, President Harry Truman addressed the American Society of Newspaper Editors, seeking to enlist the assembled journalists in a "Campaign of Truth" to win the cold war. He began by noting that democracy hinged on the quality of information people received through the news media. The nation's defense against Soviet propaganda, he told them, was "truth—plain, simple, unvarnished truth—presented by the newspapers, radio, newsreels, and other sources that the people trust." False conceptions about the United States were held overseas, Truman warned, because of the success of communist messages.

The President alerted his audience to the possibility that the Kremlin wanted to take over the United States, but assured them that their cooperation would help prevent that outcome. He'd directed his secretary of state, Dean Acheson, to wage this campaign of truth and to enlist "our great public information channels" to this cause.

Truman explicitly asked for ideological support for the national security state, and none of the assembled newsmen blanched at this enlistment to propagandize.

The President's request that day was part of deliberate strategy to sustain what was then believed to be a long-time struggle against the forces of communism. For a people just emerging from the military engagements of World War II, there was little will to remilitarize for a worldwide fight against communism. Sensing this, Edward Barrett, assistant secretary of state for public affairs, created a public information plan as a way of overcoming resistance to large foreign expenditures. Barrett was confident he could "whip up" public sentiment, and once he'd stirred the public's fears, he'd follow soon with information about the government's program to meet the threat. At times he referred to this operation as a "psychological scare campaign." Success, for him, would be measured by how much demand for government action came from frightened citizens.

Since the events of September 11, a similar strategy and rhetoric can be heard in the words and reactions of Victoria Clarke, assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, when she speaks about cooperation between the

Is the Press Up to the Task of Reporting These Stories?

An investigative journalist examines the evidence and shares his concerns.

By James Bamford

It was the perfect storm. A massive, Pearl Harbor-style surprise attack from abroad; a spreading, bioterrorism plague at home; a country caught in the numbing grip of fear; an endless war against a vague enemy; and an administration determined to recast the news to its own liking. In a whirlwind of government-mandated secrecy, censorship and press intimidation, many of journalism's most hard-won principals and tools are being lost. At the same time, precious civil liberties are being trashed and Orwellian internal surveillance measures are being instituted, all in the name of security. Where are the hard-hitting investigative journalists now that they are most needed?

More than any other conflict in history, this is a war for—and against—information. "This is the most information-intensive war you can imagine," one military officer involved in the planning told The Washington Post's Howard Kurtz. "We're going to lie about things."

Leading the charge from his secret bunker is Vice President Dick Cheney, a man who dislikes the press "big time." A decade earlier, as secretary of defense, he took aim at journalists who failed to follow in lock step behind the administration's Panama and Persian Gulf War policies. Time magazine's photographer, Wesley Bocxe, was even blindfolded and detained for 30 hours by U.S. National Guard troops for disobeying Cheney's press coverage restrictions.

Cheney's harsh rules led to protests from numerous news organizations. In a letter to the defense chief, senior executives from Time and CNN argued that the restrictions gave Pentagon personnel "virtual total control…over the American press." They bitterly complained that Cheney's policies "blocked, impeded or diminished" the "flow of information to the public" during the Gulf War. In an earlier letter, Time's managing editor charged that the restrictions were "unacceptable" and marked "the formal re-imposition of censorship for the first time since Korea in an actual wartime situation." Newsday's Patrick J. Sloyan, government and journalists. "We have the same end-goal," she said on National Public Radio's "The Connection." Likewise, senior White House advisor Karl Rove has conducted a series of meetings with television and film industry executives.

Of course, journalists chafe at such talk because it belies their professional identity as skeptics and cynics who cannot be fooled by government propaganda. Yet very few journalists find or develop alternate patterns of sourcing in times of military crisis. When they have done end-runs around official information by, for example, covering the war from an opponent's capital, they have been widely reviled. When Harrison Salisbury went to Hanoi in 1966, or when Peter Arnett remained in Baghdad in 1991, national security hard-liners accused them of treason.

Back in 1950, it would have been professional suicide for a journalist to question whether communism posed a genuine threat to the United States or whether massive militarization was an appropriate response. Instead, the press directed its energies toward policing the sufficiency of the government's response which, in effect, testily egged the government on to ever-greater heights of vigilance and aggression against the enemy.

Today, most journalists do not dare question the appropriateness of a massive military response to the September 11 attacks. Instead, like their counterparts of decades past, they are feisty in defense of the war's unrealized goals and the insufficiency of the government's efforts to fulfill the policy—the destruction of Al Qaeda and the Taliban while minimizing civilian casualties, sustaining a coalition, and preventing more terrorism at home. Similarly, the Bush administration faces its own concerns about how to sustain public support for an expensive, long-term and largely covert war. Public support began remarkably high but can be expected to wane as Operation "Enduring Freedom" experiences failures.

Those people whose job it is to maintain public support will surely follow Barrett's example by reminding us of the dangers lurking in our midst and then try to reassure us that the government will do everything possible and necessary to triumph over this evil. Journalists will keep after officials to make good on their promises and vanquish the threat, and we will have overwhelmingly unified coverage, as well as the illusion of a responsible press in pursuit of its watchdog role.■

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whose reporting during the Gulf War won him a Pulitzer Prize, said the restrictions reflected Cheney's "utter contempt" for the First Amendment and "deep hostility" toward the press.

Another old face is that of Secretary of State Colin Powell. A decade ago, while chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Gulf War, he was one of the principal architects of military censorship. The Bush administration's information war resembles a battle for territory. First disarm the enemy by taking away or degrading its weapons, such as the Freedom of Information Act, publicly available information, and dissenting views. Then, once the opposition has been neutralized, capture the hearts and minds of the target audiences with an artillery barrage of one-sided propaganda. Finally, impose dictatorial powers. Here are the measures thus far:

- To silence the opposition, the administration called on television networks to refuse to air live and unedited videotaped messages issued by Osama bin Laden. While offering not a shred of evidence, officials claimed that the videos might contain secret coded messages. No doubt to the administration's pleasure, the weak-kneed networks voluntarily took the request one step further and declined to air virtually any video of bin Laden. Then it turned out that the administration, along with Britain, offered media outlets a number of bin Laden tapes and encouraged them to air them since these tapes help boost their case against him. Apparently worries about "secret codes" gave way to the value of propaganda, thus demonstrating that the original claim was merely a sham.
- Even the government's own Voice of America—a supposed shining example of press freedom to the rest of the world—was ordered by the State Department to spike an interview with Taliban head Mullah Mohammed Omar out of fear of what he might say. This provoked a stinging response by the VOA's news director, Andre DeNesnera. "The State Department's decision is a totally unacceptable assault on our editorial independence, a frontal attack on our credibility," he told his staff. "This certainly was a dark, dark day for those of us who have—for years—fought to uphold journalistic ethics, balance, accuracy and fairness."
- Next, the administration tried to censor Al-Jazeera, the highly reputable and independent Arabic television network based in Qatar. Secretary of State Powell told the emir of Qatar that he was concerned about the "inflammatory rhetoric" used by the broadcaster, even as the United States was dropping monstrous fuel-air bombs on mule-riding Taliban forces. On November 13, U.S. aircraft dropped 500-pound bombs on the network's empty Kabul offices, destroying them. Although a spokesman for the U.S. Central Command in Tampa, Florida denied that the attack was deliberate, Al-Jazeera's managing editor, Mohammed Jassim al-Ali, had a different view. "They know where we are located, and they know what we have in our office, and we also did not get any warning," he said.
- The Bush administration's extraordinary attempts to muzzle the voices of opponents led Bob Giles, curator of the Nieman Foundation, to warn in a New York Times op-ed column, "Openness should not be a casualty of war." A former editor and publisher of The Detroit News, Giles added, "Over generations of actual and ideological combat, the press has enabled American citizens to be familiar with the images and messages of our enemies. Why is Osama bin Laden so different that television news can be pressured into blacking him out?"
- In a little-noticed action, Attorney General John Ashcroft sent out word to federal agencies encouraging them to resist responding to Freedom of Information Act requests whenever they can find any legal ground to do so. This reversed a 1993 memorandum by Attorney General Janet Reno that promoted disclosure.
- In a brazen effort to bury the ghosts of the past, particularly those of a number of his senior advisors who worked in the Reagan administration as well as his father's vice presidency, Bush drafted an executive order to keep old presidential records secret for eternity. Historians say the unprecedented order would usher in a new era in secrecy and would turn the 1978 Presidential Records Act on its head by allowing such documents to be kept hidden "in perpetuity."
- Chillingly, the White House warned Americans to think twice about criticizing the government. "People have to watch what they say and watch what they do," said press secretary Ari Fleischer.
- Finally, the administration successfully blinded the media to events in Afghanistan by purchasing exclusive rights to commercial satellite imagery of the area—an unprecedented action—costing $1.91 million a month. [See Christopher Simpson's article on page 31.]

As if all the new press restrictions imposed by government fiat were not enough, many news organizations in a misguided view of patriotism began self-censorship. Among the worse examples was CNN's shameful decision to order anchors, each time they mention Afghan civilians killed by U.S. bombs, to also mention the people killed in the September 11 attack. There was no corresponding requirement, however, to mention the innocent civilians killed by U.S. bombers every time the attack on the World Trade Center is mentioned.

Every day, as a new policy—limiting press freedom or trampling on civil liberties—is announced or leaked, the United States seems to be moving closer and closer to George Orwell's Oceania, his dreary, imaginary country locked in a perpetual state war. Although the enemy would change periodically, either Eurasia or Eastasia, the war was eternal. This was because its true purpose was not the capture of territory but the control of dissent by keeping people in a constant state of fear and

hatred. Such is the vague, undefined "war on terrorism," a battle unbound by time or space. As Bush announced in September, the enemy is some shadowy "evil" that lurks in more than 60 countries around the world, and its elimination may take years.

In Oceania, the war contaminates every aspect of society, excusing pervasive surveillance, censorship and authoritarianism—Big Brother—all in the name of protecting the homeland. "Any sound that Winston made, above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by it," wrote Orwell. "There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment.... You had to live—did live, from habit that became instinct—in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized." Of course, Orwell wrote his book long before the development of night-vision glasses.

Not since the dark days of Richard Nixon has there been such potential for good, penetrating, investigative reporting. Secret arrests and detentions of Middle Eastern men are taking place, and the press is prohibited from tracking what happens. Military tribunals are proposed for suspected terrorists, depriving defendants of American legal protections. An Office of Homeland Security is created beyond the reach of congressional oversight and thus more difficult for watchdog journalists to monitor. Surveillance powers of domestic intelligence have been expanded, and now the FBI will be gathering intelligence by dubious means and without court orders, along with investigating crimes.

The question is, is the media up to these investigative tasks? Judging from past performance, the answer is not likely. In fact, the self-indulgent television networks have been much more of a problem than a solution during the anthrax coverage.

Terrorism consists of two components—an act of violence and the generation of great fear in a large segment of the public. Although some deranged terrorist was responsible for the initial act of sending a few deadly anthrax letters, it was the networks that generated enormous, disproportionate fear throughout the country—which is exactly what the terrorist was counting on. Yes, it was a big story, but it was not Armageddon. In a country of nearly 300 million, five people died and several others suffered debilitating effects. Yet as a result of each network tripping over itself to outshock the other—endless dire reports on how millions would die not just from anthrax but smallpox, hemologic fever, and nearly every other disease known to man—large segments of the public became understandably paranoid. There are nearly 50,000 deaths from colon cancer each year, yet how many minutes of airtime and breaking new coverage does that subject get?

Also during that same period it was discovered that the Food and Drug Administration was investigating the deaths of 53 patients who used defective dialysis filters manufactured by Baxter International, one of the country's largest manufacturers of medical supplies. Nowhere on television was that ever reported even though more than 10 times as many were killed as by anthrax, and a brief story on the topic might have saved some lives. It just wasn't as "sexy" or competitive as anthrax.

Veteran television and radio journalist Daniel Shorr said the nonstop coverage was a serious problem. "The networks have settled into a new familiar routine of treating every anthrax scare—most of them hoaxes—as a major news event, with live reports from correspondents, law enforcement, and public health officials," he said. "Thus, a small investment in a powdery substance can bring a big reward in media attention for antisocial elements who get their kicks that way."

Robert J. Samuelson, writing in The Washington Post in early November, agreed. "Our new obsession with terrorism will make us its unwitting accomplices," he said. "We will become (and have already partly become) merchants of fear. Case in point: the anthrax fright. Until now, anthrax has been a trivial threat to public health and safety: four people have died of the 17 known to have been infected. So far, it's the functional equivalent of a mad gunman on the loose or a biological Unabomber. By contrast, there were 42,000 deaths from car accidents and 17,000 from homicides in 1998.... The coverage has so far been all out of proportion to the actual threat."

Another reason that much of the media is not up to probing what is probably the most important story in a generation is that they spent the last decade in an endless search of the trivial. With a few exceptions—The New York Times, The Washington Post, CBS "60 Minutes," and ABC "Nightline"—the closest most reporters and television producers came to investigative journalism was taking a handout from a staffer on the hill. "Before September 11," wrote Samuelson, "the press was caught in a prolonged process of self-trivialization. We seemed to live in an era dominated by the personal, the small, and the titillating. The summer's big stories were Gary Condit and shark attacks. Before that, there was Monica Lewinsky. Great national issues with heavy moral, political or social significance were disappearing, consigned to back pages or ignored altogether. Among media stars, many were enthusiastically self-absorbed, gleefully shrill, and blissfully uninformed on matters of substance. Attitude was king or queen."

Prior to the September 11 attacks, for example, the network evening newscasts had devoted a grand total of 58 minutes this year to bin Laden—with ABC in last place. Yet in the four months from May to September, the same newscasts carried two hours and 59 minutes on the Chandra Levy story—with NBC way out in front. Said Robert Lichter of the Center for Media and Public Affairs, "The Chandra/Condit story showed us how low TV news can sink."

Another problem is the growing xenophobia within the television news business. According to the Tyndall Report [a TV news monitor], foreign bureaus provided only a third as many minutes of coverage for the evening newscasts on ABC, CBS and NBC in

2000 (1,382) than they did in 1989 (4,032), which was a high point. At the same time, foreign news bureaus are closing down at an alarming rate. ABC went from seventeen 15 years ago to seven in 2001. Chris Cramer, the president of CNN International Networks, recently wrote that many networks have given up international coverage for higher ratings, with "most of CNN's competitors focusing on U.S. news only." Those networks, he said, had "committed the worse crime in journalism" in "the failure to make the important interesting."

"Freedom itself is under attack," said Bush. Unfortunately, it is his administration that is leading the charge. As the U.S. government returns to the days of Nixonian secrecy and unprecedented attacks on civil liberties, it is the job of the press to climb over, or dig under, the titanium walls and return with the truth. The question is, after a fat and lazy decade of triviality, do they still have what it takes? ■

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The Unreported Threat in Coverage of Anthrax

Journalists fail to focus on the longer-term dangers of antibiotic resistance.

By Philip Caper

During the impressive print and electronic media coverage of recent events concerning the threat of bioterrorism through anthrax dissemination, one major threat has been almost completely ignored by the press. It is that posed by the widespread and indiscriminate use of antibiotics to "treat" perceived but perhaps not real exposure to anthrax spores. This is a major omission and has potentially disastrous consequences.

Humans, together with almost every other biological creature, live side by side with or actually act as hosts to other organisms, including large numbers of bacteria. Under normal conditions, bacteria live on our skin, in our nasal passages, and in our intestines. Examples of such organisms include strains of E. coli (intestines), staphylococcus and streptococcus (skin, respiratory and oral passages), and various fungi (skin and respiratory passages).

All animals, including humans, have developed pretty effective ways of maintaining defenses against uncontrolled proliferation of these bacteria. Occasionally, we are infected by organisms that we encounter routinely in our daily environments—meaning that we have encountered an unusual strain to which we have no immunity or our immune systems are compromised, as in the case of HIV. When normally harmless microorganisms—those a normal immune system can keep in check—gain the upper hand and are able to multiply within our bodies to an abnormal extent, we are said to be infected by them.

During the past 75 years or so, we have developed various chemical and biologic agents that are more toxic to microorganisms than they are to humans and are therefore useful in supplementing our natural defenses against microorganisms. Examples of these include so-called chemotherapeutic agents (such as sulfonamides) and antibiotics, such as penicillin and tetracyclines. Ciprofloxin (Cipro) now considered to be the "treatment of choice" (but not the only treatment) of anthrax is an antibiotic. These agents are extremely valuable in restoring the delicate equilibrium we maintain with other biological creatures with which we (usually) peacefully coexist when they have gained the

A hazardous-materials response team during a decontamination process. *Photo by Tom Mihalek, courtesy of Agence France-Presse.*

upper hand for one of the reasons mentioned earlier.

But their use is not without risks. And their indiscriminate and inappropriate use is positively dangerous, yet this very real danger has not adequately been brought to the public's attention as part of the reporting on anthrax.

Our bodies are normally inhabited by hundreds of millions of individual bacteria of dozens of strains. Like humans, these individual bacteria differ from one another in a variety of ways. One of the differences most important to us is in their degree of sensitivity to antibiotics. Some individual bacteria are rather easily killed by these drugs, and others are more resistant to them. When antibiotics are taken, the most susceptible bacteria are killed first and the least susceptible last. Sometimes the bacteria most resistant to antibiotics are not killed at all, leaving them free to multiply after the course of drugs is discontinued.

When this happen, we have used our own bodies as a medium for breeding an antibiotic-resistant strain of the very bacteria we are trying to control. In doing so, we have created a situation that is worse than if we had not attempted antibiotic treatment at all, since the competition for food and other resources provided by the antibiotic sensitive bacteria that had held the growth of the resistant strains in check has been removed. When the antibiotics are discontinued, the resistant strains of bacteria are able to grow without restraint, and the infection returns—but this time in a pure antibiotic resistant form.

The use of antibiotics without specific indications, in inadequate dosage or for an insufficient period of time, is much worse than not using them at all. The recent emergence of drug-resistant strains of tuberculosis and staphylococcus are examples of the result of inappropriate and indiscriminate antibiotic use—in humans and animals.

If the hysteria—much of it fanned by media coverage regarding real or perceived threats from anthrax or other biological agents—continues without counterbalancing caution against the indiscriminate use of antibiotics and other drugs, it is quite likely that hundreds of thousands or millions of people will have begun inappropriate or ineffective courses of treatment, leading to the widespread development of drug-resistant strains of not only anthrax, but other bacteria as well. This poses a threat not only to those individuals directly involved in such treatment, but also to anyone else to whom the drug-resistant strains can be passed.

This very real possibility is at least as great if not a greater threat to the public health than that of direct attack by anthrax or any other biological agent.

Where is the leadership likely to come from in giving this important message the prominence it deserves? It is unlikely that the pharmaceutical industry—which is after all like other industries a revenue, profit and shareholder value-driven entity—will be at the forefront of cautioning the public against the inappropriate and excessive use of their products. They are currently in the midst of a multimillion (if not billion) dollar campaign of mar-

Highlighting Antibiotic Resistance

Though coverage of the potential health hazards of antibiotic abuse and overuse did not receive nearly the prominence of illnesses and deaths caused by anthrax, some news organizations did report this information. Among them were The New York Times and The Washington Post. Excerpts from those stories follow:

'Cure' for Bioterror May Be Worse Than the Disease

The New York Times, October 22, 2001
By Gina Kolata

"A number of health officials and experts are warning that steps being taken by the government and members of the public in response to threats of bioterrorism carry health risks that may far exceed their benefits…. 'Our big problem is not bioterrorism,' said Dr. Lucy Shapiro, a microbiologist who heads the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Center for Molecular and Genetic Medicine at Stanford University. 'It's our response that's going to lead to a big jump in antibiotic resistance. That's the terror.' … 'They don't have to kill us with anthrax,' Dr. Shapiro said, referring to the prospect that diseases might develop a resistance to antibiotics. 'They can just change the whole flora and fauna of our pathogen world. This is about the worst thing that can happen in our war on bugs.'"

Emphasis on Cipro Worries Officials

The Washington Post, October 19, 2001
By Justin Gillis and Ceci Connolly

"Doctors and public health experts are growing increasingly worried about the public's obsession with Cipro, saying that widespread, unnecessary use of the antibiotic is likely to threaten the health of far more people than the anthrax attacks that have sparked alarm…. [I]ndiscriminate use is likely to contribute to the emergence of strains of germs resistant to Cipro and its chemical cousins. Those drugs, which constitute the fluoroquinolone class of antibiotics, are already one of the last effective treatments for some serious infections that have become resistant to most other treatment…. 'You're going to see a huge change in the microbiology of the world in which we live, to the detriment of a drug that's critically important to many of our patients,' said [Stuart] Levy [head of the Center for Adaptation Genetics and Drug Resistance at the Tufts University School of Medicine in Boston]. 'It's an experiment in evolution that we're witnessing.'" ■

keting prescription drugs to the general public. Most of these drugs have very proscribed and limited indications. Many of them have less expensive and equally or more effective generic counterparts. Therefore, the track record of the pharmaceutical industry in acting in the broad public interest as opposed to the narrow interests of their shareholders is not comforting.

These ad campaigns put pressure on physicians to prescribe drugs when they might otherwise not do so. But they are likely to be highly effective even without the complicity of physicians due to the increasing availability of antibiotics and other drugs over the Internet without prescriptions.

It is equally unlikely that our political leaders will provide the necessary leadership on this issue. With few exceptions, they lack the expertise to do so. In addition, it seems to go against the popular American response to pop a pill as an answer to almost every problem and may therefore be seen by many as an unpopular position for a politician to take. And this message may not be seen by the pharmaceutical industry, perennially one of the nation's leading contributors to political campaigns, to be friendly to them.

That leaves the public relying upon journalists, using their traditional role of digging up the facts and publishing them, as the best hope for getting this message out. The trend in recent years has been for ratings to drive coverage as evidenced by how reporting on the incidence of anthrax has far outpaced a story such as this one, even though the level of harm it can alert people to might potentially be much higher.

The anthrax scare has also uncovered serious deficiencies in our system of public health surveillance and services. But these deficiencies were hardly a secret even before anthrax. Just last year Laurie Garrett, a highly respected journalist, published a book called "Betrayal of Trust: The Collapse of Global Public Health," that received a flurry of attention in the "elite" media at the time but was never picked up in the popular media, particularly television. We seem to have a great deal of trouble paying much attention to serious—but not dramatic—problems, especially if they involve the sacrifice of short-term personal gratification for long-term societal goals. Where is the coverage of the long-term implications of the Bush tax cuts ("the people know better how to spend their money than the government does") for programs such as our public health infrastructure? There are many more examples.

Increasingly, news coverage has come to be driven by the bottom line more than the news value or public importance of a story. Let's hope this important story is an exception. Let's hope journalism is up to the task.■

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Reporting International News in a Serious Way

Coverage needs to reflect 'the same values that are given to reporting news at home.'

By William F. Woo

As journalists reflect on the lessons of September 11, they are likely to conclude that foreign news coverage must be improved. Walter Isaacson, chairman of CNN, has told David Shaw of the Los Angeles Times that the terrorist attacks helped his network rediscover "the vital importance…to cover international news in a serious way."

But what does it mean to cover international news in a serious way? Foreign news is expensive, but that's only part of the reason for its well-documented decline. News executives also assume that people aren't interested in news unless it affects them personally. And if people aren't interested, the thinking goes, news organizations that invest dollars, time and space in reporting foreign news will discover their audience is disappearing. Given these assumptions, what kind of foreign coverage can news organizations afford if they believe there is value in providing audiences with a better understanding of the world?

If the emerging model of international coverage means only more news about terrorism here, there and everywhere, it won't be the right one. If it only means more about war, social unrest, and ferries sinking, news organizations ought to save their money.

At home, when journalists want to tell readers and viewers about Christianity in America, they don't confine their coverage to the Branch Davidian and other extremist sects. Stories about education don't begin and end with kids shooting up their classrooms, and reporting on deep-seated concerns about abortion isn't limited to coverage of the Army of God.

Journalists take a much broader view. And that is what I'm arguing for in foreign news coverage. The way to give Americans understanding about how the rest of the world lives and why it does so and how these things came to be is to provide international coverage, over the long haul, that reflects the same values that are given to reporting news at home.

Begin by throwing away the notion that every foreign story that isn't about a war has to have a local peg. We miss a lot of important stories because of this assumption. Take the Asian money crisis of 1997 that went largely unre-

ported until it reached pandemic proportions. It was simply beyond the press to report on the early fluctuations of the Thai baht in ways that connected to Main Street.

I tell my students to heed the message of John Donne, who observed that no man is an island. That is, sooner or later what happens to anybody else—down the street or thousands of miles away, in a country whose name we can barely pronounce—affects us. I tell them good journalists are involved in humankind. If they aren't, they will never be able to write about the world in ways that touch readers nor be able to learn anything about themselves.

At this point, you may be wondering how American journalism can accommodate this enlarged mission. Here are a few suggestions.

- Most news organizations cannot afford to keep correspondents abroad. But some can do what my old paper, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, did years ago, which was to send reporters abroad to write about events that were not daily front page news. In 1967, I went to the Soviet Union for 60 days. I wrote about agriculture, industry, education, culture, what people did for amusement, and what there was of religion. I didn't write a single story about what was going on in politics. Yet from all that I did write, you could easily see the vast reach of the Communist state into the lives of its people.
- News organizations could also experiment with consortiums. A half dozen independent regional papers could send a few reporters abroad to provide good stories throughout the year. Chains could do this more easily. Those that cannot even afford this could borrow the concept of the old "rail column." This was a column that ran along the right-hand margin of The Washington Post's editorial page before the paper had a proper op-ed page. The idea was simply to print there every day the most interesting 800 words its editor could find. Almost any paper, I should think, could afford the space to print once or twice a week the 800 most interesting words its editors could find about people and events elsewhere in the world.
- Making foreign news interesting is the key. As Barney Kilgore, the old editor of The Wall Street Journal, liked to say, "The easiest thing for the reader to do is to quit reading." If the new international journalism is dull, we can forget about an audience for it.

Our foreign news coverage has deteriorated shamefully. As Shaw reports, "newspaper editors and television news executives have reduced the space and time devoted to foreign news covered by 70 percent to 80 percent during the past 15 to 20 years." The events of September 11 and thereafter instruct us that this is not acceptable.

With regards to international news, the media today find themselves in the situation of the drunk who breaks into a cold sweat as he sobers up. He remembers that he just sped dead blotto through a crowded school zone. He swears, never again. He determines to live his life in a "serious way."

But now it's tomorrow. Does he head back to the saloon? Or does he begin a new and more responsible life?

Like him, journalists, too, have a choice. ■

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Training Journalists to Report Safely in Hostile Environments

'. . .fire services personnel don't go fighting fires without proper training. . . .'

By John Owen

Two and a half months into the war on terrorism, eight journalists had been murdered, many had been injured, and several had been held hostage. At this writing, a few American soldiers had been killed. This comparison led the British journalist Phillip Knightley to observe: "It is now safer to be a member of the fighting forces than a representative of the media. What's going on?"

No journalist, however experienced or well trained to work in a conflict zone, can feel secure working in lawless parts of Afghanistan where armed gangs or defectors from the Taliban will rob and murder them. It is how Swedish cameraman Ulf Stroemberg lost his life, when gunmen burst into the home where he and other Swedish journalists were staying in a Northern Afghanistan town.

But could the lives of other journalists have been spared had they made other judgments? The experience of a British journalist who undertook a dangerous assignment is worth examining more closely.

When Yvonne Ridley, a British reporter working for the Sunday Express tabloid newspaper, was arrested by the Taliban for illegally entering Afghanistan, she assumed that the greater jour-

nalistic community would rally around her. After all, Ridley would say later, she was trying to "put a human face on the demonized Afghans."

Ridley, disguised as an Afghan woman, had nearly pulled off her journalistic coup. She had succeeded in making the journey from Pakistan across the border and was by her reckoning a 20-minute donkey ride away from returning with her scoop when her donkey bolted and startled her. Ridley momentarily lost control, shouted in English, and was promptly spotted by the Taliban police.

For her struggling newspaper with plunging circulation, the Ridley escapade did grab headlines and put her on the BBC newscasts. But it also tied up British diplomats who, allied with the United States, were about to begin bombing Afghanistan. It was a distraction that Blair's Labor government did not appreciate.

Remarkably enough, Ridley did survive and was eventually released unharmed by the Taliban. But instead of accolades, Ridley received brickbats from other British editors who had refused to allow their correspondents to do a "John Simpson"—the veteran BBC war correspondent who, along with his cameraman, had donned burkas and snuck into Afghanistan for their exclusive reports.

At the BBC, probably the world's most safety conscious news organization, the Simpson assignment had been discussed and debated before he'd been given a green light. Although one senior BBC news executive later told me he did have grave reservations about the assignment, he did in the end acquiesce, as Simpson, who had covered countless wars and had come under attack in Baghdad during the Gulf War, was adamant that he could pull it off. Simpson also had decades of experience reporting on Afghanistan and knows the country and its people exceptionally well.

Ridley, on the other hand, was rushed off to Pakistan without any of the standard equipment that newspapers and broadcasters were equipping their correspondents with—no laptop, no satellite phone, and none of the protective gear that she would need if she ventured out of Islamabad. Nor could she have had time to get the needed anti-hepatitis shots and water purification pills and kit that would protect her against malaria and other potentially life-threatening diseases. When her editors encouraged her undercover assignment across the border, they advised her to leave behind her passport and any other identification. Other editors were particularly appalled by that absence of judgment.

The Ridley experience points out the high risks that irresponsible news organizations are prepared to take to get an exclusive story, especially in Britain, one of the most cutthroat and competitive news markets in the world. But it also points out that many editors and news executives are now unwilling to have their reporters—especially those camped out with the Northern Alliance—push themselves beyond what is already a gruelling battle daily to survive the elements. The Daily Telegraph's foreign editor, Alec Russell, was scathing in his criticism of the Sunday Express. In a damning piece about the Ridley "folly" in The Guardian newspaper, Russell was quoted describing it as "unbelievably foolish…a crazy thing to do."

The Ridley experience points out the high risks that irresponsible news organizations are prepared to take to get an exclusive story….

While Ridley escaped the Taliban and wrote about her experience, her local "fixers" will be lucky to escape with their lives. In a radio interview, Ridley was asked about whether she felt guilty about their arrest. She said that she was concerned but that they, like the others swarming around journalists in Islamabad, knew that in order to get paid hundreds of American dollars they could be risking their lives.

That explanation is not good enough for British safety trainer Andrew Kain. Kain is the founding director of AKE, one of the leading firms that conduct "hostile environment" training courses for journalists in Britain, the United States, and on the ground in Northern Afghanistan. Kain argues that international journalists must be "accountable"; that they have a special responsibility toward the local journalists or fixers upon whom they depend in conflict zones. Kain dismisses Ridley's explanation that these fixers know what they are getting into when they accept these assignments. "They live in abject poverty so of course they are willing to take these risks," Kain observes. He thinks that it is shameful that Ridley's newspaper hasn't "lobbied at the highest levels" to secure the release of the fixers who could now be dead.

The Ridley caper will make a perfect case study in Kain's courses and those taught by the other leading safety training firms including the U.K.-based Centurion whose director, Paul Rees, an ex-Royal Marine, estimates has trained over 7,500 journalists since it introduced its courses outside of London in 1995. When Rees and Kain began their courses, the idea that journalists should be taught how to behave in war zones was anathema to many of them who accepted the conventional wisdom that the only way to become an experienced war correspondent was to be thrown into a conflict zone and learn the hard way. [More information on these training programs can be found at www.akegroup.com/services and www.centurion-riskservices.co.uk.]

This is a view still held by the foreign editor of National Public Radio, Loren Jenkins, who was a superb foreign correspondent who received a Pulitzer Prize for reporting in the Middle East. Jenkins and NPR don't require their budding correspondents to go through these safety training and first-aid courses. In an e-mailed response to a request for a statement I could use to explain his attitude, Jenkins said: "Do I

think such courses are invaluable? I personally am not convinced. Coming from a generation of war correspondents that cut our teeth in the Mekong Delta, the Golan Heights, and places like Beirut and El Salvador, I have always believed that common sense—not military training—is the best guide to war correspondence."

Jenkins and NPR are clearly out of step with the overwhelming consensus among international broadcasters and many leading newspapers about the value of the training courses. Chris Cramer, the president of CNN International who is credited with making safety training courses mandatory at BBC News when he headed its newsgathering, singled out NPR for refusing to sign a code of practice that was agreed to by other major news organizations including Reuters, The Associated Press, CNN, BBC, ITN, CBC and the big three American networks. This code was finalized in London at the European Center of The Freedom Forum after the shocking deaths in Sierra Leone in May 1999 of two of the best and most experienced agency journalists—Kurt Schork of Reuters and Miguel Gil Moreno de Mora of APTV (Associated Press Television News).

The code of practice commits the broadcasters and agencies (so far no newspapers have signed up) to putting staff, freelancers and local hires through the hostile environments training course; to providing adequate insurance; to equipping everyone with protective flak jackets and other gear; and to offering counseling for any post-conflict trauma difficulties. In the first in-depth study of psychological effects of war on journalists, Anthony Feinstein of the University of Toronto found that nearly 30 percent of frontline journalists experienced some levels of trauma or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). (The Freedom Forum European Center underwrote the study.)

Cramer acknowledges that covering wars and conflicts will always be "inherently risky" but points out that "fire services personnel don't go fighting fires without proper training and equipment; the armed services don't do that and neither do members of the police or emergency services." Cramer becomes enraged when he thinks about broadcast or print executives who fail to make this training available to their war correspondents.

Most importantly, the training has now spread to local journalists who, far more than traveling international journalists, are in constant threat in their countries. An estimated 90 percent of the journalists killed—or more accurately, murdered—each year, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, are targeted for what they have reported or published. As one of its first acts, the new Kurt Schork Memorial Foundation, backed by Reuters, brought more than a dozen local journalists from around the world to the United Kingdom to enroll them in the weeklong safety training course.

Centurion's Paul Rees points to the training of more than 250 Latin American journalists. There is heavy emphasis on how to conduct themselves if kidnapped, as so many journalists in Colombia have been during the past few decades. Earlier this year, working with IREX, the U.S.-financed training group, AKE's Kain trained more than 100 Macedonian journalists about the time that country was teetering toward civil war. African and Asian journalists are also getting access to the training, but on a far more limited scale.

Beyond preparing journalists for war zones and caring for them after they return, the journalistic community is also waking up to its responsibility to act collectively in a far more aggressive fashion to pursue any government, regime, or military group that harms a journalist. The International Press Institute and its aggressive vice chairman, ITN Editor in Chief Richard Tait, has spearheaded missions to countries where journalists have been killed and assaulted. And the Paris-based journalist rights' group, Reporters sans Frontières, has created what it is calling the "Damocles Network" that will deploy prominent journalists, international criminal law experts, and human rights activists to investigate the unsolved murders of journalists, the overwhelming number of whom are local reporters and editors who dared publish or broadcast stories that exposed corrupt politicians or organized crime bosses. These efforts to bring the killers of journalists to justice are aimed at ending any feelings of impunity. They are also aimed at helping the families of dead journalists achieve some closure—to help them feel that their loved ones did not die in vain.

In Croatia this past September—days before the horror of September 11—the widow and father of BBC correspondent John Schofield, six years after he was shot by Croatian troops while covering events in the Krajina, were handed a final report documenting how he was killed. The report neither satisfied the BBC nor the family as it accused the BBC crew of being in an unauthorized area and failing to heed a warning from jumpy Croat soldiers who stuck to their claim that they thought the BBC group could be Serbs.

But then the Croatian government did something that, if not unprecedented, is certainly highly unusual: It joined the BBC and Schofield's widow, Susan, and father, Patrick, in unveiling a plaque on the spot on a remote, picturesque country road where the exhaustive investigation had determined that the 29-year-old correspondent had been killed.

In the end the report, however flawed, and the ceremony honoring John Schofield helped his family come to terms with his death. It may be little consolation for a family that has lost a son, a sister, a parent or partner, but what happened that terrible day in August 1995 did cause the BBC and eventually much of the broadcast news industry to do everything it could to spare other families the heartbreak of loved ones dying to tell the story. ■

John Owen was the director of The Freedom Forum European Center from 1996 until its closure this year. He had worked for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for 20 years, serving as the chief news editor for CBC-TV News, London bureau chief, and chief of foreign bureaus.

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Freelancers' Vital Role in International Reporting

With the rise of media conglomerates, foreign news has been shoved aside.

By Nate Thayer

At an annual gathering of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists in July, I sat with Ahmed Rashid, a renowned Pakistani journalist, and discussed the decreasing appetite for international news. Rashid has spent a lifetime writing about Afghanistan. He spoke then of diminishing interest from editors for his stories. "No one is interested in Afghanistan anymore," he concluded. His brilliant book, "Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia," was newly published and was meeting with a good response from those who maintained an interest in this "irrelevant" corner of the world.

Typical for an accomplished and respected freelance journalist, Rashid writes for a number of publications, relying on a core handful of news organizations to make a living. But, he said in July, even these were rejecting stories they once would have published. The Islamabad-based Rashid said it was a struggle to get anything published on Central Asia in the British- and American-owned publications he relied on.

Only weeks later, after the events of September 11, I smile as I pass my small-town bookstore and see Ahmed Rashid's "Taliban" prominently placed on a rack next to the cash register—number one on The New York Times bestseller list. I see Rashid regularly on television and quoted copiously by journalists now descending on the region—22 years after he began reporting full time from and about Afghanistan.

The pleasure is mixed with melancholy for the state of international reporting. Hundreds of freshly arriving foreign correspondents obscure the fact that they are often dispatched by major news organizations to cover international events only after they are overtaken by them. And their presence obscures the crucial role that local and freelance journalists play in ensuring that these otherwise forgotten places are properly covered in the absence of a major media presence.

Further, the key role played by "foreign" freelance journalists in providing the backbone of international coverage highlights the importance of the principle of a press free from the influence of any government. Many, if not most, of those who gather information for the American-owned press are not American. And many of those who read or view the American-owned press are not American. And for those who are, so what? The concept that reporters should have some allegiance to their government is not only fundamentally contrary to the role of a credible and independent press, it presupposes a false premise: that news organizations are homogeneously comprised of nationals of the country of which they have their primary audience.

It is freelancers and local journalists who are now playing a crucial role in Central Asia in ensuring that the world understands these events as they have rocketed to the forefront of international attention. When a story forces media executives to *react* to events, their reporters must turn to those who are informed and on the ground. Invariably, those they turn to are freelance local journalists such as Ahmed Rashid.

At the same time, the events of September 11 should have sent a cautionary signal to major media conglomerates, which increasingly are controlled by people who have demonstrated an insufficient commitment to the role of a free press and well informed public in world affairs. These news outlets are increasingly driven by their marketing departments, public relations people and lawyers, whose values too often infiltrate the newsrooms and effectively seize control. Non-journalists are increasingly determining what is news and treating it as a commodity, selling it like shampoo or cars.

The world press has indeed been absent from Central Asia since the Soviets and the CIA pulled out a decade ago. Before September 11, how many

Thayer in a Khmer Rouge controlled area of Cambodia. ***Photo by Roland Eng.***

news organizations had staff reporters in Islamabad, much less in Kabul, or in the countries just north of Afghanistan? Precious few. Not The New York Times, The Washington Post, CNN, nor any other American news organization except The Associated Press (often staffed by "local hires," usually nationals). Nor did the three American broadcast networks—which eviscerated their foreign news operations during the past decade—have staff correspondents in the region.

Lessons From Cambodia and Afghanistan

There are useful comparisons to be made between what is happening now in Afghanistan (and with Rashid's reporting) and the decade I spent as a freelance reporter in Cambodia. Both Rashid and I had chosen areas of focus that often held marginal interest in the ebb and flow of international attention. Neither of us was a staff correspondent, though each was listed as a "senior writer" on the masthead of the Far Eastern Economic Review, the leading Asian weekly newsmagazine, owned by Dow Jones. Our compensation came primarily from our published words.

Like Afghanistan, Cambodia was, after a spurt of international focus, relegated to the dustbin of obscure civil wars. Interest in both countries always had little to do with the country itself, but rather the proxy role each played to larger global players. Once epicenters of cold war conflicts that served as a hot theater for foreign power interests, by the mid 1990's neither Afghanistan nor Cambodia had much economic, political or strategic value to the world—or to its media.

Like the Taliban and bin Laden in Afghanistan, the Khmer Rouge and Pol Pot continued to play a major role in Cambodia's politics after outside interest diminished. And, despite the absence of international attention, the domestic dynamics of these conflicts continued largely unchanged, ready to erupt. Like bin Laden, Pol Pot was seemingly an inaccessible enigma, directing a monstrous political movement and hiding in impenetrable terrain. And similar to Rashid's predicament this past summer when I was a freelancer covering Cambodia, editors at my primary news outlets constantly discouraged me from pursuing stories and often rejected ones I wrote. These stories were dismissed as too obscure, costly, dangerous, or merely "uninteresting to our readers."

Such reactions explain why there has developed such a dearth of in-depth international journalism. This essential yet expensive genre of reporting has few institutional supporters. Fortunately, as a freelancer I had the latitude (if not the expense account) to ignore those who urged me to stop my investigations. Had I been a staff reporter covering Cambodia—and therefore required to abide by instructions of those who had the right to dictate what stories I could pursue—I would not have kept reporting many stories that were deemed "important" as time went on.

The absence of coverage of these regions is usually a reflection of the skeletal resources that major media organizations devote to foreign coverage. And that is a decision often dictated by the business side. The Afghans and Cambodians, after all, aren't likely to be promising advertising targets or subscribers. Therefore, the argument goes, there is little "reader interest." And, in the absence of staff journalists based in such places, it can often appear that there is little of newsworthy significance. But, as the events of September 11 made clear, this is not necessarily true. There are important stories to tell and it is crucial for news organizations to be prepared to cover news properly when events demand.

The Role and Life of a Freelance Journalist

While publications naturally like to take credit for work they publish, any modicum of journalistic accomplishments I might have had were not wholly supported—financially or otherwise—by any publication. Freelancers usually must pay the expense of research, travel and phone upfront with no guarantees of having their work published or expenses reimbursed. Given the substantial costs of reporting, many stories go unreported for the simple reason that there aren't journalists to do them.

It is true that properly covering many obscure and complicated conflicts often bears little immediate fruit. I emerged from most forays with precious little, often after weeks of work, an empty wallet, and thousands of kilometers of travel. But even though a meeting or trip would often not bear fruit worthy of an article, it all added up to a body of unique knowledge and access. My persistence, like the work of many freelancers, left me in good position to write knowledgeably when newsworthy events happened. Like most "local" journalists and freelancers, I had what visiting journalists did not—the essential context for any story, pertinent background and, after years of cultivation, well developed sources in place. At such moments, I could usually offer plausible and well informed analysis of what a news story meant.

Like many other reporters, I prefer to work as a freelancer, even though it's a job that is often like being a mistress. The editors' attitude: "Why buy the cow, if you can get the milk for free?" They compliment me profusely after each encounter and give me little stipends to keep me feeling wanted and coming back. They speak wistfully of how much they wish they could hire me and that someday we might have a permanent relationship. Like two illicit lovers who can't look each other in the eye, we both generally leave our encounters satisfied. We each accept the arrangement as good under the circumstances. And I am fully aware that the focus of my reporting makes me rather unemployable by nature—not marriage material.

In June 1997, I was still a freelance journalist when Cambodia, again, imploded in civil war. Hundreds of journalists descended on the country. There were reports from the jungle suggesting Pol Pot was on the run, and fighting raged on several fronts throughout the country. I'd already spent years reporting in inhospitable jungles (though I'd been based in Phnom Penh and Bangkok), attempting to find Pol Pot,

The author standing next to the body of Pol Pot.

the leader of the Khmer Rouge.

I called editors seeking plane fare to go back to Cambodia. "I believe I might be able to get to Pol Pot," I said. I was flatly turned down. I borrowed money and got on a plane that day. Six weeks later, I emerged from Khmer Rouge-controlled jungles having gotten to Khmer Rouge headquarters and been the only reporter to attend the "trial" of Pol Pot, one of the century's most sought-after mass murderers. In 18 years he hadn't been seen or photographed. For a couple of days, it became the biggest story in the world. And as a freelancer, I had the only firsthand reporting, still pictures, and video of the story.

I received thousands of calls from media wanting my pictures and story. As I sat in my office in Bangkok, journalists from the world's major media descended like vultures. And before I'd even finished writing my story, these events were front-page news around the world. Ted Koppel of ABC News flew to Bangkok from Washington, and he returned home with a copy of my videotape. I gave it to him in exchange for his strict promise that its only use would be on "Nightline." However, once he had the copy of the tape, ABC News released video, still pictures, and even transcripts of my interviews to news organizations throughout the world. Protected by its formidable legal and public relations department, ABC News made still photographs from the video, slapped the "ABC News Exclusive" logo on them, and hand delivered them to newspapers, wire services, and television. It also released the transcripts of my interviews to The New York Times and placed pictures and video on its Web site with instructions on how to download them. All of these pictures demanded that photo credit be given to ABC News.

Even though ABC News does not have a correspondent in Southeast Asia, it looked as though ABC News had gone and found Pol Pot. The Far Eastern Economic Review ran my story in its weekly edition a couple of days later. But already thousands of newspapers, magazines and television stations had published or broadcast the story, thanks to ABC News. The story won a British Press Award for "Scoop of the Year" for a British paper I didn't even know had published it. The Wall Street Journal (also owned by Dow Jones), for which I'd never written about this story, also won several awards for *its* coverage. I even won a Peabody Award as a "correspondent for 'Nightline.'" But I turned it down—the first time anyone had rejected a Peabody in its 57-year history. No one noticed, since ABC News banned me from attending the ceremony after I told Koppel I would reject the award.

When I watch the Afghan coverage and think about the U.S. military and American news reporters now looking vigorously for bin Laden, I remember that he has been interviewed and photographed seven times by local and freelance journalists. And when I see the American networks play "stolen" footage—obtained by Al-Jazerra and lifted off satellite transmitters—I think of the Al-Jazerra correspondents in Kabul, risking their lives and developing sources to obtain information and develop access. I am outraged that a U.S. smart bomb targeted their offices and there was scant protest. And when I see the Ken and Barbie news celebrities in their color-coordinated flak jackets reporting from the "front lines" (microphone in one hand, aerosol hair spray nearby), I picture them pouring at night over the life work of Ahmed Rashid to try to get an understanding of what the hell is going on.

With the war in Afghanistan, it is important to remember the invaluable role played by freelancers and local correspondents whose commitment to reporting gives substance to the current coverage. They play a pivotal role in maintaining a free press by delivering knowledgeable, firsthand, well-sourced information from the field. It is their dedication to this vital enterprise that creates the foundation for what we read and view, not the efforts of slick corporate hucksters and their willing agents who would substitute an agenda that betrays what should be our singular allegiance. That allegiance should not be to Pennsylvania Avenue, or to Wall Street, or to Madison Avenue. It should be to Main Street. ■

Nate Thayer was the Cambodia, then Southeast Asia, correspondent for the Far Eastern Economic Review. He has written for more than 40 other publications and news services and has won numerous awards, including the 1999 SAIS-Novartis prize for Excellence in International Journalism and the first award given by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists.

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Press Access to Satellite Images is a Casualty in This War

The Department of Defense owns and controls these pictures.

By Christopher Simpson

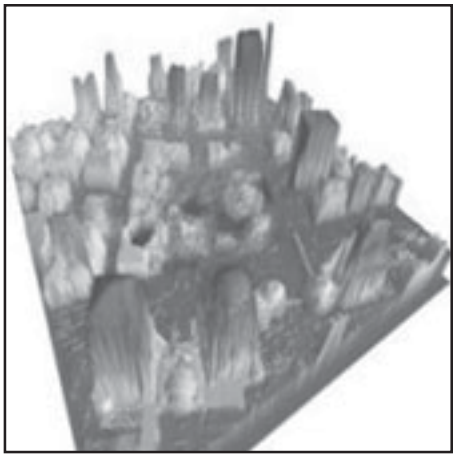
Not too many years ago, I invited the chief intelligence and national security correspondent from one of America's most prominent newspapers to a conference on news media use of remote sensing tools to cover wars and similar crises. He gruffly replied that it was all baloney (though he used a different word for it) and declined to attend. I was curious and asked him why.

"Remote sensing," he said, "like using mind waves to read Kremlin mail," is complete crud. (He used a different term there, as well.)

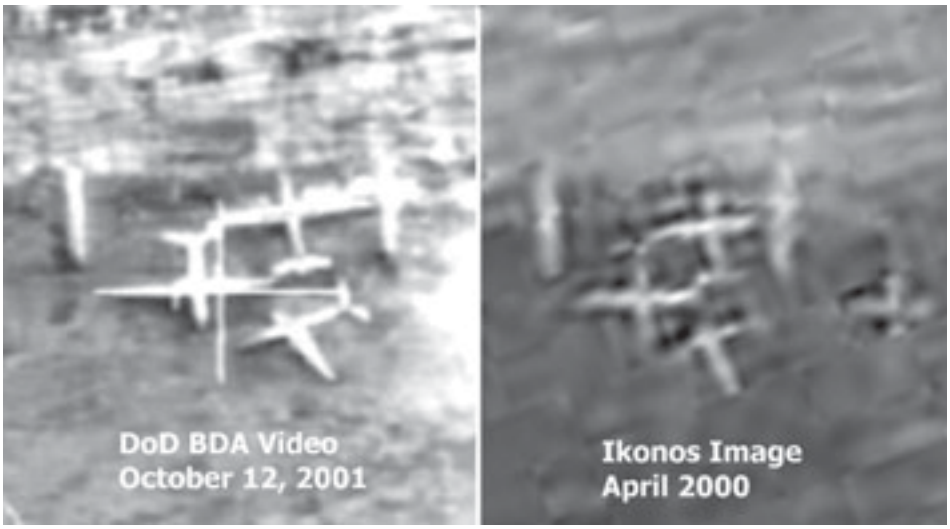
Today that correspondent tells quite a different story. He encourages his paper to use remote sensing tools such as images gathered by civilian spy satellites, especially for coverage of the World Trade Center disaster and the subsequent war in Afghanistan. Remote sensing from satellites, sometimes known as "earth observation" or as imagery gathered by spy satellites, has nothing whatever to do with ill conceived attempts to use purported psychics for intelligence collection.

Instead, unclassified imagery gathered from space has emerged as a powerful tool for capturing unique photographs and information. Properly analyzed, these images present to broad audiences some of the complex ideas that for decades have been the exclusive preserve of presidents, intelligence agencies, and a handful of scientific specialists. During the past three years alone, almost every major news organization in the world has used these tools to report on natural disasters, war, closed societies, environmental destruction, some types of human rights abuses, refugee flight and relief, scientific discoveries, agriculture and even real estate development.

The increasing popularity and effectiveness of these journalistic tools has raised concerns in some quarters that public images might reveal sensitive information in wartime, most recently in Afghanistan. Since mid-September, federal intelligence and security agencies have organized a sweeping clampdown on almost every type of geographic information available on the Internet, including civilian remote sensing information. Satellite imagery of Afghanistan, surrounding countries, and sensitive installations in the United States were among the first to go. The National Imagery and Mapping Agency—the Defense Department's lead agency for satellite image collection and analysis—went so far as to attempt to end public distribution of decades-old, widely available Landsat 5 imagery and of topographic maps of the United States that have been commercially available in one form or another for more than 100 years. They did not succeed. Nevertheless, NIMA and other defense agencies have announced a "review" of publicly available U.S. maps in order to eliminate



Imagery for news and analysis: At left, a Spot Image satellite photo of Ground Zero captured on September 11, less than three hours after the towers' collapse. The thermal infrared band identifies fierce fires (in white in this picture) at the base of the smoke plumes. Ground spatial resolution of the image—that is, the size of an object represented by a single pixel—is about 15 meters. At center, a one-meter resolution Ikonos satellite image of the same area taken on September 15. Debris and emergency vehicles are clearly visible. This image was collected by an observation satellite some 423 miles in space traveling at about 17,500 mph. At right, this LIDAR image extrusion prepared by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) permits precise three-dimensional location of elevator shafts, stairwells and broken support structures at the destroyed World Trade Center. When merged with other satellite data, the final color 3-D image provides approximately 30 meter resolution. ***Image credits: (left) Spot Image/CNES, (center) Space Imaging, (right) NOAA.***



Imagery and Public Relations: At left, a gun camera video image of what appears to be a highly effective air strike on military jets at Kabul airport. The image received heavy television coverage when it was released by the Department of Defense shortly after the beginning of the air war in Afghanistan. At right, an Ikonos satellite image showing that the same planes were in precisely the same position 18 months earlier, demonstrating that the targets were actually "three derelict cargo airplanes," writes analyst Tim Brown of GlobalSecurity.org, who discovered the archive image. U.S. air strikes on these targets during the first 72 hours of the air war had little military value, he contends, except for the "strong media and visual impact" produced by network news coverage of the vivid imagery. *Image credits: (left) Department of Defense, (right) Space Imaging / GlobalSecurity.org.*

what they assert to be potentially dangerous information.

Procedures for suppressing what is regarded as "sensitive" imagery and geographic information have been a feature of presidential national security directives since the Reagan administration. But never before have these restrictions been implemented so rapidly or on such a wide scale. The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which operates low-resolution weather satellites, posted an image on the Internet on the afternoon of September 11 that showed a long smoke plume drifting from New York City down the east coast of the United States. Moments later, they took it off the net and issued a press statement stating that no weather imagery report at all was available for September 11. When satellite imagery watchers called NOAA on this contradiction, the agency eventually returned the satellite photograph of the smoke plume. NOAA has yet to acknowledge that they suppressed the image in the first place. Unfortunately, since mid-September NOAA's highly regarded Operational Significant Event Imagery (OSEI) coverage of territories outside the United States has been cut to a small, anemic fraction of its former output, also without acknowledging that there has been any change.

Recommended Sites

www.spaceimaging.com
Space Imaging's Ikonos one-meter resolution satellite is the premier source for civilian high-resolution imagery, but at this writing its data collected over Afghanistan and environs has been effectively blockaded by the U.S. Department of Defense. Space Imaging Middle East in Dubai, UAE (www.spaceimagingme.com), Space Imaging Eurasia in Ankara, Turkey (www.sieurasia.com) and Space Imaging Europe in Athens, Greece (www.si-eu.com), are each franchises, in effect, of the U.S. company. Each also has its own downlink capability to gather imagery from Afghanistan and environs collected by Ikonos, U.S. Landsat satellites, and India's mid-resolution IRS-C and IRS-1D satellites.

www.spot.com
Spot Image features considerably more satellites presently in orbit and a stronger image archive than its competitors, but most data are at about 10- to 15-meter resolution. This resolution is appropriate for most commercial applications and in some instances can be adapted to meet the needs of the news media. Spot Image's new generation of higher resolution satellites is scheduled to be online during the spring or summer of 2002.

www.imagesatintl.com
ImageSat International, formerly known as West Indian Space Inc., features a 1.5- to three-meter resolution Eros A1 satellite that has captured images of the Afghan war that are unavailable elsewhere. However, ImageSat also boasts that it has won Department of Defense contracts similar to those that tied up Space Imaging's satellite data during the conflict.

www.earthsat.com/environ/region
Earth Sat are image processing and analysis specialists. They provide infrared satellite imaging, GIS and agricultural and socioeconomic data on Pakistan and Southwest Asia,

Private satellite companies in the United States have thus far closely cooperated with the government's effort to block media access to the large majority of current imagery. Lockheed Martin subsidiary Space Imaging Corp., located in Thorton, Colorado (www.spaceimaging.com) operates the Ikonos satellite. It captures images of the earth at about one-meter ground spatial resolution, and that is precise enough to permit experts and even ordinary readers to identify many types of military and civilian operations.

During the first week after September 11, Space Imaging released to the media high-resolution photos of Ground Zero at the collapsed trade towers in Manhattan and at the Pentagon. The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, scores of major publications, and every major television news organization in the world employed these dramatic photographs to analyze, document and explain what had taken place during the attacks. Meanwhile, SPOT Image, a French satellite company with a significant share of the U.S. market (www.spot.com), provided somewhat similar 15-meter resolution "images of infamy" it had gathered from more than 400 miles in space.

As dramatic as those photos are, they have since become something of a fig leaf that has obscured more recent, sweeping restrictions on news media use of satellite imaging. Beginning at least as early as October, the Department of Defense (DOD) has moved aggressively to shut down media access to overhead images of the heavy bombing of Afghanistan, except for photos that the DOD presents at its own news conferences. In the process, the DOD appears to have sidestepped its own regulations, some legal experts say, and might have broken the law.

The present controversy about public access to satellite imagery began a bit less than a decade ago when the U.S. government drafted elaborate regulations claiming it had the authority to exercise "shutter control" over U.S.-licensed satellites. Executive agencies authorized a procedure they would use to shut down collection of otherwise available imagery when key members of the President's cabinet agreed that national security, foreign policy, or similar matters might be endangered. Critics contended that the "shutter control" procedures amounted to governmental prior restraint on publishing, a type of censorship that the Supreme Court has long held to be unconstitutional in almost every circumstance.

The Radio-Television News Directors Association said that the first time the procedure was actually used they would challenge its constitutionality in court. Similar objections came from a number of news and publishing organizations and some representatives of the civilian satellite companies themselves. But until October 2001, no clear-cut test cases had arisen. Then, as the United States began its bombing campaign in Afghanistan, the DOD signed contracts with Space Imaging to purchase exclusive rights to all of the company's imagery collected anywhere near Afghanistan.

These tactics, known as "preclusive buying," have been a feature of U.S. economic warfare since at least World War I. Earlier preclusive buying efforts sought to choke off shipments of tungsten and other strategic minerals to Nazi Germany, for example. This time, though, the object has been to shut down U.S. news media access to information about the war in Afghanistan, the flight of refugees, and the widening crisis in West Asia.

Today, the Defense Department and Space Imaging contend that this preclusive buying is a simple contract matter. "This was a solid business transaction that brought great value to the [U.S.] government," said the company's Washington representative, Mark Brender. "Nothing more; nothing less." But critics contend that the Department of Defense has used the contracts

usually under contract to the United Nations, national governments, U.S. government agencies, the World Bank, or corporations.

www.digitalglobe.com
DigitalGlobe, formerly known as EarthWatch, successfully launched its QuickBird high-resolution satellite in autumn 2001. It plans to offer full image-gathering capability during the first quarter 2002. DigitalGlobe, like several of its competitors, also markets imagery from Canada's RADARSAT International, Russia's space program, India's satellite program, and other sources. Availability and currency of these data vary by region.

www.dfd.dlr.de
DFD-DLR, Germany's state remote sensing organization, installed an advanced, mobile four-meter ground receiving station near Kitab, Uzbekistan, some months prior to the outbreak of war.

www.globalsecurity.org
GlobalSecurity.org is a space and international security-oriented think tank, most of whose analysts were formerly associated with the well known Federation of American Scientists satellite imagery Web site. The latter site has been significantly cut back, while GlobalSecurity.org's site includes key materials gathered during the FAS project and a considerable amount of new data. The site is particularly useful for satellite imagery and high quality maps of the Afghan war zone, as well as an archive of publicly released DOD imagery.

www.orbimage.com
Orbimage currently specializes in high quality, weather satellite-type imagery that covers an entire region of the globe in one image.

—Christopher Simpson

as a device to avoid their own regulations and thus sidestep the legal challenge that would almost certainly follow. "This contract is a way of disguised censorship aimed at preventing the media from doing their monitoring job," contended Reporters sans Frontières (Reporters Without Borders) executive director Robert Menard. The Guardian (U.K.) characterized the deal as "spending millions of dollars to prevent Western media from seeing pictures of the effects of bombing in Afghanistan." Ernest Miller, writing in Yale University's LawMeme electronic newsletter, concluded that preclusive buying should be understood as "shutter control by means other than those enumerated in the current regulations," that has added new regulatory and constitutional law issues to the existing controversy over the regulations themselves.

Perhaps most disturbingly, Guardian correspondent Duncan Campbell reported that the decision to buy rights to all satellite imagery appears to have been made on October 10, then backdated by a week or more. The date is significant, he contended, because the agreement took place soon after news organizations attempted to purchase high-resolution images of Daruta, Afghanistan, to follow up on reports that bombing raids had killed a large number of civilians at that settlement. (The DOD has stated that the raids at Daruta hit nearby Taliban training camps. The dispute over the civilian deaths has yet to be resolved.)

Meanwhile, Spot Image has also declined to make the most of its current take of imagery available to news organizations. Industry insiders contend that all Spot imagery of Western Asia gathered since September 11 has gone to the French government, where it is said to facilitate French horse-trading of intelligence concerning terrorism with U.S. intelligence agencies. For the moment, at least, the ostensibly civilian Spot satellites are operating in tandem with France's military Helios spy satellites, which have a very similar design to Spot's birds and use much of the same command and control infrastructure.

Neither Space Imaging nor Spot have been willing to say much to the news media. There have been some interesting exceptions, however. At SpaceImaging, the company thus far has made public only one before-and-after image collected over Afghanistan. It illustrates a precision airstrike that effectively destroyed an Afghan airfield near Kandahar without damaging nearby homes. The images and the analysis that accompanied them were presented to news organizations as the product of an independent information company. In reality, the released image was calculated to be a "big wet kiss," as a satellite industry insider put it, for the U.S. war effort. (It was also cleared by the DOD prior to release.)

For the moment, the only source of current, civilian, high-resolution imagery from Afghanistan appears to be a remarkable corporate hybrid whose lineage exemplifies the world of post-cold war intelligence. ImageSat International—formerly known as West Indian Space Inc.—is a partnership of the state-owned Israeli Aircraft Industries (IAI), a U.S. software company, and a second major Israeli defense contractor. The company operates out of Cyprus and from tax havens in the Caribbean and launches its birds from Siberia aboard leased Russian rockets. The 2.5-meter to three-meter resolution Eros 1-A satellite is officially a civilian "earth resources observation" tool. A closer look reveals this remote sensing satellite is designed to specs closely modeled on Israel's highly secret Ofeq-3 spy satellites, which are also built by IAI. The new company sells imagery worldwide about two weeks after it is gathered at www.westindianspace.com or www.imagesatintl.com.

Controversy still erupts from time to time over interpretation of some imagery, or over these satellites' potential threat to national security or personal privacy. But so far, at least, no serious abuses of these tools by media organizations have come to light. When high-quality imagery has been publicly available, disagreements over its interpretation have proven to be high-tech versions of healthy, democratic discussion in which society's best approximation of truth emerges through a clash of ideas. The Institute for Science and International Security's recent book, "Solving the North Korean Nuclear Puzzle," provides an example. Imagery and information concerning North Korea's missile and nuclear weapons programs is quite sensitive by any measure. Nevertheless, the informed public analysis and debate about Korea that has been spurred by imagery from civilian remote sensing satellites has led to more effective monitoring of arms limitation agreements and—at least so far—more effective means to cope with the arms race in Asia.

Today's battle over access to current, accurate satellite imagery from Afghanistan is new in many ways, of course. Yet in a certain sense it remains similar to public debates over earlier newsgathering technologies in wartime such as television, radio and—not really so long ago—the telegraph. Media organizations have long preferred to attribute positive effects of open information to their responsible handling of news. The armed forces, on the other hand, have often traced that result at least in part to military efforts to shut down unwanted news reports before they begin.

It seems clear that spy satellite tools—regarded by some as neutral news sources—have already adapted quite easily to modern public relations. And, like it or not, the fact that today's debate about war coverage focuses on information collected by satellites is a sure sign that this new information tool has come of age. ■

Christopher Simpson specializes in national security and media literacy issues at the School of Communication at American University in Washington, D.C. He directs the school's project on Satellite Imagery and the News Media. Simpson spent more than 15 years as a journalist and is author or editor of six books on communication, national security, and human rights.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Using Graphics to Tell Stories

'[O]nline graphics add other dimensions to the stories we report. . . .'

By Joanne Miller

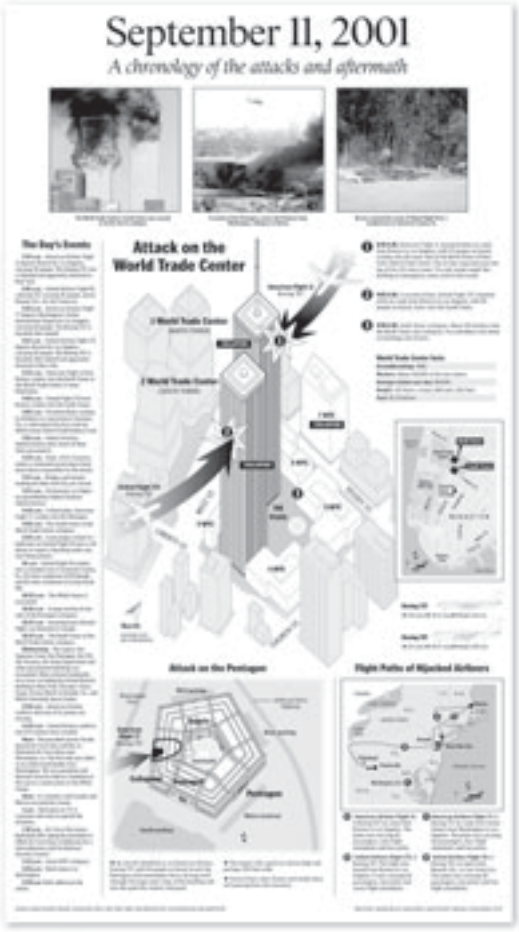
As the horrific events of September 11 unfolded, the scope of the tragedy I witnessed began to sink in. The terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania became the biggest breaking news event of my lifetime, charged with more emotion and disbelief than could ever have been imagined. As art director of The Charlotte Observer, it became my job to figure out how the newspaper could cover the story graphically.

Few graphics are as valuable to readers as step-by-step diagrams that we use to show, in detail, what happened and when. Immediately that day, working with our national desk, we began to create a graphic time-line of events, with diagrams and explanations of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon and the Pennsylvania plane crash. To obtain and convey accurate information, we studied video feeds from network television again and again. We also used photographs and other reference materials to draw three-dimensional views of what would become Ground Zero and of the Pentagon. We added locator maps of Manhattan and the crash site in Pennsylvania. The result of our work—a full-page graphic portrayal of these tragedies—appeared in a special section of the next day's Observer.

As news continued to break that week, we created a map and chronology of the trail of suspected hijackers and converted our World Trade Center diagram into a smaller scaled graphic and added color to illustrate the still emerging details of the attack and aftermath. And we devised graphic strategies to illustrate other aspects of the emerging story.

When we learned Osama bin Laden and his terrorist group, Al Qaeda, were prime suspects in the September 11 attacks, we wanted to give readers a better understanding of who bin Laden is, where he operates from, and who supports him. We drew a full-page color map of the volatile region around Afghanistan and Pakistan, with an enlarged detail map showing the topography, cities, roads, military installations, and suspected Al Qaeda training camps. Symbols on the map also illustrated the Al Qaeda connections to other countries in the region. The map was published in a Sunday Perspective section that focused on Afghanistan history and politics. The reader response was tremendous—so great, in fact, that we reproduced it on heavier stock paper that was then wrapped around newspaper ad inserts. By doing this, readers and teachers could have a more durable copy of this map.

Once again, television reports and Web sources played key roles in providing information that appeared in our graphics. Progressively, news of these events and their aftermath became more complex and graphically challenging. While we continued to respond to breaking news, we also started to devise new ways of providing broader context and understanding.



Graphics help readers visualize the story in The Charlotte Observer.

We did this by producing several "primers" on terrorism, Afghanistan, the Taliban, Al Qaeda, and Islam. Because of the wealth of resources and reporting now available online, our job of finding accurate information to build these primer graphics was made simpler than a decade ago when we constructed graphics as the 1991 Persian Gulf War was escalating. We also drew from the experience of our staff artists who produced graphics during the Gulf War. It then became a race against the clock. Would we be able to get this series of primers into the newspaper before military strikes began?

At the same time, in anticipation of a military response, we wanted to prepare—for possible future use—scenarios of how the military strikes might proceed and how the forces might be utilized, along with other pertinent information to supplement wire service graphics. We dug through our archives and once again cannibalized our Gulf War graphics, pulling out pieces that might be relevant to military ac-

tion in Afghanistan. We also researched and drew many graphics that might be useful, such as maps of the region and aircraft carrier battle groups, then readied these elements, again for possible use. To do this, we relied on our award-winning graphics staff, many of whom have had a lot of experience in military affairs. Our news graphics editor, William Pitzer, served as a major command illustrator for the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War and worked at another newspaper handling military graphics during the Gulf War, as did David Puckett, our informational graphics specialist.

In researching material to go into these graphic displays, we consulted local university professors who specialize in Middle East studies or other pertinent topics. We also looked to Web sites that we can rely on in terms of accuracy, which we've determined by doing in-house fact checking of the information provided. These include www.bbc.co.uk/ (BBC Online homepage), www.fas.org (Federation of American Scientists) and www.af.mil (American Air Force Link Online). The BBC site is especially useful and provides highly detailed maps that we use to produce our daily attack graphics. Non-American governmental Web sites are often more forthcoming with information than U.S. sites, so each day we scan foreign sites. The Federation of American Scientists site and the Air Force Link site provide highly detailed information about military equipment, how it is used, and other key military information.

To ensure the consistency of our war graphics, we created a unique design and title format: The Observer's Guide to Aircraft Carriers; The Observer's Guide to Afghan Rebels; The Observer's Guide to Attack Forces, etc. Using this format, we produce explanatory graphics that are instantly recognizable as being related to the ongoing story of the war against terrorism, even though they appear in various sizes and locations throughout the paper. This visual display of reporting is a key element of our paper's extensive daily coverage.

The Observer created a unique design and title format for its "Guide to" graphics.

On October 7, when U.S. and British missiles struck numerous targets in Afghanistan, we were ready. Immediately, we converted reference maps we'd made into templates for daily attack updates. We utilized our format and began producing The Observer's Guide to Allied Attacks. On days when these graphics do not make it into the newspaper because of space constraints, they appear on our paper's Web site (www.charlotte.com). Many other Knight Ridder newspapers have direct links to our newspaper's online war graphics, and the positive feedback we've received convinces us there is a need for this daily map, even if it is only seen online.

As we'd anticipated, the allied forces are using much of the same equipment in Afghanistan that was used in the Gulf War, including fighter jets, B-1, B-2 and B-52 bombers, aircraft carriers, and submarines. Tomahawk missiles were launched at terrorist training camps and targets associated with the Taliban. The attack began rather conventionally, with air-to-ground and sea-to-ground attacks on Taliban positions, and as Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said, the success of military actions will be heavily dependent upon surprise. With concern about security and secrecy, we do not expect to receive much in the way of detailed military information from the Pentagon briefings.

One of the ways we have devised to cover this new war is to provide information in a format that readers can't get anywhere else. Along with more "primer" graphics to help readers take in information about different aspects of this war at home and abroad, we are continuing with "The Observer's Guide to" format. We are creating different informative graphics, including a "bunker busters" graphic. These detail how the terrorists' caves—where they are presumably in hiding—might be destroyed with special deep penetrating missiles. And we are also helping readers to examine the plight of Afghan women under Taliban rule, along with other newsworthy subjects, through similar use of graphic displays.

Our daily coverage is definitely enhanced by sharing our graphic displays with our Web audience. Observer staff artist Jacob Piercy converts newspaper graphics into animated "flash" and other still graphics that we post online as they are created. He has received numerous e-mails and phone calls praising his online graphics and requesting more. They are archived at: www.charlotte.com/observergraphics/archive.html. In creating graphics for the Web, we work hard to make sure that we don't add gratuitous animation or sound, which can trivialize the issues of life and death involved. We don't want these displays to have the look or feel of video games or cartoons. We know that online graphics add other dimensions to stories we report, so the newspaper allocates the necessary resources to do them even in

these budget-tightening times.

Changing technology constantly influences the crafting of newspaper graphics, whether it's new computer software, the Internet, or other technological advances. By taking advantage of technologies that presently exist, we can quickly create accurate, detailed and visually compelling graphics that provide relevant, contextual information to help readers understand the issues that interest and affect them. Increasing understanding is always an important part of what newspapers do. At a time like this, when Americans are waging war in a distant land and much is happening to evoke fear at home, we have a greater obligation to provide accurate information and make it as easy as possible for our readers to absorb it. ■

Joanne Miller is art director at The Charlotte Observer where she supervises a staff of five artists. Before going to the Observer, she was deputy visuals editor/graphics for the St. Paul Pioneer Press and worked at the Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, Army Times, and Honolulu Star-Bulletin.

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Watchdog Journalism: An Instrument of Democracy

In his introduction to the Nieman Foundation Watchdog Conference held at Harvard University in September, Curator Bob Giles described how and why the Watchdog project was created. He invited Murrey Marder, its guiding force and benefactor, to speak about the purpose and promise of watchdog journalism, with particular emphasis on its need and use during times of national crisis. Marder's revised remarks follow Giles's introduction.

Bob Giles: We're deeply indebted to Murrey Marder, the retired chief diplomatic correspondent of The Washington Post and a Nieman Fellow in 1950, whose generous gift to the Nieman Foundation has enabled us to hold these conferences to examine and reinvigorate the press in its fundamental role of serving the public interest.

In his original proposal in 1997 for a watchdog project, Murrey wrote that the press as a whole is by no means penetrating enough, vigorous enough, public-spirited enough, or courageous enough about reporting and analyzing the most vital needs in performance of the nation across a full range of local, regional, national and international news. A year later, as the first conference began, Murrey described watchdog journalism as an instrument of democracy: "It is by no means just occasional selective, hard-hitting investigative reporting. It starts with a state of mind; accepting responsibility as a surrogate for the public. Asking penetrating questions at every level, from the town council, to the state house, to the White House, in corporate offices, in union halls, in professional offices, and all points in between."

The American press is at the beginning of a time for which it has no adequate experience or preparation. A war on terrorism is unlike any war this nation has ever fought and unlike any that journalists have had to cover. In these times, our nation needs an activist, searching, challenging press and essential to fulfilling this responsibility is asking probing questions.

Last spring, when we were putting together some ideas for this watchdog conference, Murrey sent me a memorandum discussing how we might achieve the widest impact with the information that is going to be developed from these discussions. He told me of a meeting with Gene Roberts at the University of Maryland, in which they discussed how to broadly change the existing journalistic mindset about watchdog journalism. Murrey asked Gene Roberts whether journalism students at Maryland were taught to ask questions. "Not in any comprehensive forum," Roberts replied. "There are numerous references to question asking, but no substantive focus on it, or guidance on how to ask questions."

The core of the problem, Murrey suggested, is a lack of penetrating, probing questions to produce accountability for all that impacts the public interest. And his exchange with Gene Roberts set the stage for a discussion about reaching journalism students broadly by offering instruction about question asking through videotape of first-class quality. So part of our purpose here is to think about and to assess how information from this conference could be packaged and produced in such videotape. We have invited a number of journalism educators and people from the documentary field here as participants and observers and, after the conference concludes, we'll be talking with them about their reactions and ideas for how to broaden our outreach.

Murrey Marder has not only provided the gift that makes these conferences possible, but he is a continuing inspiration for them. During his career at The Washington Post he practiced watchdog journalism, building a reputation for diligence, dedication and integrity. These qualities served him especially well in his assignment in 1957 as the Post's first foreign correspondent. Dean Rusk, the secretary of state for Lyndon Johnson, in his autobiography once likened Murrey to Hercule Poirot, Agatha Christie's famed detective: "He's got a little piece of a story here, and a little piece of a story there, and gradually he pieced the puzzle together."

Murrey, we're very thankful to you and pleased to have you here with us. Would you come and talk to us a little bit about watchdog journalism?

Murrey Marder: When we began this particular project no one, especially me, could have anticipated where it would be right now after September 11. Many news people, including me, initially leaped to the metaphor of the Pearl Harbor attack. But the more I thought about the shocking effect, for me it had more of a combination of Pearl Harbor and Sputnik. I don't know if many of you can remember Sputnik—the Soviet satellite launched in October 1957—but this had profound impact on the American psyche. For the first time the threat was directly overhead, and a foreign power had invaded American air space, in a degree unlike Pearl Harbor, which struck the fringes of American power. Sputnik was right above us, beeping tauntingly, mocking American boasts of scientific primacy.

The impact was profound. It overwhelmed so many concepts of American education, especially the scientific concepts, because at that time the Soviet Union was vastly underrated as a quite backward power. Instead, it had penetrated the shield of American invincibility in a way much like the attacks in September penetrated the shield of our homeland invincibility.

But there the comparisons end. There was nothing mysterious about Sputnik's origin or purpose. It was a calculated psychological and technological shock in an escalating cold war between two superpowers armed with obliterating weapons. Yet Sputnik cost no casualties, destroyed no facilities, and left no nuclear, biological or chemical aftershocks.

By contrast, Americans on September 11 were not only aghast over the nature and magnitude of the terrorist attacks, but they were confounded by the enmity of an adversary they did not know. American bewilderment was exemplified by the outcry, "Why do they hate us?"

Where were the watchdogs who could have sounded that alarm? Any attentive reporter working in the Middle East during the last decade could not have missed hearing what one U.S. diplomat recently described as "a sorcerer's brew of anti-U.S. grievances." Grievance news, however, was little sought and rarely headlined by most American news outlets and least of all by commercial television.

Grievances, in the absence of a major, imminent threat to the United States, were rated as dull, tedious and intolerably space consuming. At the same time, the end of the cold war supplied a convenient excuse for reducing the total space given to foreign news. Consequently, the number of American reporters based abroad shrunk steadily in the last dozen to 15 years, drastically diminishing overseas news coverage.

So as the grievances intensified, the watchdogs decreased, because the American corporate focus shifted to the bottom line. The bottom line was profit and loss. I would suggest that the American conglomerates are looking at the wrong bottom line. The bottom line, now we realize, is not profit and loss, the bottom line now is survival, and that is why the threat is so stark.

The question now is what do we do about it journalistically, and here we face a formidable challenge. Those of us who live in Washington, work in Washington or New York, might have a more acute sensitivity of what we're going to be up against in trying to penetrate a situation which threatens the nation in many ways, in which the administration has declared that it is going to rely heavily on secrecy. And we really haven't faced that kind of a direct challenge at the outset of a crisis in the lifetime of any of us.

This administration, unfortunately for us, has a great deal of practice in the use of secrecy. Many of its officials conducted the Persian Gulf War in exceptional secrecy and tied the press into knots as a result.

We are going to have to learn a great many things to cope with the new secrecy. I would think that we're going to have to go back to basic principles, and when we are foreclosed, as we often are likely to be, from the American version of what is happening around the world, we now have greater access than we ever had before to the outside world's interpretation of what is happening. So there is going to be a different kind of competition for the eyes and ears of the American public, and we're going to have to listen to that very carefully.

At some point, our business is going to have to invest far more resources than it is committed to doing now, if it is going to be in a position to keep the American public even modestly informed about the outside world. I am personally appalled by the fact that the administration's initial quest for legislation to give it authority in this crisis went virtually unchallenged. It got blanket authority. In my time, we used to kick ourselves over the blank check that the Johnson administration got in the Vietnam War in the Gulf of Tonkin.

The blank check the executive branch holds now is the greatest blank check any of us have ever seen because it has absolutely no limitations on it. If any part of the press was courageous about questioning the authority, it has escaped the attention of most of us.

There are things that others can do, too. Harvard can raise the level of education of its students and the rest of us about what is happening in the world around us. We clearly do not know enough about other religions, other cultures, other histories. We're going to have to awaken ourselves, to a tremendous degree, about the fact that our fate can be determined considerably by others, as we have seen. At the time of Pearl Harbor it was determined in Japan. At the time of Sputnik it was being determined in the Soviet Union. Here it is being determined in Central Asia. It is just impossible to survive in the modern world very long in an island of privilege surrounded by a sea of have-nots. We're going to have to learn much more about the embittered have-nots of the world and how their fate can impinge on ours.

With that over-long dissertation, I then invite you to help us all learn collectively how we can better inform ourselves and our readers and viewers about our responsibilities in meeting what is certainly not going to be a short-term problem, but very likely the largest one we may see in our lifetime. Thank you. ■

Asking Probing Questions in a Time of National Crisis

Are journalists asking 'the right question?'

Charles R. Nesson, the Weld Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, moderated a panel of journalists who spoke about the job of asking critical questions in the aftermath of the attacks on September 11. Nesson directs the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at the law school and for many years worked with the late CBS News producer Fred Friendly in the PBS series "Media and Society." What follows are edited remarks of the journalists and moderator.


Focus

Books

'Because we are so big, so powerful'

'America represents global capitalism'

WHY DO THEY HATE US?

'Most had never met an American'

'The harm done to innocents'

The reasons are many, the history long

The Boston Globe, September 16, 2001.

I'm Charles Nesson. The question is how do you ask the right question? The way we teach at Harvard Law School, the answer to the question is the process of answering. But that leaves you with the question: If the answer to the question is the process of answering it, what's the question? That has been puzzling me for years. After September 11, I wondered what's the question. Then, five days after the attack, The Boston Globe in their Focus section asked, "Why Do They Hate Us?" That sort of question hit me when I saw it.

So what went on at The Boston Globe to come up with this question? What was the resistance to this question being asked earlier? We obviously don't know. But my guess is that's one of many questions that came up in asking what is *the* question. Someone had the wisdom to say let's get to the heart of it. So here we are. We're journalists, sitting around, and we're trying to figure out, what is the question? What's the right question for us to ask?

Alex Jones: A lot of stories have addressed this question, and it was the obvious question given the magnitude of what happened and also what was clear from day one was that it was a very well thought out, very calculated operation that took place over a long period of time. So given the facts we knew, it was the only question because of the devastation. We knew that they wanted to kill a lot of people. We knew that they wanted us to watch it on television because of the 20 minute lapse between the destruction of the first trade center and the second, so we knew how methodical it all was. Obviously, these people really hate us.

Charles Nesson: That was the evidence that they did this, that they hate us. But why do they hate us? You don't consider that a loaded question? You don't consider that, in lawyer's terms, a question that assumes the answer to facts not yet in evidence? You think this has been proved?

Ellen Hume: I think it's a very narcissistic, American-centric question, and I think it's the wrong question. For many Americans who have never thought about this before it's the right question, but for those who have lived abroad it's pretty obvious that this is something other people think about a lot. For me, the correct question, which I'm very eager to hear more about from people who know about this, is what were they trying to accomplish? Because that encompasses why do they hate us, but it also carries out, so what do they think will happen next, and how do we play or not play into their hands with our own behavior? Because that to me is the crucial question: "What were they trying to accomplish?"

Michel Marriott: I don't think that question ["Why do they hate us?"] is one that germinated within newsrooms. I think it was one of the times when the newsroom tries to serve the readership, and they think that is a question that is germinating among the readers. It speaks to a certain naiveté. For people who have not been

following foreign policy, for people who have not been keeping track of global events, that's almost an emotional response, almost like a spurned lover. Why does he hate me? It was also a very humanistic sort of question that I think very intelligent people in newsrooms are thinking is what our readers really need to know. Or this is their point of entry, so we will then try to bring the story through that portal, and that's where that question comes from and not really from the journalists who cover these events.

Rami Khouri: I have a problem with that question, with its last three words "they hate us." It's very imprecise and loaded. It's a very political and sort of culturally distorted kind of question. Who is "they"? The bombers or the wider societies? Or the Islamic or the Arab world? "They" is not clear. And hate is not the right word. For the people who did the bombing, their emotions are stronger than hate. The societies that allowed these terrorists to rise have an emotion that I think is not hate; it's a very complex, mixed emotion of positive and negative. And "us" is not a very precise word. Are you talking about American society as a whole, the Western free world democracies, the United States government, the United States people?

Charles Nesson: When we read this, when you say to yourself why do they hate us, do you not have a sense who we are who are asking this question? Who are we asking this question?

Alex Jones: I don't think it really matters, frankly. The reason for putting it that way was to narrow the focus to a point. And the point was actually to try to get the perspective of the people who did this thing into the newspaper so that people were not just sort of shaking their fists but were trying to understand some motivation that would help explain it. Obviously it's imprecise—they, us—who are we talking about? It was a journalistic device, a headline that was intended to get people to read what was on that page and those were representations of the perspective of people who are far into the experience and knowledge of most of the people in this country.

Charles Nesson: So Ellen, what was your question, the right question?

Ellen Hume: I'm not sure it's *the* right question. I think it's *a* right question—"What were they trying to accomplish?" Because if they were trying to accomplish an expression of hatred, then that could be one or two of the essays about why do they hate us. They hate us, and they were trying to accomplish pain. Or it could also encompass what is the strategy? What do they think this is going to trigger? Are they hoping we will bomb Afghanistan? What is it they're looking for? So I would have asked a question that would have elicited, I think, a more complex range of answers, but would also have covered why do they hate us.

Melissa Ludtke: This is also a question with different levels to it. If we're sitting here as a group of journalists talking about this, then it seems this headline is also inner-directed at journalists. Where did we fail in terms of educating the public prior to this happening so that they come to these events with a basis of knowledge that maybe we don't have to ask that question at this stage? It is important that we look inward and ask ourselves some of the questions that we're asking to a public audience. Where did we fail? What about our coverage, prior to this event, did not give people an understanding they need at this point to make an interpretation of what's going on?

Charles Nesson: So yours is the journalism business? You educate America. If America is completely ignorant on some major aspect of the world, so that they are utterly amazed that there is a large segment of the world that hates us, that's your fault.

Melissa Ludtke: We are one piece of an educating process. We aren't the only educators, but certainly that is one of the roles journalists play in our society today.

Rick Kaplan: What journalists recognized when that happened is that all of a sudden they're going to get to be journalists again, they're going to get to cover news again. All of a sudden, Gary Condit doesn't matter. And, even for that couple of weeks, we're not going to see some of the CEO's come down and take a look at the balance sheet and see how much money is being spent. I've never seen so many happy, depressed, sad but invigorated journalists as I see now. I think what

Journalists on the Watchdog Panel

Geneive Abdo—Tehran correspondent for The Guardian, Nieman Fellow 2002.

Ellen Hume—media consultant, former White House correspondent for The Wall Street Journal.

Alex Jones—author, director of the Joan Shorenstein Center on Press, Politics and Public Policy, former reporter for The New York Times, Nieman Fellow 1982.

Rick Kaplan—fellow at the Shorenstein Center, former president of CNN.

Rami Khouri—columnist and radio commentator in Jordan, Nieman Fellow 2002.

Charles Lewis—founder and chairman of the Center for Public Integrity.

Melissa Ludtke—editor of Nieman Reports, Nieman Fellow 1992.

Murrey Marder—former chief diplomatic correspondent for The Washington Post, benefactor of the Watchdog Project, Nieman Fellow 1950.

Michel Marriott—technology reporter for The New York Times, Nieman Fellow 2002.

Susan Reed—freelance journalist, former CBS News reporter, Nieman Fellow 1999.

James Trengrove—senior producer for "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer," Nieman Fellow 2002.

happened is they sat there and said, "Gee, it's been a long time since we've run an international story," and what this event allows people to do is to sit there and say, "Okay, we're back in business. We can be journalists again." Now we've got fewer resources, whether you're in print or television, but we can go do our thing.

"Why do they hate us?" is a great question, but the point is it's just the headline, and it allows us to begin the process of educating people about what Islam is, what Afghanistan is all about. There is a lot that people need to know because all that news has been missing from the newspapers and from television. And the things this country has done in Kyoto and in other places that have just irritated the hell out of the rest of the world, and has gone fairly uncovered by television and, for the most part, by a lot of print, all of a sudden it scomes back into play.

Audience member: I'd like to comment on the question that you raised when we started, "Why do they hate us?" It's a brilliant question to ask, because that question, apart from dealing with who are the "they" that hate us, who are the "us" and, as Rami said, the hated self, that question is rooted in the assumption we are the good guys, so why do they hate us? If you take it a little further, it is a question of perception; the perception of America, uniformly, virtually across the country, is that we are the good guys, and whatever we do, however faulty our foreign policy may be, the actions of that foreign policy are taken as the actions of the good guys, and how dare you disagree with us.

Charles Nesson: Can I add to that? To me one of the most interesting, challenging features of this was the idea that these people who did such damage had lived with us for extended periods of time. They saw us up close. We, who love ourselves, and somehow assume that we must be loved by anyone who truly knows us, it must be misunderstanding. That's the basis of this. So you're saying, if I hear you right, there is no misunderstanding?

Audience member: There is a vast gulf of perception between the self-image of the people of America and the image that people outside have of Americans. Maybe one of the reasons why this gulf will always remain is because no attempt is being made to bridge that gulf. Asking a question like this, if I was sitting in my newsroom in the newspaper that I was working for, I think this is a great device. It is a device to raise debate; for people to think about both sides of the question. If this generates the kind of debate I think it was intended to generate, then it's a great question to ask, because it goes to the very root of who we are, and who they think we are, and why don't we think alike on that question?

Ellen Hume: I think one of the things that we're getting back to now is that this is a very important moment for journalism. We are discovering that it's a moment when news is important again, and the questions we ask are important again. They don't just have to be sexual titillation, and they don't just have to be entertainment. They can be real questions. What's been missing is the international coverage—because, frankly, it hasn't been allowed, and there hasn't been space for it even if smart reporters have struggled to get this coverage into American media, and I know they have. The question is, why does it matter? If we blow off Kyoto, why does it matter? If a president or another candidate doesn't know the names of his counterparts around the world, why does it matter? What's happened is we have been forced to understand suddenly that it does matter. If we can add that idea as we go forward then there is a real role for journalists. We're not just America's hosts. We're the ones who are supposed to help figure out why it matters, without taking a point of view. That's the American style. We're not supposed to take a partisan point of view. That's an interesting challenge for all of us.

Charles Nesson: I'm a lawyer. Lawyers have their art of asking questions. Journalists would seem also to live by the question. It's our weapon in both professions. Yet you don't think of yourselves as lawyers, and you don't think like lawyers. What would you say is the difference? What is it that makes you a journalist, as opposed to me, a lawyer, in terms of the way we use the weapon of the question?

Alex Jones: I'm told that lawyers never ask a question, at least in court, that they don't already know the answer to, or at least that's a technique—that you don't risk an answer that might be damaging to you. I think journalists go about it in a very different way. They are trying to illicit information that they have no stake in one way or the other. Their only interest is in getting truth.

Lawyers have an advocacy role journalists don't or shouldn't. So when they're asking questions, they're asking it with a very different purpose. I don't think it is wrong to think of the sort of strategies of questioning as being similar to those that might be used in a cross-examination, but I think that the purpose is somewhat different.

Michel Marriott: Also, the people we talk to are not compelled to answer. I can't subpoena a source like a lawyer can. Because I know that, I know the relationship between me and the person I'm trying to get information from is so radically different, I have to bring a whole new set of techniques to try to get at the truth. Even though I know the truth is sort of philosophically difficult sometimes; it can be relative, circumstantial. But I do kind of go into this with a very idealistic thought, that there really is a truth out there that I can find. If I mine it carefully enough and persistently enough, it will surface, and I will recognize it, and I can capture it, and I can put it in print, and other people can enjoy it, or respond to it, whatever.

Murrey Marder: I think the basic difference is that we see ourselves in our better moments as seeking the accountability for the use of power; whether it's the city council or a town sheriff, a state senator or a president, he or she has public power. We see

ourselves as holding power to accountability.

Charles Nesson: You speak for the oppressed.

Murrey Marder: We speak supposedly for all of those who are subject to the use of power. Some of them are oppressed, some of them are very rich and unoppressed.

Charles Nesson: But don't you think that that's a bit idealistic?

Murrey Marder: Gee, I hope it is.

Geneive Abdo: That's why this question, "Why do they hate us?" should have been asked 30 years ago, and not asked today for the first time. It took this crisis for us to ask the most obvious question. I mean, the resentment didn't happen, didn't begin yesterday. But as journalists we have become so removed from the topics that we cover. I mean, I think a good argument could be made that we used to represent the oppressed, now we don't know who we represent. Certainly this business has changed in terms of its whole class structure during the last century. Now we are sort of white-collar workers, whereas before we used to be blue collar. That, to some extent, has changed who we represent. Are we really speaking for the oppressed?

Susan Reed: I think you're right, and I think the better question for journalists is why didn't we know that these terrorist networks were alive and operating and living among us? I think that one of the striking things about what has happened, I saw this in a cartoon where there is this older couple sitting on the couch reading People magazine: "Why didn't they tell us about these people?" they say. One of the things I think Geneive is saying is that journalists have become members of the white-collar working class, and in this robust period of economic growth they have ridden the tide as well, so that we were all caught surprised on September 11.

Charles Nesson: What's emerging is a picture of journalism serving an audience in much the same way that network entertainment serves an audience. And serving that audience sets up a kind of loop of shared hallucination between the folks out there who want stories and the folks here, who are generating it for them. This loop can take on a life of its own.

Susan Reed: Yes, unfortunately in America it really can. I've worked overseas for several years, and I know that you're on the other end of a long telephone cord trying to get an executive producer of your evening news show to listen to you and to put a story on the air. I also know that it's very hard to get Saudi Arabia to let you in to cover the bombing of Khobar firsthand, and I know New York Times reporters who are standing at the embassy in Egypt yelling for a visa right now because they can't get it. So it is more complicated. But I do think that journalists weren't asking the right questions before this happened.

Charles Lewis: We didn't do these [international] stories either at the Center [for Public Integrity]. I want to be frank. Look, we all know that international coverage by the U.S. media has radically decreased. Is it ABC that now has seven or eight people overseas? A lot of bureaus have closed. From an investigative reporting standpoint, if you said "I'd like to go investigate the CIA's relationship with bin Laden over the last 10 or 15 years. I'm going to need about two months on the ground in Afghanistan," an editor would say "Good luck to you, pal. If you find something, send it in, but we're not paying for it." Nor is there much in the way of investigative reporting about a number of the government institutions involved in this process now and the failures across the board. There has not been a great mandate [for it]. There is no sex scandal involved. There is no ready, easy video. You actually have to leave New York to do the story. It just doesn't get done and didn't get done.

James Trengrove: I might just say that we're lashing out at each other here as journalists for not paying attention to the stories. After Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, you could walk down the street and ask people, "Why did he do that?" How many are going to be able to say why he invaded Kuwait in the first place? Nobody knows? And that war was on television and in the newspaper. Everybody saw it. What were the reasons for it? If you ask people now, even at the time that it happened, people didn't know. People don't care. Now that it has hit home, people may care. But we can't be responsible for writing stories, or putting stories on television, or having debates. We can't be responsible if people don't watch.

Charles Nesson: Did journalists ever look at that controversy from Saddam Hussein's point of view?

James Trengrove: Some did, yes, but who paid attention to it? Who cared at that point? All we knew was that American troops were going over there. That's the story that mattered. So if we asked this question before September 11, "Why do they hate us?" and we even put it on the front page of the section as The Boston Globe did, how many would have paid attention to it? How many would have read it? We can't be responsible. If you look at the top five selling American movies any week, they are action adventures. Look at what people are watching on television. So if you're producing news at CBS, ABC or NBC, and if you're going to go wall-to-wall with international coverage, you're not going to last very long because you have to sell commercial time, and if people aren't going to watch, you aren't going to be on the air.

Murrey Marder: Our focus tonight is on asking probing questions that arise out of events we cover and asking ourselves what the press can best do under these circumstances to explain, to edify, to educate all of us. For example, we have had overwhelming support of the President in Congress, one

vote against, which is so reminiscent of the votes endorsing the Tonkin Gulf resolution, which were two votes against. That happened to have been the trigger for me of what touched off in subsequent years this Watchdog Project. Because the press of the United States failed to pursue that issue, which touched off the enlarged war in Vietnam. What we have now done, and I do not see it raised in any newspaper that I have read, what is it we have authorized the President of the United States to do in his own name, and what restrictions are there on him, if any? As far as I know, there are no restrictions. Now, others are more familiar with the legislative verbiage, which I believe has not been published in any of the papers that I have read. This is what we have to focus on. What is the way in which you can help lead us into better questioning technique for pursuing these issues as this completely murky situation unfolds? What can you tell us, from a legal standpoint, what would you as a lawyer do to question the administration as it proceeds here? What are we missing journalistically?

Charles Nesson: Let me try and take your question. There are two kinds, there are two places where the question comes in. The question comes in when you're examining the witness, sure. But the much more important question comes in when you're crafting your case. What is your claim? What is your defense? That's where the real lawyer's art comes to play. That is where our professions differ, of course. [However,] when you pick a question to pursue, a focus, an issue, you're doing much of what a lawyer does in plotting a line of attack, as opposed to just the actual cross-examination where you try and elicit, or trap, or do whatever.

Murrey Marder: The difference is, I'm not trying to win something for my client. Our mission is to serve the needs of citizens. That doesn't necessarily mean taking any sides at all, that necessarily means getting information that people need to be citizens and getting it to them. I would assume when a lawyer is crafting a case for the client, the client wants to win. "There are things that are ugly in my case, and I'll make sure that I surely don't bring them up," the lawyer would say. "I'll find ways to obscure this from the jury or the judges so that they don't focus on it too much." But a journalist doesn't do that if they're doing their job properly. A journalist tries to get the news out. And I think what's happening right now is we're trying to make up for lost time. When I started in the news business, we used to use our judgments about what news needed to be told. We, in a sense, were trying to serve the needs of citizens, and most of us used our news judgments in doing that.

But what you hear from too many people when you talk about the news today, is you talk about what people want to see. So all of a sudden now news is governed by what people will watch, not by what citizens need to know, and that's a disaster. That all of a sudden makes you something just short of being an entertainment programmer.

Melissa Ludtke: And as journalists, we're supposed to become experts instantly. I'd argue that behind all of this discussion about the right question is really a discussion about the right information. The fact that journalists need to have some time built into their lives to be able to educate themselves, before they go out and presuppose that they know the question to ask. Unless they have that information, they don't know the next question to ask because they have no basis on which to gauge the veracity of the information they're being told, or the way to get to the next level of questioning.

Ellen Hume: One of the key things that journalists do and need to do to address the current setting and situation is to diversify their sources. Not to just talk to the officials about what our plans are as a nation, but to talk to everyone we can possibly get our hands on, and this isn't always so easy because we don't have subpoena power. We can't force them to tell us the truth. We can't punish them if they lie to us. This is a huge difference between what we have as a right and what lawyers often have in the courtroom. So this is a time for us to really think broadly about to whom we pose the question, as well as what the question is.

Rami Khouri: I see a persistent tendency in the United States to find the easy answer to tough questions. People are asking questions that are correct, but they're not complete. The reason I say that is because I see American journalism doing exactly what they should be doing for domestic issues. When Timothy McVeigh blew up that building in Oklahoma, the press did ask the right questions and started understanding these people. When abortion clinics were bombed, when the race riots happened in the 60's, there was tremendous questioning about why this happened. How could this happen? So the press has the capacity and the instinct and the skills to do this. The problem is it doesn't do it beyond the borders of the United States. That's why I think you have two problems here in the situation of September 11. You have the problem with the terrorists, and there is another problem with America's place in the world. And I think when Americans start asking the complete questions about these two and how they interact with each other, then people will start getting to the bottom of this thing. The press can do it. It does do it in the United States. Why doesn't it do it with things overseas? That's a very tough question that the press and the political culture of this country need to answer. ■

Nieman Reports will publish more excerpts from the "How to Ask Probing Questions" Watchdog conference in our Summer 2002 issue.

Images of a Shattered City

'. . .you can feel the energy and the horror and a sense of history washing over you at once.'

Stan Grossfeld, a photographer with The Boston Globe and a 1992 Nieman Fellow, returned to his childhood city, New York, to take pictures of and write about the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. His images and personal reflections follow.

Jennifer Stewart of Brooklyn says she has raised more than $13,000 for the Red Cross and her local Engine Company 205 in Brooklyn since September 11 by posing with tourists near Wall Street.

When I first saw Ground Zero, I literally felt as though I had been punched in the stomach. And the despair continues. Now New York has a 1950's skyline again, and people are nicer to each other just like they were when I was growing up in that city.

All photos by Stan Grossfeld, The Boston Globe.©

Marie Donofrio, 80, weeps in Uncle Sam's Army Navy Outfitters on West 8th Street in New York City as she looks at gas masks. Comforting her is assistant manager Aboubscar Tours.

A firefighter throws up his hands in despair at Ground Zero in New York.

The first thing I noticed about Ground Zero was the reverence people had for each other. This is sacred ground, where innocent people lost their lives, and you can feel that. The massive movie klieg lights and lack of unnecesary chitchat give this place a surreal feeling. It is devoid of laughter and one of the few places in the world where you can feel the energy and the horror and a sense of history washing over you at once. The Wailing Wall in Jerusalem is like this, as is Gettysburg and Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The rescue workers, firefighters, police and EMT's left every ounce of energy at the site. They worked basically until they dropped, and then they slept. Not even heavy machinery could rouse them.

A New York City firefighter naps at first light after a night of searching in vain for bodies at Ground Zero.

A parking lot several blocks away from Ground Zero becomes a graveyard of melted and mashed cars.

Burnt cars from the World Trade Center explosion in Lower Manhattan.

Reporting to a Western Audience About the Islamic World

American journalists often lack training, knowledge and sensitivity needed to tell these stories.

By Geneive Abdo

Through eight years as a correspondent in the Islamic world for The Guardian and other publications, my aim was to tap into the untouched universe of Muslim sources. I conducted interviews with militants in Algeria determined to kill foreigners; a progressive Iranian cleric under house arrest who is considered one of the greatest threats to the Islamic republic; his hard-line nemesis, believed to be responsible for the murders of Iranian intellectuals; and hundreds of Islamic moderates in Egypt under round-the-clock surveillance by the intelligence apparatus propping up President Hosni Mubarak's government.

The militants were men who loathed the Western world, were unlikely to meet a foreigner, and even less likely to be interviewed by a female foreign correspondent. Some agreed to one interview and others to many more after I convinced them I wanted to hear their opinions and give them a voice in a world otherwise closed to them. When I wrote stories based on the interviews, I reported their views in much the same way I would have if they were coming from the U.S. Secretary of State, not from advocates of creating an Islamic state based on principles the Western world finds abhorrent. In other words, I sought to reflect their views and comments with accuracy, providing the reader with the context needed to understand the world through an Islamic perspective.

Since September 11, much discussion has focused upon appropriate methods for reporting on the views and statements of Islamists who are either involved in the war or in the reporting of it. Should U.S. television networks refuse to report statements made by the Al Qeada network? Should the U.S. government pressure Qatar to place restrictions on reporting on Al-Jazeera, the Arab world's CNN, which has served as Osama bin Laden's microphone from his cave to the outside world? Should CNN submit questions through an intermediary to Osama bin Laden, then air his views?

"This young female art student was sitting in the central park of the Iranian city of Isfahan. She was working intensely. Nobody could interrupt her. Women in Iran live in two worlds: In public, due to the strict Islamic rules, they have to wear the shador, a headscarf or a long coat. At home, they look like many other young women throughout the world—with modern clothes, makeup, no scarf—no different than Europe or the United States."—Katharina Eglau. *Photo by Katharina Eglau.*©

In more ordinary times, campaigners for free expression would have launched protests over such overt suggestions of censorship. But even before September 11, conventional rules of journalism were often suspended when covering Islamic societies. Islamic sources were considered less credible because their views stem from a different philosophy, not only about politics and religion, but life itself. As a result, the American media, particularly television, often relied on the usual suspects—the 20 or so sources in countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan, Algeria and Iran who were Westernized—and often English speaking—and who were found to be much more acceptable than the average Islamic activist. These sources are, in fact, often local journalists with ties to their respective governments. Reporters overlooked the fact that they generally have a political agenda and are rarely objective analysts.

A foreign correspondent in Tehran who worked for an international news agency boasted that in eight years on the job he had never traveled 100 miles from the Iranian capital to interview clerics in Qom, Iran's religious center. Many theologians in Qom are directly involved in policymaking, but rarely come to the Iranian capital. Even in cases when journalists tried to interview major players in the Islamic world, their lack of knowledge and preparation produced less than enlightening reports. This lack of understanding of the material, in turn, discouraged other Islamists from cooperating and contributed to the Western press's pariah status in countries such as Iran, Egypt, Pakistan, Algeria and Syria.

The progressive cleric in Iran under house arrest, Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, had denied interview requests to nearly every major American newspaper for two decades, including The New York Times. After I submitted my questions to him by fax in December 1999, he responded one month later in an 8,000-word treatise.

The story I wrote in The Guardian, based on his response, was read aloud on the BBC, and its contents were reported widely across Europe. The story was also broadcast on the BBC Farsi Service, allowing thousands of Iranian listeners to hear his views. Although the scoop drew harsh attacks against me within the regime, it allowed Ayatollah Montazeri to speak out for the first time in many years.

Later, I asked his son why he had chosen me to be his messenger. "Because you posed questions he was interested in answering. You asked questions about his theories, not whether he was plotting to overthrow the regime or what he ate for breakfast."

American journalists, unlike their European counterparts, are discouraged from becoming "experts" on politics in areas of the globe they might end up covering. To know too much is considered a liability. If experts are hired, the theory goes, their stories will be too sophisticated for average readers. In addition, learning foreign languages has never been a priority in most newsrooms. Only The New York Times and a handful of other publications offer systematic language instruction to foreign correspondents. In large measure, there is an ingrained sense among U.S. editors and publishers that domestic and foreign reporting are interchangeable enterprises.

Occasionally, this view risks slipping into the absurd. In one well-known case, a star tennis writer was sent to cover the collapse of the Soviet Union. When I worked in American newsrooms in the 1980's, editors often bragged that it was the versatility of American journalists that made them great. "If a reporter can't produce a topnotch story on the city's worst fire, how is he going to cover the Middle East peace process?" they argued. "The same reporter who is brilliant in Moscow should be just as brilliant three years later in Beijing and then six years later in Jerusalem," they said.

The most frequent result is superficial coverage and a tendency to focus on the familiar, or on certain hot button issues that play well with editors and readers back home but do little to capture realities on the ground. In the Islamic world, this latter phenomenon is best represented by the coverage of women and women's rights. Thus, the shifting length of the veils on the streets of Tehran, or a sighting of forbidden lipstick in the city's more affluent northern suburbs, are taken as emblematic of a universal struggle against Muslim prescriptions of "modest dress." Yet spend time talking with the majority of Muslim women and the picture that emerges is very different; few are demanding a Western-style feminism that they see as failed and incompatible with their religious and personal values or a change in their attire.

When I attended a diplomatic tea one afternoon in Tehran in 1998, an American correspondent known for her long-time reporting in Iran since the Islamic revolution in 1979 criticized me for wearing a chador, a black shroud considered the most conservative form of veiling, which is preferred by the Iranian regime. She later charged that I was a traitor to the Western feminist cause. A week later, this same correspondent asked my husband at a government press conference to shake her hand, a violation of Iranian custom, which frowns on such a public greeting between a man and woman. "Let's show them how we do things in America," she said. He wisely demurred.

At first glance, such anecdotes might seem trivial. Yet they reveal a profound lack of respect for social, religious and personal mores on the part of American correspondents, slights that would be unthinkable while covering Western societies that are seen as more acceptable and familiar. They also reveal an intellectual laziness and a general unwillingness to cover the Muslim world in a way that allows readers to view it on its own terms without moral judgment, which is, after all, the way in which understanding is deepened.

Since September 11, U.S. officials have repeatedly told Americans that Islam is a religion of tolerance, and they have gone to great lengths to distinguish the militant fringe from the millions of peaceful Muslims. Meanwhile, American journalists now roaming the streets of Pakistan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia are trying to answer the simple question baffling their readers and listeners: "Why do they hate us?"

The painful reality is that America's newly realized "understanding" of Islam has come about 30 years too late.■

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Images From Another War in Afghanistan

A controversial program for Afghan 'journalists' produced a treasured collection of video, audio and photography.

By David B. Edwards

Last January, an old Afghan friend called to tell me that Haji Daud, the director of the Afghan Media Resource Center (AMRC) in Peshawar, Pakistan, was trying to find an educational institution in Europe or the United States that would help the center preserve its news archive. Having conducted research on the war in Afghanistan since the early 1980's, I knew that the AMRC had sent teams of video cameramen, photographers and print journalists inside Afghanistan to cover the war during the last years of the Soviet occupation and the first years of the civil war that followed in the wake of the Soviet withdrawal.

I also knew that the plan for setting up the center had generated considerable controversy back in 1986. The U.S. Information Agency (USIA) at that time had provided a grant to the College of Communication at Boston University to train Afghans in the rudiments of journalism and many, including the dean of the college, had protested what they viewed as an unhealthy co-mingling of government propaganda efforts and newsgathering. Whatever concerns I had about reawakening this controversy quickly faded when I heard from Haji Daud his estimate that the archive contained 3,000 hours of videotape, 100,000 negatives and slides, and 8,000 hours of audiotape.

When I traveled to Peshawar to talk about possibly collaborating to preserve this archive, Daud made it clear that he wanted the original materials to stay in Peshawar. So we brought a portion of the collection to Williams College, along with AMRC staff who would be trained in photo scanning, video digitization and editing, database management, and other techniques needed for managing the archive. The digital copies we produced will stay at Williams, which will serve as the permanent repository for the material. The originals will remain in Pakistan in the hope that eventually they can go to Kabul when the political situation allows. Plans are also being formulated so the archive can be made available to the public through museum exhibitions, online photographic and video databases, and one or more books and documentaries.

Engineer Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leader of Hezb-i Islami Afghanistan, addressing a rally. Peshawar, Pakistan. November 1987. *Photo by Mohammad Karim.*

As an anthropologist, what I find most intriguing is the view the archive provides of Afghan society as it adapted to war, particularly the role of Islamic political parties in remolding Afghan culture according to their moral precepts. The AMRC collection is far more revealing than comparable material produced by Western cameramen, most of whom were skilled technicians and courageous in their pursuit of news, but few of whom had much grasp of what was going on around them.

During the late 1980's, journalists risked the dangers and hardships of an extended trip inside Afghanistan because of the possibility of returning with images of Soviets fighting in a guerrilla war with the Afghan mujahedeen. "Bang-bang" footage was the prize and, in truth, Western journalists were ill-equipped to capture much else, since they didn't speak the local languages or know much about the society. Afghan cameramen could converse with people and understood the dynamics of the culture, so when a ritual took place, or a religious leader spoke to his people, or a dispute broke out, AMRC cameramen were able to follow the action and interview the principals. This archive of their work consequently resembles something like

an anthropologist's field notes that collectively provides a three-dimensional picture of life in a time of war and of war as a way of life.

The AMRC archive is valuable as well for what it tells us of the politicization of journalism and the role of news in a time of partisan struggle. It was created by the U.S. government to ensure that the story of the Soviet Union's difficulties in Afghanistan would be seen by the world. But that was only one part of the political equation. In the highly charged environment of Peshawar, the AMRC was able to operate only if it recruited its trainees directly from the Afghan resistance parties. As a result, while the professors from Boston University were intent upon teaching their students the principles and practices of "objective" news gathering, the "journalists" at AMRC were deeply implicated in the political struggles and agendas of their political leaders and parties. At the same time, there was also pressure brought to bear by the media outlets themselves for the AMRC cameramen to come up with combat footage that they could broadcast to the world, and this also produced a sometimes corrosive effect on the truth.

Though many journalists associated with the center took their obligation to objective journalism seriously and endeavored at great risk to report on the conflict in Afghanistan as honestly as they could, some in the West came to view the news coming out of the center as compromised. However, what made for problematic journalism makes for great history. Aside from the record it provides of the two decades-long struggle in Afghanistan, the AMRC is itself one piece of the story of the war, and the events of this fall have made understanding that story more important than ever. ■

David B. Edwards is a professor of anthropology at Williams College and the author of "Before Taliban: Genealogies of the Afghan Jihad" (University of California Press, Spring 2002).

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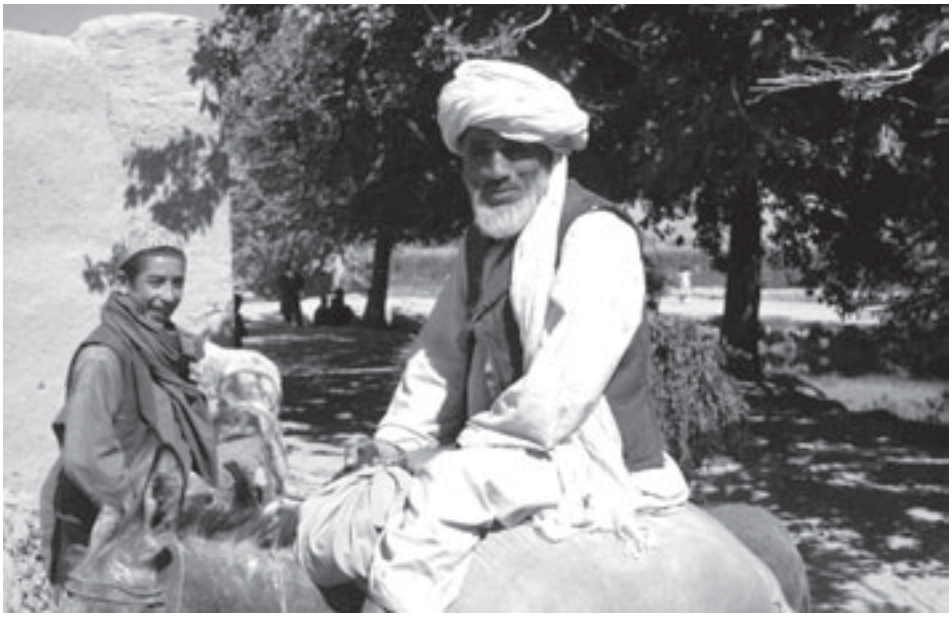

Old man on a donkey, Kandahar Province. June 1987. ***Photo by Mohammad Karim.***

Mujahed with unexploded Soviet bomb, Logar Province. November 1987. ***Photo by Hafiz Ashna.***

Commander Aliadin being interviewed by AMRC cameraman, Mazar-i-Sharif Province. January 1988. ***Photo by Baz Mohammad.***

Little girl on a hillside, Kunduz Province. December 1990. ***Photo by Fazil Haq.***

Ahmed Shah Massoud in Takhar Province. 1990. ***Photo by Ahmad Shah.***

Mulla teaching students, Kandahar Province. November 1990. ***Photo by Mohammad Muqim.***

An old refugee selling sugar cane with a child in his lap. Peshawar, Pakistan. October 1990. ***Photo by Mohammad Hashim.***

Revealing Beauty in the Harshness of War

On his journeys to Afghanistan, Iranian photographer Reza used his camera to document the life and times of General Ahmed Shah Massoud, the Northern Alliance leader who was assassinated on September 9, 2001. In 1985, Reza encountered Soviet army attacks in the snowy mountainous pass that first led him into Afghanistan. Five years later, he rode on a tank with Massoud as his forces entered Kabul. And earlier this year, Reza returned to Afghanistan with author Sebastian Junger, who wrote about Massoud. Reza's images convey a sense of beauty otherwise hidden by the harshness of war. In a career that has spanned 20 years, Reza has worked as a contract photographer with Time, Life and National Geographic, and as an Iranian correspondent for Sipa Press during the 1979 hostage-taking at the American Embassy and during the Iranian-Iraqi war.

Massoud (third from left) is surrounded by close advisors. May 1985. *Photo by Reza/Webistan.*©

A woman in a burka walks near a mosque in Mazar-i-Sharif. 1990. *Photo by Reza/Webistan.*©

Exodus from Afghanistan. January 1990. *Photo by Reza/Webistan.*©

Independent Media Try to be Balanced and Fair in Their Coverage

Yet all parties play their 'well-known game of intimidating the media.'

By Fazal Qureshi

For the journalists in Pakistan, the September 11 attack was a bolt out of the blue. And this bolt was followed quickly by President George W. Bush's call to President General Pervez Musharraf asking him to choose sides—the Americans' or the terrorists'. With the decision to back America, Pakistan suddenly emerged into the world's spotlight and became a highly strategic news location for the international media. For the people and journalists of Pakistan, this marked a giant change from years of being an international recluse that was known primarily for its many sanctions following its nuclear testing and after General Pervez Musharraf seized power by overthrowing an elected government.

On September 11, and again on October 7 when the bombing campaign in Afghanistan began, Pakistani newspapers employed large-size, hard-hitting headlines to report the news. During much of this crisis, entire front pages of the nation's several dozen newspapers, along with editorial columns, were devoted to news, opinions and images of its dramatic events. Following the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the overriding view expressed in Pakistan's media was of wholehearted condemnation of the terrorist attack on the United States. However, as American bombardment of targets in Kabul, Kandahar and other Afghan cities dragged on and caused the killing of civilians, media sentiment gradually came to reflect heightened concern and sympathy for the suffering of the Afghan people.

The upsurge in sympathy for Afghan civilians did not translate into support or sympathy for the Taliban. The majority public opinion in Pakistan favors a moderate, progressive Islamic society. Even before September 11, many in Pakistan were thoroughly dismayed with the distortion of Islam by the Taliban. Enlightened public opinion has always been very apprehensive of the rising threat to Pakistani society from indigenous religious fanatics hopeful of imposing a Taliban-type, rigid Islamic system in Pakistan.

Increasing concern was also reflected in stories about the escalating number of civilian casualties and the arrival of hordes of hungry and sick Afghan men, women and children on Pakistan's borders. Columnists wrote that the American offensive was inflicting very harsh punishment on the citizens of Afghanistan (not the Taliban) and that the United States should have found a better way to deal with the Taliban and Osama bin Laden.

Pakistani journalists have had to walk a tightrope in trying to keep all parties satisfied with their 'balanced' coverage.

In Pakistan, almost all the largely circulated English and Urdu language newspapers are independent in their editorial policy, thus allowing a diversity of viewpoints to be put forth in news and opinion columns. Among these independent print media, condemnation of the terrorist attacks was virtually universal, as was support for General Musharraf's decision to side with the international community, though there was certainly fair and balanced coverage given to all the parties in the conflict. In Pakistan, too, a substantial number of publications are brought out by political and religious parties and, in those, views adhere more to the publisher's purpose. Their circulation is limited to those who tend to already share those opinions.

Pakistani journalists have had to walk a tightrope in trying to keep all parties satisfied with their "balanced" coverage. Despite their best efforts, no one seems fully satisfied with their performance, and some journalists and publications have faced complaints, even overt or hidden threats from different sides. Government functionaries call editors and news editors with "advices" to be a little more careful in their display of news and headlines hostile to the government. Journalists in this country are quite familiar with the threats concealed in these "friendly advices." This is a version of the well-known game of intimidating the media and a reminder that the government in power in Pakistan is a military dictatorship. If driven to the wall, it might clamp harsh restrictions on the press.

With this in mind, news managers always take these "press advices" seriously and, drawing on their experience with the two previous military dictatorships of General Ayub Khan and General Zia ul-Haq, exercised care not to provoke the generals. The approach that seems to work best is to avoid printing abusive or offensive words and expressions of the opposition leaders, while at the same time finding ways to project their criticism. But even with this approach there is a limit. When one religious cleric issued

an edict, declaring General Pervez Musharraf a "renegade from Islam" and calling for volunteers to "behead" him, no major newspaper carried the story.

However, more frightening threats have come from the religious elements. In a typical scenario, a group of bearded toughs visit the newspaper office and very "courteously" inform the editor of the growing anger and frustration among their followers because of the unfair coverage of their activities in the newspaper. "We are restraining them, but please be fair to our news," they will say. For editors, who have in the past seen violent attacks on newspaper offices and newsmen, it would be foolish not to take their message seriously. But, generally, newspapers refused to be cowed, so the only way to cope was to enhance gate security. We are grateful that as I write this article at the beginning of November neither the government nor the extremists have translated threats into action.

Despite lack of popular support and with the help of their limited but dedicated cadre of followers, Islamic extremists were able to organize dramatic protest rallies and marches in various cities of Pakistan. In these demonstrations—broadcast to a worldwide audience—the protesters openly abused Musharraf for siding with "infidel" America, asked people to rise against his government, and called upon armed forces to remove him from power. These demonstrators were not apologetic about the September 11 terrorist attack: "Thousands of Muslim and Arab civilians have been killed by the Israeli and American military forces in Palestine, Iraq, Libya and other countries," said Maulana Abdul Hameed, a fiery orator, as he addressed a protest rally in Karachi. That a vast majority of Pakistanis neither supported nor sympathized with this viewpoint limited the protesters' power and enabled the government to control them.

However, those in the West urging that the threat of these fanatics not be underestimated were right, too, given the moderate Islamic social and political structure in Pakistan, which is experiencing economic stagnation and military frailty primarily because of the sanctions. "The lifting of sanctions and visible high-speed arrival of economic and financial succor to Pakistan definitely helped raise the morale of the government and of the moderate majority to stand up to the frenzied assault of the fanatics," a columnist wrote in the Urdu-language daily, Jang, in Karachi.

In early November, Pakistani media commentators were still skeptical of the successful outcome of the American offensive on Afghanistan, with success defined as getting rid of the Taliban and/or bringing Osama bin Laden to justice. Many analysts who were quoted in news articles thought the military action would achieve nothing more than pacification of the revenge-thirsty American public and that what happened on September 11 could happen again if the basic causes underlying such terrorism are not dealt with. "Even if Osama bin Laden is caught and killed, 100 other Osamas will take his place," said Saeed Hassan, a University of Karachi professor. A senior media analyst, Karachi's Agha Masood, recently said: "The issue finally boils down to this: investigate and root out the causes of terrorism, solve issues of Palestine, Kashmir and other festering sores in other parts of the world, and you would have effectively rooted out terrorism."

There was an in-depth and prolonged discussion in the media about how to define what terrorism is. An editorial in a Lahore English newspaper, The Nation, said: "One person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter. Even the Western world has historically recognized genuine wars of liberation and supported and eulogized them. It is important that ultimately the world leaders should get together in a saner environment to ponder on how really to eradicate causes that force people to resort to violence." An editorial comment in a Karachi Urdu-language daily summed up the issue in these words: "It is of fundamental importance that the fine division between terrorism and freedom fighter be correctly understood to achieve lasting solutions to the menace of terrorism."

That editorial went on to observe: "There is talk of threats from fanatics unleashing nuclear or chemical weapons against civilian populations, but such an attack could be expected only from maniacs undertaking 'terrorism for the sake of terrorism' and not from dedicated freedom fighters committed to a 'cause.'"

As more firsthand reporting emerges out of Afghanistan, it becomes more evident that despite civilian casualties the U.S. bombing is directed against Taliban military targets. The overwhelming majority of moderate public opinion in Pakistan, therefore, remains supportive of General Musharraf's policy of supporting the fight against terrorism. ■

Government functionaries call editors and news editors with 'advices' to be a little more careful in their display of news and headlines hostile to the government. Journalists in this country are quite familiar with the threats concealed in these 'friendly advices.' This is a version of the well-known game of intimidating the media and a reminder that the government in power in Pakistan is a military dictatorship.

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Stories the Media Decide Not to Tell

An Arab American assesses coverage from his dual perspective.

By Abdelmagid Mazen

I am a man of falafel and apple pie; five prayers a day and a Mozart; reading from right and left of a page, and political spectra—a Muslim, a Middle Eastern, an Egyptian and an Arab. The four descriptors overlap but are never identical, and they melt into a dynamic deep within me that nourishes the very meaning of my being an American. I am not a journalist nor do I play one on TV. But my fantasy about a healthy interaction with the media is ongoing.

The talk is that we, in the United States, could do better in our propaganda war on terrorism. Three facts are clear to me: Propaganda and persuasive efforts require different postures; media are at the frontline of these efforts, and the overwhelming majority of the 1.3 billion Muslims, who are at the center of both these efforts, oppose terrorism. Yet, we are not doing so well in getting our message through. How come?

That is when my fantasy kicks in. It usually starts with an innocent "what if" or two. What if televisions were like side mirrors of cars? If they were, we'd see a cautioning strip: "Objects and issues on this screen are actually much different than they appear." And what if from time to time viewers were allowed to reach into the teleprompter to change the anchor's script or press the cursor and insert a missing viewpoint or two into the story? What if TV viewers could be seen applauding in admiration for a piece well done, or heard whispering gently: "Snap out of it, please."

Someone once defined moral dilemma as not paying equal attention to the humanity and equal worth of people who are at a distance. I believe that our efforts to inform during this crisis are more likely to succeed when we are willing to look wider *and* deeper into the current reporting on the crisis. This applies to media I hear and see coming from all the lands to which my roots, trunk and branches extend.

On my New England rooftop sit two adjacent satellite dishes, one feeding my television from Western media, the other from Arab satellites, including Al-Jazeera (The Peninsula). Currently, many in the media attribute Al-Jazeera's success to a competitive advantage. The network had early access to Taliban sources and to the tapes of bin Laden. This thinking, while correct, is also truncated and could harm the media and efforts to reposition our image in the Middle East and related worlds.

I attribute my increasing attention to Al-Jazeera, the Egyptian Satellite Channel, and others to the thick description reporters use to portray and interpret events as well as to their ability to disrobe the comforts of their normal angle on issues and bring forth those of others. For me, the questions Al-Jazeera raises in reporting news reach beyond the predictable, and answers are often embedded in the complexities of our times. The best in Western news reporting does the same, but too much of it is less thickly layered, its content lessened. Time constraints are partly to blame but, frankly, when it comes to reporting about the Middle East or the third world, the U.S. media are often caught in the seductive practice of seeking excellent answers to very truncated questions.

In crafting questions and seeking answers, grades of excellence and exquisiteness apply. Once I heard a master violinmaker in Stradivarius's hometown say something that applies to how I think of news and analysis: "The challenge for me," this violinmaker said, "is to have my hands do what my eyes want to see. [Because] this doesn't always happen.... I have to be honest with myself. I have to recognize my mistakes. And when I do this, I feel, I know, I am doing my best work."

Whenever I interact with media, I find myself searching for the angles and degree of thickness with which stories are told. Often, I search for that pinch of exquisiteness with which a story is spiced; naturally, the yield ranges from the delicious to the bland.

For me, and for people rooted similarly, Al-Jazeera transmits news and translates its meaning across cultures. Are the reporters of Al-Jazeera's and other Arab media heavy-handed in directing their microphones and cameras at times? Indeed. Do I find myself disagreeing with several views expressed on the Arab channel, from the political to the religious? Yes, and Al-Jazeera did air explicit criticism of its biased reporting for the Taliban by Sayyaf, a prominent leader of the Northern Alliance that now controls Kabul.

But Al-Jazeera does something else that suits how my human antennae work. When I watch, my eyes move in brain speed; first, deep from the central figure of the story to people sitting in the café in the background; then wider to span kids in the streets, their clothes and quality of shoes, if any; up to the second floor of the short building behind, to the teenage girl in the window and the undeliberate glance of the boy mechanic below; then into the family room to the scant table, if any, and the small kitchen behind; to the worn shoes under beds, near a few watermelons and copper pots, where homemade bread can be kept fresh; to what this family had or didn't have for dinner the night before and when they last saw, much less tasted, meat; to the issues in their family disputes, besides money; then back to words of the central figure extracted with aching simplicity into an extended microphone. These thick images take me deep into lives and help me develop context for understanding.

Within the context of a thick and layered reality, I see that many people —particularly in the Middle East, Muslim and Arab worlds—find themselves caught in an inner and simultaneous bind: deeply grieving with the United States and also wishing that the powerful America does not interpret their ongoing disgruntlement with U.S. policies in their region of the world in ways that could deepen their suspicion and feelings of helplessness, sometimes despair. It is here where journalists have an ethical role to shuttle constantly between feelings on the street and decisions of policymakers in all involved nations.

Many who live in this part of the world also believe that U.S. media insist on not delving into what could help Americans to truly understand the root causes of many of these social and political issues. People in the streets aren't diplomats, so many are able to discern the U.S. media's explicit bias toward Israel, as well as its negligence of their daily feelings about these issues. This circumstance is pivotal to the gap of misunderstanding that exists among Americans, Muslims and Arabs, a gap that exists in the media and on the streets.

Take the eloquent Newsweek cover story of October 15, 2001 in which Fareed Zakaria tried to answer one of the few "why" questions that gained prominence in U.S. media after September 11: "Why do they hate us?" After more than 15 pages of mostly well documented reporting, Zakaria arrived at the Arab-Israeli intersection. Suddenly, "vroooom," he sped up, as if caught in the middle of a yellow traffic signal. "Why is the focus of Arab anger on Israel not on [their] regimes?", he asks, blaming instead of interpreting. He adds: "The disproportionate feelings of grievance directed at America have to be placed in the overall context of the sense of humiliation, decline and despair that sweeps the Arab world." He wonders why many who live in Africa and China, who have reason to feel the same sense of disappointment and unfairness, don't work themselves into rage against America.

"Stop it right there," I want to say, as my whispering fantasy kicks in. Reasonable people who live in the Middle East, Arab and Muslim worlds would, very normally, want to insert here some of the exquisite reporting on "Nightline," when novelist Arundhati Roy, of Indian origin like Zakaria, explained to Ted Koppel how many people of the world "can grieve with Americans and still feel discomforted by America's power and arrogance." Roy wondered if Americans truly appreciate that such discomfort exists and argued that mainstream media in the West—by its reluctance and/or inability to tackle such sensitive topics—shields Americans from taking in such a world view.

To improve effective communication and to persuade, U.S. media needs to better portray how people on the other side experience their reality. It is not a coincidence that the first item on Al-Jazeera these days has been from Afghanistan, followed closely by reports from the Middle East. Their counterpoint to Newsweek's speeding up at the Arab-Israeli intersection is to show images of the bodies of Palestinians killed and wounded daily since the beginning of the last intifada in September 2000—more than 800 killed, 7,000 wounded—by the occupying force of Israel. Cut, and Al-Jazeera shows the Palestinian operations inside Israel, resulting in the killing of more than 150 Israelis during this same period. Cut, and look inside living rooms at the remains of those killed by rockets launched from helicopters made in the United States and given to Israel. Then, it's on to coverage of the Security Council with countless American vetos preventing anything that sounds like criticism of Israel from being passed, no matter what the Israelis do.

Blend in footage of these occurrences happening continuously during the last 30 years and, drop by drop, it settles deep into the national conscience. Fade away. Try to understand. Remember that to persuade, one must be open to persuasion and willing to dispute answers that touch only the top rung of layered reality.

On November 4, CNN's Wolf Blitzer invited Senator Carl Levin and Representative Henry Hyde to comment on why the United States is not doing as well on the propaganda front. By then, Al-Jazeera had aired bin Laden's second tape and followed with U.S. Ambassador Christopher Ross responding in fluent Arabic. Levin was optimistic that the situation will change soon, saying that we will spend more money and added that bin Laden is losing the war because he is attacking the United Nations, which won this year's Nobel Peace Prize. Blitzer turned to Hyde, who said: "This is the country that invented Madison Avenue and Hollywood. So, if we cannot market our own image, then we are very poor."

Images from "Wag the Dog" and these comments drift away, intertwined.

"Nightline's" Koppel delved deeper by virtue of the questions he posed, the way he reasoned, and the guests he invited. Former U.N. ambassador Richard Holbrooke insisted that the United States needs to beef up Voice of America and other methods of communication. Koppel's other guests, Jordanian journalist Rami Khouri and Ghida Fakhry, New York bureau chief for Al-Jazeera, put forth a different angle, suggesting strongly that the most effective American message in the Middle East is its policy on the ground. Craftily, Koppel asked Holbrooke to comment on this view. The ambassador laughingly replied that this was not the topic of the day and, with that, the program ended.

I whispered to Holbrooke, hoping Koppel would hear me. "Policy and media persuasion will carry the new day, not propaganda. Even if we are able to table the question now, wag Hollywood or Madison Avenue, the two P's—policy and persuasion—are *the* main dish on dinner tables in places far away." And media's role in serving both is crucial. ■

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Understanding the 'Why' of September 11

Using the Web, Globalvision's world news site helps readers dig deeper and broader for answers.

By Danny Schechter

Visual coverage of the events of September 11 was as riveting as the unbelievable images it conveyed. Answers also came fast and furious to questions of who, what, where and when. It was the "how" and, even more difficult, the "why" part of journalistic inquiries that, perhaps understandably, was not as well explored, as television reached for its cast of familiar pundits who often turned out to be as confused and predictable as they were jingoistic.

What became hard to find after September 11 were places to go for news in which the broader dimensions of the story about the terrorists' attack on America were unfolding. There were, of course, in mainstream media questions asked—and answered—about who was responsible, how the acts of terror came to be, and how the nation's defense and intelligence agencies missed signals about this attack. Often, though, the level of indignation coming out in these interviews exceeded the depth of good information and analysis provided.

As a way to respond to what we perceived to be a vacuum, Globalvision launched its own online News Network (www.gvnewsnet.com) prototype for a more diverse global syndication effort. By using this vehicle, we were able to offer stories from news outlets throughout the world. It became our way of bringing information and views of local sources—and often unheard voices—to audiences more accustomed to a narrower range of Anglo-American news. Our news network provides a panoply of "inside-out" coverage (for example, coverage about Pakistan is written by Pakistani journalists, not Americans) instead of the conventional "outside-in" international approach. On a given day, our lengthy collection of stories—linked for reader convenience—can include reports from Interfax Russia, The Kashmir Times, Middle East Newsline, Islam Online, Iran News, The Moscow Times, The Times of India, Mandiri News, Israel Insider, and Radio Free Europe. We call ourselves "context providers" and are turning a collection of stories into a news product that we hope news companies and Web sites will acquire to compliment existing wire service reporting as a way of offering more and deeper sources to their readers.

Our initiative emerged as a response to media trends that over the years have shortchanged the public and, in turn, eroded our democracy. While Globalvision is not alone in rejecting the dumbing down of news, we are trying in a practical and credible way to counter the pervasive withdrawal of international coverage by networks and newspapers. Yet it still surprises me to learn how many in the media business don't appear to recognize the scale of this problem or the scope of its consequences. Pulitzer Prize-winning media writer David Shaw reported recently in the Los Angles Times, "Coverage of international news by the U.S. media has declined significantly in recent years in response to corporate demands for larger profits and an increasingly fragmented audience. Having decided that readers and viewers in post-cold war America cared more about celebrities, scandals and local news, newspaper editors and television news executives have reduced the space and time devoted to foreign coverage by 70 to 80 percent during the past 15 to 20 years."

The homepage of mediachannel.org.

Long before September 11, my colleagues and I had become alarmed by the consequences of America's media-led isolationism as it fueled citizens' ignorance about the rest of the world. We could understand why headlines in other nations' newspapers soon read "Americans Just Don't Get It." And we could read about how this absence of engagement through public communication led the Indian writer Arundhati Roy to suggest that Washington's foreign policy was the consequence of the power of the U.S. media to keep the public uninformed. "I think people are the product of the information they receive," Roy writes. "I think even more powerful than America's military arsenal has been its hold over the media in some way. I find that very frightening.... [J]ust as much as America be-

lieves in freedom at home, or the free speech, or the freedom of religion, outside it believes in the freedom to humiliate, the freedom to export terror. And the freedom to humiliate is a very important thing because that's what really leads to the rage."

Agree or not with Roy, it is hard to deny that most Americans are confused about why "they" would afflict such terror on the freedom-loving "us." "I think most Americans are clueless when it comes to the politics and ideology and religion in [the Muslim] world and, in that sense, I think we do bear some responsibility," Boston Globe Editor Martin Baron told the Los Angeles Times's Shaw. "In consequence, we are not only less informed about what's happening in the world but about how others see us."

This situation prompted Globalvision to create its News Network of international reporting. Our motives for acting arose from both our personal interest in trying to draw more attention to the plight of the world's dispossessed and in our company's interest in tapping into a forgotten niche that might serve as a lucrative business opportunity. For 15 years, we had mostly focused on producing "inside-out" TV programming about a changing world. Now, thanks to the Internet, there is a distribution channel to add international content to an all too limited global news mix.

In 1999, Globalvision created mediachannel.org—the largest online media issues network in the world—to respond to the key role media plays in this age of globalization. I serve as executive editor of this site and write a weekly column called "The News Dissector" in which we watch the media as it watches the world, offering media news, analysis, criticism, research and discussion from monitors, observers, journalists, commentators and critics.

After September 11, and as the war in Afghanistan made clear, there was a hunger for more perspectives. Globalvision launched a test of its new News Network by posting stories from 125 affiliates in 85 countries, including a daily column on news about the news with criticism and reports about how the story is being covered in different countries, with a focus on what is being left out. To assemble this, I rely on the help of new WebLog technology and also draw content from our mediachannel.org network of more than 800 affiliated news sites as well as from links provided by the millions of readers/users who come to our Web site. Positive responses we've received, and the spurt in traffic we've observed, confirm that there is a market and an audience for this blend of international coverage and media criticism. Our site might also be filling some voids left with the shrinkage of the Gannett-funded Freedom Forum worldwide, as well as the collapse of Brill's Content/Inside.com.

Our interest is not in criticizing coverage for its own sake. We are neither media makers nor bashers. We present the information we do as a way of offering constructive approaches to improving coverage. For example, mediachannel.org carries work by a new British-based group called Reporting the World, whose work shows how coverage of the same news can be told from a perspective of conflict resolution (the "peace journalism" approach) just as easily as it can be conveyed through the prism of "war journalism," with its usual emphasis on bombs and bodybags. In another section of the site, we offer extensive information about media policy issues and media literacy education.

Long before September 11, my colleagues and I had become alarmed by the consequences of America's media-led isolationism as it fueled citizens' ignorance about the rest of the world.

Also, we try to offer strategies and information that will help journalists counter our largest media failure—the lack of context that allows news consumers to gain clearer understanding of the background issues and clash of interpretations. And because our readers are able to look at so much coverage by news outlets in other countries—many of whom report on the same story on a given day—they are able to see for themselves the cultural biases and parochialism that deforms news coverage worldwide. Hopefully, it helps them put reporting in this country in a larger perspective.

Because of the reach of the Internet, many diverse sources of information are now available. But despite all the choices, well advertised, major media brands remain the primary source of news and explanation for most citizens. This presents a problem, since the crux of these debates—the impact of past U.S. covert operations and oil interests, for example—fly below the radar of most mainstream media outlets. And in mainstream media there is a lack of dissenting perspectives offered.

Media have a major role to play in reminding us of the ways in which lives are entwined and futures are interconnected worldwide. The shocking events of September 11 and the response to them calls our attention to the deeply institutionalized failures in foreign policy, defense strategies, the work of intelligence agencies and, yes, the U.S. media. We can call on others to fix the former, but only journalists, ourselves, can improve the media institutions we work for and rely on to strengthen our democracy. For too long, news organizations have failed to do this. They can fail no longer. ■

Danny Schechter, a 1978 Nieman Fellow, is the executive editor of Globalvision's mediachannel.org. His latest book is "News Dissector: Passions, Pieces and Polemics, 1960-2000," from Akashic Books and Electronpress.com.

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America: A Bully Wreaking Havoc on the Poor

Why the Spanish press highlights the ugly side of the 'war against terror.'

By Dale Fuchs

The bloodied Afghan teen with the amputated leg made a living selling ice cream before an American missile hit him. That's what the caption tells readers who look at the color photo on the front page of Spain's largest conservative daily, El Mundo, on October 9, two days after bombing of Afghanistan began. "The first collateral damage," the caption begins sarcastically.

Day two of the "war against terror" and already a quote from the German philosopher Kant appears discretely above the paper's masthead: "War is evil because it makes more bad men than it kills."

Cut to the next day's front page of Diario 16, one of Spain's oldest national dailies, soon to close despite its recent revamping to capture younger readers. "The U.S. accidentally kills four U.N. employees in Kabul," the lead headline screams in thick, sans serif type. A picture of "the search for survivors among the ruins" nearly consumes the whole page.

Air strikes continue for a fifth day. Editors at El País, the country's largest socialist newspaper, slap this headline on their cover: "Taliban say attacks have already caused more than 200 deaths."

At a time when American leaders are chirping about ending the war before Ramadan, the front pages of Spanish newspapers are filled with photos of Afghan corpses, bloody children, and battered homes. Headlines point to American misfires. Deluxe graphics pay tribute to practically every jet and missile in the U.S. arsenal. Turn the page: Afghan refugees are fleeing with bundles on their backs. Coverage like this makes France's La Libération, a left-leaning tabloid usually critical of anything America does abroad, look like USA Today.

If Spaniards didn't know any better, they might not guess that their president, José María Aznar, pledged unconditional support to Bush's anti-terror coalition. Or that Spain is an important NATO ally with strategic military bases on alert and lending logistical aid since the September 11 attacks. In fact, judging from the repeated barbs at American brutishness—a political cartoon in El Mundo shows two Afghan refugees trekking through the desert beneath a missile—newspaper readers here would probably be surprised to learn that Spanish editorial writers generally consider America's attack "justified, though of questionable effectiveness."

The little boy in the photo in the October 14 edition of El Mundo appears below the headline: "A 'smart' bomb falls on a Kabul neighborhood."

So why are newspapers in Spain so determined to show the ugly side of this war on terror? Why are they so quick to portray America as a high-tech bully wreaking havoc on the poor with its array of terrible toys? Why is coverage so critical when Spanish journalists might be expected to welcome any effort to "hunt down" terrorists (to use Bush-speak) since they are favorite targets of the Basque terrorist group ETA, which has claimed almost 1,000 lives in the past 30 years as they've tried to gain independence for the Spanish Basque region?

"Our readers tend to be anti-war so any news that spotlights human tragedy, the poor and oppressed, sells papers," ventures El Mundo's foreign editor Fernando Múgica, who began his journalism career in 1966.

Flashback to the day of the World Trade Center attacks. El País, the same newspaper that would later trumpet news of the 200 Afghan deaths, splashes these words across its front page: "The world on edge in wait for Bush retaliation." In much smaller type, beneath a picture of the famous, smoking twin towers, comes this addition: "thousands are dead beneath the debris."

How does one explain the failure to capitalize on this particular human tragedy? "Well, there is a certain sense that America is this conceited empire that acts rashly—cowboy-fashion is the term in vogue since Bush—to protect its pride," Múgica admits. "When you hear the U.S. was attacked, you think, now who's going to pay?"

But Spanish coverage is shaped by more than knee-jerk anti-Americanism. For starters, Spanish journalists simply do not consider violence, even U.N.-

sanctioned violence, an appropriate way to fight terrorism. Consider: In the late 1980's, press reports alleged that government ministers had ordered the kidnapping and assassination of several ETA members accused of orchestrating high-profile killings. The ensuing scandal that came out of these accusations not only brought about one conviction—of a government official, not a terrorist—but it also heightened the reputation of a major newspaper (El Mundo) and led to the electoral defeat of the socialist administration.

"Violence only gives more excuses to the terrorists" is the way reporter Luís Angel Sanz sees it. "You have to go to the root of the problem, with legal means. You can't go bombing the whole world."

Displays of patriotism also make the press corps shudder. The concept of allegiance to one's country was so brutally distorted during Franco's time that, to this day, a waving Spanish flag still symbolizes fascism. It's no wonder that those bouts of American flag waving after the tragedy make reporters here nervous, fueling snide references to Big Brother.

Then, there is Spain's reading on America's foreign policy. In a word, it "stinks." One hundred thousand Spaniards turned out to protest the Gulf War, and protests against this one in Afghanistan are mounting as well. In press coverage, too, there appears to be a pattern. When the United States bombed Serbia, civilian victims surfaced on the front pages of Spanish dailies along with the usual U.S. gaffes. As Múgica observes, "People think, oh no, those Yankees are screwing up again." When the Middle East heats up, Israel is portrayed as a U.S. "puppet," lumped with other monster governments "Made in the U.S.A." And when readers come across the phrase "the death of Iraqi children," chances are good they are reading a story about U.S. policy, not about Saddam Hussein.

Finally, Spain has long nurtured a love-hate relationship with the United States. On the one hand, the media depict America as the fountain of all things modern, a model for business, journalism, the arts. Foreign correspondents regularly quote The New York Times and The Washington Post, especially if Bob Woodward has a byline. It's difficult to find a reporter who doesn't speak English well enough to translate American wire copy.

Even before the tragedy, American news permeated the press. On September 11, every major Spanish daily put out a special, late edition, five hours after the attacks. Since then, each one has devoted at least 10 pages daily to the crisis. But while the rest of Western Europe (begrudgingly or not) has historically associated America with the defeat of fascism and economic recovery through the Marshall Plan, Spain sneers: "What did you do for us?" Anyone will remind you of President Eisenhower's pact with their dictator, Franco, in exchange for his cold war support and the installation of American military bases on Spanish soil.

The history books say many actually believed the United States would save Spain from fascism and poverty. The movie "Welcome Mr. Marshall," required viewing here the way "Citizen Kane" is in America, satirizes those ingenuous hopes and disappointment when the Marshall Plan passed them by. Spain learned the lesson even before Americans did in Vietnam: America isn't always the good guy. And such mistrust does not fade. As recently as 1982, for instance, former president Felipe González got elected on promises that he would "keep Spain out of NATO." (He broke his word.) Even though only two U.S. military bases remain here, thousands of residents still protest them now and then.

As setbacks mount in the "war on terrorism" and even U.S. leaders worry about civilian casualties, the Spanish press digs in. "U.S. admits it may never capture bin Laden," reads a recent front page headline on the ultraconservative paper, ABC. But El Mundo editor Múgica thinks the press hasn't been critical enough. "Hundreds of people have been detained arbitrarily and remain in custody and we don't know anything about what happens to them!" he says, outraged.

This media coverage appears to be affecting public opinion. Before the start of the bombing, a survey conducted by Spain's national statistics center found that as many as 63 percent of the people considered American military response appropriate. A month later, an Internet poll by El Mundo showed support had slipped below 50 percent. Meanwhile, 5,000 people—members of women's groups, unions, left-wing parties, and immigrant rights associations—took to the streets in Barcelona to protest the war in Afghanistan. This was twice the number that turned out earlier in solidarity for victims of the September attacks.

As an American writing for a Spanish newspaper, I'm accustomed to ritual Bush-bashing and basic skepticism of American foreign policy. I often agree with much of the criticism, but I am finding this coverage, in particular, disturbing and disheartening. From personal experience, I am finding there is indeed a sense among journalists that, as horrible as the tragedy was on September 11, America is finally getting a taste of the world's suffering. When I mentioned to my editor how scared my mother—living in the United States—is about anthrax, he laughed as if I were joking and shot back, "You're just not used to having terrorism at home."

I've heard that phrase a lot lately. Several days after the attacks in America, a friend who is a photographer shook his head as he greeted me. It was the first time we'd seen each other since the attacks happened. "America creates its own monsters," he said, in a knowing tone. He was referring to Osama bin Laden. He knows I am from New York City, but he hadn't even bothered to ask me if my loved ones were okay. ■

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Women and Journalism

To writers in countries throughout the world, Nieman Reports posed a few questions: In your country or region, what is the situation for women journalists? If women journalists are progressing into decision-making positions, what impact, if any, exists in how news is being covered? What these journalists tell, in their articles that follow, surprise, infuriate, inspire, anger, delight and sadden us. Best of all, they inform us by reminding us of realities we'd suspected and telling us of circumstances we hadn't imagined. In reading this collection of women's experiences, a shared sense of future challenges is revealed.

Our opening writer, **Margaret Gallagher**, whose research focuses on gender and the media, reminds us, "Wherever one looks in the world, women still have little decision-making power either inside the media organizations themselves, or in the political and economic institutions with which these organizations must interface. This is one of the reasons why female journalists—even when they are a majority within the profession—remain highly vulnerable…."

Some journalists, like Worldwoman editor **Lesley Riddoch**, leave publications where stories about women do not receive adequate coverage. Riddoch writes about her online news service, written for and about women, and about the virtual newsroom pilot project she uses to train women journalists in Africa. From Africa, **Christine Anyanwu**, chief executive of Spectrum Broadcasting Company of Nigeria, describes the situation in Nigeria and sheds light on why efforts like Riddoch's are necessary. "The definition of news, what makes news, real marketable news in Nigeria inevitably excludes a sizeable chunk of the population, especially women." In South Africa, **Pippa Green** is one of three women editors in the country in her job as associate deputy editor of the Financial Mail in Johannesburg. Green's story illuminates a debate about why (and whether) the absence of women in leadership positions matters. Two African women, **L. Muthoni Wanyeki** and **Lettie Longwe**, who oversee programs that train rural women to tell stories at community radio stations, explain radio's vital role in communicating news about women's lives and its potential as a force for societal change.

Teresita Hermano and **Anna Turley** share results from the Global Media Monitoring Project 2000, a worldwide survey of women's presence and portrayal in the news, done by the World Association for Christian Communication, with which they work. **Peggy Simpson**, a freelance writer living in Poland, writes about Agora, one of Europe's newest media empires that is owned and run by women. **Ratih Hardjono** recalls her decade-long experience while reporting on war and conflict for Kompas, an Indonesian daily. "In the coverage of war, it is stories about women's lives that often go untold," she writes, and then describes her efforts to change that situation. These women's stories, she contends, "are so very different than men's, and necessary to hear if we are to understand the consequences of war."

From India, **Ammu Joseph**, author of "Women in Journalism: Making News," observes how women report alongside men but their impact (on coverage of news) can be difficult to discern. Indian author and journalist **Sakuntala Narasimhan** finds her nation's culture

combining with business decisions to leave many women's stories untold. Visibility of women in the media, she writes, "does not necessarily translate into gender equity in terms of the content of what goes on the pages." After working for 18 years at two of India's largest newspapers, **Angana Parekh** directs the Women's Feature Service, which provides access to stories about women's lives. Her goal: "to create 'space' for women's voices and experiences in mainstream media, where such topics don't usually receive this same kind of attention." From Pakistan, **Massoud Ansari**, a senior reporter for Newsline in Karachi and contributor to Women's Feature Service, demonstrates how journalists, through their coverage of news, maintain women's lesser cultural status.

By turning the camera's eye on their own lives, women in rural China created a collection of photographs called **Visual Voices** which were, in turn, used to generate discussion about aspects of their daily lives. Similarly, women's photographs taken in Cape Town, South Africa, as part of a project called **Through Her Eyes**, accompany our coverage of Africa.

Surveys of women journalists done by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) show the varied pace of progress in different regions of the world, according to **Bettina Peters**, a director at IFJ. From Chile, **Veronica Lopez** argues women bring "a certain look, a certain feeling" to news coverage, and what they bring is what the public now wants. **Blanca Rosales**, a Peruvian media consultant, describes what she learns from listening to women journalists discuss their situations. Sadly, she reports that women who've reached top positions "don't feel the obligation to be trailblazers for other women." Colombian journalist **María Cristina Caballero**, who demonstrated great courage in reporting on her nation's war and reached top positions at her newspaper, recently turned her attention to helping other women journalists as she became interested in "exploring the causes of the gender inequalities in the media workplace and in seeking ways to possibly overcome these situations."

For more than 25 years, as a journalist, editor and analyst, **Naomi Sakr** has covered the Arab world. Using findings from her 2000 report, "Women's Rights and the Arab Media," Sakr describes the tough roads women there must travel to break down barriers to their progress. Photographs by German newspaper photographer **Katharina Eglau** accompany Sakr's story and that of Iranian-American **Naghmeh Sohrabi,** who explains how important stories about women's lives are submerged by inaccurate assumptions, particularly regarding the wearing of a veil. It is, she writes, "rare to read a news report about the social and cultural situation in Iran without a mention of veiled women." And, in these stories, "a veil is used to either demonstrate a person's conservative viewpoint or to show the opposite—that despite the veil, a woman holds views close to our own more liberal, democratic ones." She offers four timely suggestions to journalists that can be applied to improving coverage of women throughout the Muslim world.

In our next issue of Nieman Reports, women journalists who work in the United States will address issues related to these same questions. ■

Reporting on Gender in Journalism

'Why do so few women reach the top?'

In a chapter written for inclusion in an upcoming book, "Gender and Journalism in Industrialized Nations," edited by Romy Froelich and Sue A. Lafky for The Edwin Mellen Press, Margaret Gallagher examines gender trends in journalism as she explores the progress women journalists are making, the impact they are having, and the reasons why so few manage to rise to the top. What follows is an edited excerpt from her chapter.

By Margaret Gallagher

Wherever one looks in the world, women still have relatively little decision-making power either inside the media organizations themselves, or in the political and economic institutions with which these organizations must interface. This is one of the reasons why female journalists—even when they are a majority within the profession—remain highly vulnerable…. It can be argued that survival and success in journalism—at least in the market economies of Western Europe and North America—are dictated by the logic of commerce, to which male journalists are equally subject. Of course, there is an element of truth in this. But particularly when it comes to the most senior editorial jobs another—perhaps parallel, perhaps predominant—logic seems to operate. As Canadian journalist Huguette Roberge put it a decade ago: "One woman at a time…. One at a time. We barely manage to fill the shoes left by one another." In the years since then, the situation has barely changed. It is as if one woman at the top is as much as the system can absorb without being thrown into a paroxysm of professional anguish about the potential effects—on status, salaries, self-esteem—of "feminization."

In relation to the upper echelons of journalism, the notion that feminization could be imminent is risible. Even in the United States, figures produced by the National Federation of Press Women (1993) show that women have been increasing their share of management posts by only one percent per year since 1977. If that rate continues, it will be another 30 years before there is gender balance in top newspaper jobs in the United States.

Of course, it cannot be assumed that women's existing rates of entry to *any* hierarchical level will continue…. But what of the women who entered the profession in the 1970's and 1980's? How have they fared in the decades since? The studies analyzed by professor David Weaver lead him to the overall conclusion that those women who *are* in American journalism have made "significant gains in managerial responsibility…and in amount of editorial control" over the past two decades. Nevertheless, given that since 1977 women have outnumbered men in college and university journalism courses in the United States, why are women still a minority presence in American newsrooms—especially in senior editorial and decision-making positions?

The same question is relevant throughout the industrialized world. UNESCO data show that in most of these countries the predominance of female students in mass communication courses stretches back to at least 1980. It is true that in many cases the percentage of practicing female journalists has risen substantially over the past 20 years…. It is also undeniable that, in many parts of the world, women are now a significant on-screen and on-air presence in the broadcast media—as presenters, reporters and newscasters…. In her analysis of the rise of the woman reporter over the past century, journalist Anne Sebba argues that it is no coincidence that a high proportion of the women journalists who covered the Gulf War in 1991 worked for television: "They know that what the major networks want is a frontline account from a (preferably pretty) woman in a flak jacket."

Yet it is debatable whether this actually constitutes a "feminization" of journalism, in the sense of a take-over of the profession by women. Indeed women's increased presence on the screen almost certainly contributes to a gulf between perceptions and reality. In most European countries, women are a clear minority of working journalists in radio and television. The exceptions are confined to countries formerly within the orbit of the Soviet Union, where the profession had an altogether different status from that in Western Europe. It is quite conceivable that, as the media systems of these countries move from a state-financed to a commercially financed basis, the proportion of women employed as journalists will fall—as has already been documented in the case of the former German Democratic Republic.

Moreover, when it comes to senior editorial and management jobs, women are consistently under-represented. In general, this pattern seems to hold even in the new commercial broadcasting companies—a finding that confounds the view that market-driven systems and audience goals will result in an increase of women's power at the top…. Why do so few women reach the top?

By far the most common obstacle to career development reported by women journalists is the problem of male attitudes. One of the most important implications of the male dominance within media organizations is that women are judged by male standards and performance criteria. Often this means a constant effort to be taken seriously—a point made in a recent study of French journalists: "It's really not easy to be taken seriously…. To begin with they treat you as a bit of a

joke.... To show that you're serious, you have to try twice as hard if you're a woman." The hazards of not being taken seriously include the risk of sexual harassment—a problem mentioned by women surveyed in countries as different as Finland and Spain. Thus while their male colleagues use time after work to develop the "old boys' network," some women may limit their after-work contacts because they prefer to avoid "risky" situations.

Perceptions of editorial management as a tough and virile domain, where decisions are made by men in smoke-filled rooms, are enough to stop some women from trying to become part of a world they regard as alien. More importantly, they affect the promotion prospects of many women who do aspire to senior positions. In the words of a Danish journalist disappointed in her attempt to obtain a management post in the early 1990's: "All my colleagues recommended me, but the management said... I wasn't 'robust' enough. The management don't like women in managerial jobs. Only one has succeeded so far, but it took her more than 25 years." The "one at a time" mentality vis-à-vis women in senior editorial management precludes the possibility of women building up the kind of power base necessary for real change—either in terms of journalistic output or in the way the institutions of journalism are organized.

One of the major ways in which stereotyped attitudes impinge on women journalists is in the assignment of work. In a 1992 survey covering 10 countries in Europe, North America, Asia and Africa, writer Kate Holman found that 56 percent of responding journalists (male and female) believed that women are still directed towards topics which traditionally have had less status (human interest, social affairs, and culture), rather than being steered towards the "high-status" topics such as business, economics or foreign news. Although this rigid division of labor has started to break down in certain countries, the general tendency to streamline women and men into different departments and subject areas undoubtedly has an impact on salary and on promotion prospects.

There is overwhelming evidence of a significant salary gap between female and male journalists.... It seems likely that the earnings gap is related to the kinds of assignment given to women and men—the specific tasks they do and the valuation attached to these through additional payments and merit awards.

The gendered division of work assignments reduces more than women's income. It also reduces their chances of promotion.... A journalist writing about "hard politics" is supported and regarded as good promotion material. Someone writing about "human" and "everyday" issues is seen as unambitious (because of apparent disinterest in the top priorities of the organization), and tends to remain a rank-and-file reporter. The subtlety and circularity of this process, which both reflects *and* constructs power relations between women and men in the profession, is aptly described by Professor Eric Neveu with respect to French journalism: "the female condition is a constraint on access to responsibilities in journalism...this distance from responsibilities and important columns increases the probability of meeting less famous people, thus having to settle for more anonymous, soft news reporting...which in a nutshell produces a journalism typified as 'feminine'.... If women write what they write, it is not always the expression of a feminine sensibility...but also the fact that in many situations they cannot write anything else, according to the structures of power within the professional hierarchy."

In her study of women's impact on the British press (1997) journalism lecturer Linda Christmas concludes that political writing is one of two "stubbornly male enclaves." The other is leader writing (editorials). Again, the rules of the game mean that women are not seen as—and usually do not see themselves as—suited to this form of journalism. One of the few female leader writers in Britain (for The Times) ascribes the small number of women to "a stereotyped notion of how women's brains work.... Men are thought to be more convergent, more dispassionate, more analytical than women are. And women have been assumed to be better at writing the empathetic, people-orientated stories," according to Christmas. This general stereotype feeds into gender-based editorial appraisals, as Christmas writes: "There are some editors who instinctively, without questioning it, give less weight to women's views. Also, some editors may think that women are more muddled thinkers and therefore it is not just that they think their views are unimportant, but that their views won't be expressed quite so coherently as men's views." The notion that coherence equates with the bold affirmation of a particular viewpoint is, again, something with which many women feel uncomfortable. According to another senior woman interviewed by Christmas: "My dream is to be able to write 'on the one hand' and 'on the other hand,' and 'having thought about it carefully, this is the conclusion I come to.' But I know you can't write columns like that. Or leaders. You need to have very, very firm opinions and a belief in your own opinions."

The male-defined rules of the game which determine journalistic culture—the customs and practices which prevail within the profession—must therefore be understood not simply in terms of working conditions, definitions of newsworthiness, values and priorities. In a more fundamental sense these rules permeate the very essence of what journalism "is," or is believed to be, by the majority of its practitioners. Of course, they are not completely static. It can be argued that the audience goal of journalism implies that the rules must—in some respects—be subject to redefinition if markets are to be fully exploited. But given the framework of power relations in journalism, it cannot be assumed that such redefinitions will work to women's long-term advantage. If audience behavior causes a shift in the hierarchy of genres, or in professional beliefs about what constitutes "good" journalism, it is inconceivable that male journalists will ignore the new ground opened up by such a change.

The belief that the gender balance in journalism—particularly in its higher echelons—will shift "in time" as more women graduates enter the profession is remarkably persistent. UNESCO's first World Communication Report (1989), noting that the proportion of female journalism students is very much higher then the percentage of female working journalists in almost every country, concludes that "other things being equal, women's share of jobs in journalism will gradually increase in the coming years." But, of course, other things are not equal—even at the starting post. Studies from various countries show that male journalism graduates are more successful than females in finding jobs in the profession. After recruitment men advance more quickly than women….

To bring about shifts in the organizational culture and in the attitudes of key staff, some media companies have adopted policies and action programs. These are more often found in the broadcast media than in the press, and more often in publicly funded than in the commercially financed sector. In that sense, market trends do not present a promising scenario for women…. The pursuit of equal opportunities does not easily coincide with the pursuit of maximum financial gain.

But even when they work, equal opportunities policies seem to drag change along behind them—at what often seems an excruciatingly slow place—rather than pushing media institutions forcefully towards transformation. In the sphere of gender relations, the most recalcitant obstacle to transformation is that of attitudes. Andy Allan, the chief executive of Carlton UK Television, has expressed this succinctly: "From the cradle, we have people brought up with certain expectancies of what they are likely to achieve and what they can achieve. If we don't see this as a human problem, rather than a female problem, we won't crack it. No single initiative within a media organization will take this very far…. The major problem is nothing but simple prejudice, and we should reply to any technician who complains: 'Don't give me any more of that rubbish about women not being able to handle cameras.'" Or, he might have said, that rubbish about women not being "robust" enough to handle the job of chief executive. ■

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Worldwoman Stretches Its Reach to Several Continents

By training rural women how to tell their stories, the coverage of news changes.

By Lesley Riddoch

Newspapers are male shaped. They are testosterone fueled, knee jerk, confrontational, short term, pompous and status conscious. They are also punchy, strong, uncompromising and incisive. And they reflect the direction in which the editor wants to move. Usually, that editor is a man.

From where I sit, as editor of Worldwoman—an online news service written for and about women—mainstream news could use a lot less blind obedience, hierarchy and conformity and a lot more vigorous challenge. And the voices of those that are often excluded could substitute a lot more action and focus for their resentment and passivity. In short, women need to save the news reading planet from chronic boredom by developing an alternative news agenda fast.

I set up my first feminist magazine at Oxford University in 1978. It was called Lilith after Adam's mythical first wife who refused to lie beneath him and was banished from Eden for her cheek. Much of the content was desperately worthy—I remember trying to make a story out of the Boilermakers Union donating 40 pounds to the local Women's Aid hostel. And I remember having to argue strenuously that Lilith would not be avoided by women embarrassed that its name reminded them of—hush it—tampons.

We thought that we were groundbreaking, but we were like primary kids painting with colors for the first time. Opinions were easy to chant about but harder to develop, adapt, refresh, relate and, yes, write about. Even at lofty Oxford University, girls regurgitated facts but tended not to develop personal agendas, never mind worldviews. We acquired knowledge but were not encouraged to develop insight. We got our brains working to analyze massive problems but weren't expected to persevere and suggest solutions. Clever girls. Boring newspaper. But we were young.

In 1991, feminist magazine number two was born and named Harpies and Quines. At its birth, the magazine was sued by the mighty Harpers and Queen, owned by National Magazines, due to

the likeness of our names. Apparently they thought our scurrilous rag could be mistaken for a glossy debs and homes, frocks and gardens kind of magazine. We kept calm, used the press, got Britain-wide publicity, and forced Harpers to climb down. Three years later, the nightmare of distribution costs did what H&Q could not and closed us down.

That was enough fringe activity and enough time worrying only about women and the dinosaurs of print. For the next decade, I was in broadcasting—radio and television—and discovered that a good live broadcaster can set a distinctive news agenda without too much fuss. However, the print challenge remained.

By 1995, I'd become deputy editor of The Scotsman, Scotland's primary quality daily newspaper. At 182 years of age, the newspaper needed to be modernized and made more attractive to younger people and women. As I looked across newspapers, radio and TV stations I could find plenty of female reporters but hardly any female correspondents, lead writers, political columnists, news editors, program editors, newspaper editors, or owners. Jobs that required comment, judgment and well-cultivated contacts, jobs that shaped public opinion and set agendas, these jobs were filled mostly by men.

I wondered why. And I wondered if it mattered.

It did. Women readers were drifting away from almost all broadsheet papers. The Scotsman, in 1995, was no exception. Was the content unreflectively male oriented? Discussions about this were frustrating. A well-run paper is rarely a deeply reflective one. The men who ran The Scotsman did not—perhaps they could not—challenge their own decision-making on a daily basis. The relentless pressure of paper production required unselfconscious decision-making about who should cover which stories and how those stories should be written. The suggestion that their decision-making habits might be a source of trouble provoked a very frosty, hostile reaction.

I realized there was only one way to demonstrate how a set of values can underpin each word, picture, opinion and promotion. I suggested that one edition of the paper should be written, produced and edited by the women on the paper and published as the Scotswoman on International Women's Day, 1994. I was amazed when I discovered I didn't have to argue the case at the next board meeting. Some men reacted so strongly, so immediately, and so angrily against the very idea of change that they converted the more moderate men into my instant allies.

Creating Scotswoman

This left us 10 weeks to achieve a world first—the first Scotswoman paper. Some women argued the idea was patronizing, that there wasn't one "women's view" of any issue and that the whole project was a token waste of time. I let the staff argue out these important questions and come to a majority decision. Thankfully, the decision was to proceed.

A month before this paper would be published, 30 female journalists sat in a room for two hours and discussed news coverage. At first, it was hard. When no one has asked your opinion on the big stories, it's tempting to revert to passive silence or criticism. But soon the opinions were flowing. What is foreign news? Pictures of men in uniforms with guns, and men in suits with power. Much war and conflict reporting is about how people die and fight, cheat and wrangle, but has little to do with how people live in different cultures. No one suggested we ignore coverage of war, but we also wanted to make more space for stories about topics like paternity leave in Norway. Apparently lots of men there use their state-funded leave to go fishing. The female politicians who introduced the leave were apparently checking up on the men's whereabouts. Everyone agreed that was the sort of story they wanted to see in foreign news.

Additionally, we wanted women being actors in the news we published, and not simply seen as passive objects. But the truth was then, and is now, that women just don't make the "news" as news is conventionally defined. Women's opinions don't usually shake stock markets. Nor do their actions normally provoke wars or strikes or disputes. Their casual purchases don't destroy or create thousands of jobs. Their work doesn't usually attract Nobel Prizes or vast research awards, and their hopes rarely shape new political parties or movements.

We wanted to produce a real newspaper, not a fantasy one, so we had to find ways to make women's views newsworthy. I employed a prominent transportation expert to look at a new proposed motorway round Glasgow. Professor Carmen Hass-Klau analyzed the evidence and concluded that the council was indirectly discriminating against women by spending millions on new motorways, not on new public transport. Her views made news, even by existing standards. Then, we found the most inaccessible train platform in Scotland and challenged the male boss of the Scottish Trade Union Movement to cross it with one baby stroller, two children and four bags of shopping. The resulting pictures later persuaded Railtrack to install lifts.

We had a men's page, too, with a self-examination graphic for testicular cancer. Strangely, this was one male disease that the male-led news team had never thought to cover. There was also a fashion spread on how men can match their shoes with their briefcases. We decided to make a statement about the cynical use of naked women in fashion shoots by using an undressed male model—with the briefcase covering his modesty! This went down surprisingly well—with both sexes. Humor was important among all the "earnest" stuff that the male staff feared and readers might have expected.

The presses went into action and vans and trains shot off around Britain to deliver this very special edition. The Scotswoman sold out in about three hours. There was publicity about it in 22 countries and letters and faxes came pouring in for weeks afterwards. The vast majority were supportive; a few were appalled.

By the next morning, it was business

as usual at The Scotsman with no real analysis about what was learned and what was achieved. By the next year, our project was downgraded to a tabloid supplement; the following year, it was scrapped. When I left the paper, it seemed the idea had died. But in 1998 the British Council in Scotland invited me to talk to a bunch of women politicians and activists from 41 developing countries about women and the media. I showed them the Scotswoman papers, and their response was emotional and intense. They also *longed* to produce something different and not just talk about it.

Worldwoman and the African Experience

A while later, I figured that the Internet would have to be part of the answer. That's when I set up Worldwoman as a women's Web paper to be a source of women's stories, available to interested editors in many countries. I devoted the best part of two years looking for funding. Too worthy to be commercial, yet not safe enough to get U.N.-type funding, we were fortunate to get some financial backing from Scottish Enterprise and a lot of voluntary help with the Web site from Jim Byrne at Glasgow Caledonian University.

Meanwhile, in 1999, the secretary general of UNESCO decided to encourage women in newsrooms to have a "Takeover Day" on International Women's Day. With their backing, 600 news outlets did this; more joined in 2000. However, what I wanted to do was develop an alternative news agenda and not just a series of one-shot publications.

With British Council backing, I visited four of the African countries that were interested in developing a worldwide women's news agenda. I realized during my visit that their need for personal development and my desire to create a stable of sassy women writers throughout the world were walking hand in hand. And at least one of those hands was also holding onto the women activists in Africa who were confronting the massive burden of AIDS, as well as working to end the cycle of corruption, war and exploitation in their continent. These African women I met with wanted to develop a voice. Their voice. To do that requires patience, practice, work, support and fun.

The idea of encouraging and training a pilot group of women journalists by producing a paper like Worldwoman on the Internet started to form before I went to the SWAA (Society for Women and AIDS in Africa) conference of HIV-positive women in Uganda this past March. Four hundred women from all over Africa were present, representing probably the largest group of HIV-positive women on the planet. But there was more media coverage of Kofi Annan's one-day visit to Kenya.

These women delegates knew nothing of impending AIDS-related conferences of the G7 in Genoa or U.N. in New York. Their views were not being canvassed by international journalists. Delegates knew little about the details of the anti-retroviral court case in South Africa and what it might mean for imports of generic drugs in their own countries. The women were well-organized, articulate and passionate but disconnected from the mainstream news and decision-making agenda. These brave and focused women were outside of the food chain called news.

A quick solution was for me to write a few stories about them and their concerns. And I did. But these activists need skilled African journalists to tell their stories. The role for well-meaning outsiders like me is to provide support, mentors, encouragement and cash. And that's what the virtual newsroom (VNR) pilot project at Worldwoman is all about.

The VNR is an Internet tool to connect women journalists in four African countries (Ghana, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Kenya). They've been trained together face-to-face to understand more about news values and journalism, and they are using an intranet to set their own collective agenda, swap stories of best practice, news and information, and create a new net paper. At the moment, their netpaper is private, primarily to protect Zimbabwean writers, in particular, and basically to allow the journalists a bit more freedom at the start. When they are satisfied that they are ready to "go live," Africawoman will be launched. It will be a Web paper written by African women journalists to be read by African women and the news will also be delivered via community radio to be heard by millions of women across Africa.

Worldwoman has linked up with Development Through Radio (DTR)—a Zimbabwe-based charity—to use the Internet to send the netpaper to their growing network of women-led community radio stations. [See stories on African community radio on pages 75-77.] Together, our goal is to have every country in Africa broadcasting a women's news service by 2003. Worldwoman will use the Internet, recording studios, and rural radio listening groups to send news bulletins and news features across Africa and pick up local stories to feed back to the journalists. In 2003, we hope to expand facilities to help African women producing plays, soaps and documentaries to make programs for the network of DTR women's stations.

Within three years, Worldwoman would like to transfer control of editorial, finances and production of this ambitious media project to the African women whom we are currently training. The DTR Project—popularly known as the Radio Listeners' Clubs—was launched in 1988 by Jennifer Sibanda to give rural women access to national radio. Through training, the project develops leadership qualities, encourages women to share experiences, and links rural people with policymakers. Now there are women's community-run radio stations and women-run programs on existing national broadcasting stations in Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. DTR is expanding its work to Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leones. DTR has a massive listenership, but needs news material. Africawoman has news material, but needs a virtual audience, and women activists in Africa need a voice. It's time they all worked together.

Worldwoman envisions a different

way to use the Internet in rural Africa. We don't think there will be a vast network of marginalized African women reading Africawoman on computers. Internet links are too expensive and computers too rare for most Africans. But the net is already being used as a virtual whiteboard by our remote news teams when they create their Web paper together. It can be used as a virtual post box when we send copy to local radio stations. And the computer can serve as a portable printing press so information need only be downloaded and printed out once to then be communicated to tens of thousands of women listening to community radio. Using the net and the "written word" this way, rural women who might wait a generation to become literate can hear what they need to know next year, and hear it from sisters across Africa.

This media project is not a one-way street. Direct communication between the rural women and journalists will happen on a monthly basis. But we hope e-mail will become a regular "direct" channel, too. There is a phone line to the women's community radio stations in Malawi and Mozambique. So a computer and modem and printer could supply Africawoman news and allow activists to join the virtualnewsroom intranet. Once trained—in the cascade training event we are fundraising to realize in March 2002—a key activist in each group will be trained to be sufficiently skilled to keep in touch and to start additional local training.

We also think that editions of Africawoman can be published to coincide with important meetings or summits that affect grassroots women. One special edition is already being planned for the Rio plus 10 summit in 2002. Few grassroots activists ever get to attend decision-makers' conferences; Africawoman will bring the mountain to Mohammed. Not only do we plan to send Africawoman to DTR's entire radio network, but we're also working on the idea of a weekly news service that would become daily when those stations have more demand for that amount of news. We are also planning Commonwoman—a Commonwealth version of Africawoman to be inserted into existing newspapers as a supplement on March 12, 2002 (Commonwealth Day). This would expand the whole project to Asia while keeping editorial control in Africa, and there would then be a repetition of the virtual training we've begun in Africa.

Worldwoman's aim is to train groups of women journalists throughout the world to work together to create their own virtual or actual publications, to encourage women's community radio networks, and to have top quality journalists writing for a weekly Worldwoman that will be essential reading to half the world's population, and pretty damn interesting for men, too. In countries around the world, women are confronting similar challenges and fighting similar battles, and even though they are separated by continents, oceans, languages, customs and religions, by mixing technology with cleverness, enthusiasm and skill building, connections through news can and should be made. ■

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In Nigerian Newspapers, Women Are Seen, Not Heard

Even influential women journalists stay away from coverage of women's issues.

By Christine Anyanwu

The Punch, the widest circulating daily in Nigeria, did something savvy October 20. On the cover, Stella, the gorgeous wife of President Obasanjo, was stepping out for an occasion with two equally gorgeously dressed women. There was no detail on where they went; no words heard from them. No stories. Just big color pictures. In this edition, women made the cover, back page, and seven other pages, a total of nine out of its 55 pages. Who can resist the face of a beautiful woman? The paper's vendors had a field day. That morning, other papers lost out in the fierce competition for a narrowing market.

A content analysis of mainstream media in Nigeria reveals one dominant orientation: Women are largely seen and not heard. Their faces adorn newspapers. However, on important national and international issues, they fade out. Even when the news is about them, the story only gains real prominence if there is a male authority figure or newsmaker on the scene.

Ask any editor in Lagos, the media center of Nigeria, and he will argue his paper is issue-oriented, keen on serious news, and gender-blind. That would tend to suggest that whatever makes news gets covered, whoever is involved gets heard. But the reality is that it is not quite so. The definition of news, what makes news, real marketable news in Nigeria inevitably excludes a sizeable chunk of the population, especially women. By the 1991 population count, women make up 49.92 percent of the population; that is .8 percent less than the men. But from politics to economy, technology, commerce and industry to crime, very few women's voices are heard in the mainstream media.

At the heart of this practice is tradition. Historically, the local media has been dominated by men, a situation that persists. A recent survey conducted by the Independent Journalism Center

(IJC) in Lagos in conjunction with the Panos Institute of Washington and the Center for War, Peace and the News Media of New York established that 80 percent of practicing journalists in Nigeria are male. This circumstance impacts coverage of news. The Lagos-based Media Rights Monitor reports in its January 2001 issue that "domination of the news media by men and the preponderance of male perspective in the reporting of news have also brought about a situation where there is little focus on the participation of women in the political and economic spheres of the country. Women's issues are also not given adequate coverage in the media. Where they are covered, they are treated from the male perspective."

Newsmaking itself also has been gender-biased. That a woman made news in the early years of media development in the country was in itself news. "Man bites dog." "Woman strips in protest against taxes." It had to be that unusual to attract news coverage. And so, in the early 1960's, women resorted to doing shocking things in order to grab the attention of society. In Aba in southeastern Nigeria, it took bands of angry women rioting and chasing the colonial government officials there into hiding before society could listen to their issues. Then they made banner headline news in the conservative national dailies.

A Fulani woman in Keffi, Nasarawa State. *Photo by Tony Raymond. 2001, Startcraft Intl.©*

The women of the rice pyramids, Abakiliki, Ebonyi State. *Photo by Christine Anyanwu. 2001, Startcraft Intl.©*

But those days are gone; that genre of woman has all but disappeared. In her place has come a new brand of woman, doused, softened by education and modernity. She no longer employs the shocking tools of her forebears to get noticed, but she has not succeeded any better with her modern methods. A woman is still largely eclipsed in the news by the looming image of her male counterpart.

The dominant attitude among Nigerian journalists is that women's issues rarely make marketable news. Controversy is what sells. As most women shy away from controversial issues, they remain out of the orbit of hot news. It is that simple.

But there are occasional sparks. In its October 13 edition, This Day newspaper devoted two-thirds of the back page to a flattering column on Justice Rose Ukeje, the first female chief judge of the Federal High Court and the highest judicial appointment for a female in Nigeria's history. Some journalists point to the column as indicative of the quality coverage mainstream papers prefer to give women, but it can also be argued that it is reflective of the elitism that rules news judgment in our newsrooms. How many Justice Ukejes are there in Nigeria? For every triumphal story of an Ukeje, there are thousands of her compatriots engaged in unending struggles in a harsh economic and social environment. Their struggles and triumphs are part of the social landscape, which ought to be reflected in the national media.

Mainstream media is dominated by politics. Very little attention is given to real life issues that shape the quality of living, things that dominate the minds and hearts of the people. Professional indoctrination and market realities rule the treatment of information. Women's issues belong to a genre of information considered lightweight news. Frivolous. No serious editor wants his newspaper trivialized. Therefore, such stories are considered to properly belong to the tabloids dealing in trivia and sex and scandal. In the serious media, they are buried or relegated to the society, art, home and entertainment pages. Only in sports, however, do women speak loudly because of their overwhelming presence and performance.

Branding by advertisers also is a consideration in the treatment of this genre of news. Publications that feature women in large numbers are easily branded women's publications. That has severe limitations on the kind of advertisements they attract. No publication wants to suffer such limitations in revenue generation. Therefore, they steer clear of such affairs. It is a major nightmare for publications edited or published by women.

Since the voices of politicians drown out the people, it is those few women linked to the noisy world of politics that are occasionally heard. Wives of

Sifting rice from the chaff, Abakiliki Rice Mill, Ebonyi State. *Photo by Christine Anyanwu. 2001, Startcraft Intl.©*

public officers enjoy the best press in Nigeria. The public profiles of their husbands rub off and the goodwill plays in their favor. Generally, they are perceived as playing supportive roles to their husbands. Women in government also make news but this is because they speak on the portfolios they control, and those usually include women and children's affairs, health and aviation. Unlike their male colleagues, rarely do they venture out to comment on issues of national importance unrelated to their portfolios.

The visibility of women in elected offices remains surprisingly low despite the significant increase in their numbers in this republic. Like women in other spheres, they are seen more in pictures, and their voices continue to be muffled. In the week of October 15 to 19, for instance, the most contentious political issue in the country was the electoral bill, the law to guide the conduct of the next election. The Senate had passed it with controversial provisions, sparking a noisy debate in the media. In that week, the voices of women in the federal legislature were barely heard. Where were they? Did they not contribute to the debates on the floors of the Senate and House of Representatives? What were their views on the points of contention? It was a mystery.

The silence of women on important national and international issues gives the mistaken impression that they do not care about the things happening around them. However, some female politicians complain that even when they grant interviews, they are either not reported or severely misquoted. As a result, they do not go out of their way to engage with members of the media. Maryam Abubakar, a businesswoman in Abuja, offers another explanation: "Maybe we have not mastered the art of public relations operating here." Angela Agowike, editorial board member at the Daily Times of Nigeria, however, explains that many women, including those in public office, still do not have sufficient confidence to speak out publicly on issues. "They require a little push; a media friendly environment."

Agowike belongs to a small group of journalists who through some funding provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) tried to give women interested in politics a voice in the media during the pre-election politics of 1999. But that initiative petered off with the end of the elections and return of democracy. Before they were properly weaned, they were literally left "on their own" and they slipped back into silence.

Perhaps the most reported issue concerning women in recent months is the traffic of women to Europe for prostitution. Two local NGO's took it as a cause, focusing on discouraging the practice through tougher legislation and rehabilitating the girls deported from Europe. The activities of the NGO's have enjoyed considerable media coverage not the least because their flag bearers are the wives of the vice president and the governor of one of the states. That their husbands lent their political weight to this cause helped in no small measure in shaping the attitude of government and by extension that of the media whose huge publicity has made the issue one of the few success stories of media handling of women's issues in recent times. It could also be argued that their interest in the matter was all the more fired by the tremendous coverage of the global problem of woman slavery and prostitution in the world press. Still, it is a story of triumph. Through sustained publicity and pressure, the federal government has set up its own committee to draft a law that would empower it to seek the repatriation of citizens engaging in such disgraceful practices as prostitution and fraud abroad.

Overall, the coverage of women in Nigerian media is comparatively less impressive than many other nations in the region. But if, as the study by the IJC concludes, this state of affairs can be explained by the overwhelming dominance of males in the profession, are the few women, especially those in decision-making positions, making a difference?

Currently, there is only one Saturday editor and one business editor. There is no female editor or deputy editor in any major daily newspaper in Nigeria. In the magazines, females have made greater inroads with several publishers, editors in chief, executive editors, and associate editors.

Ijeoma Nwogwugwu, business editor of This Day newspaper, explains the low numbers of women at the top. "Many women," she says, "are hired but they soon marry and drop out of the profession because they can't combine the rigor with raising a family. Besides, a lot of men are very uncomfortable when they know their wives are going out in the street meeting all sorts of people. They complain of overexposure." Like many other women who have made it to the top, Nwogwugwu does not believe in gender discrimination in the newsroom, perhaps because she has had a good experience with her peers at her newspaper. Yet many see that as one of the obstacles to the rise in the ratio of women in the profession. One point on which there appears to be consen-

sus, however, is that the majority of male journalists have difficulty accepting the editorship of women. This, they say, impacts on the numbers of female leaders emerging in the newsrooms.

Still, globally, women are moving up the ladder in higher numbers today. Surprisingly, however, it has not translated into more quality coverage for women's issues, the reason being that professional indoctrination and market realities dictate practice. By their training and socialization, women have been taught that reporting women's affairs diminishes the stature and impact of a journalist. A professional who wants to be taken seriously goes to mainstream journalism—oil, finance, politics, industry, technology, crime—issues that attract the interest and respect of the dominantly male readership. In Nigerian journalism, this indoctrination is deep, sometimes, driving a strong defensive attitude in the women.

A woman at work in the salt pit of Keana, Nasarawa State. *Photo by Tony Raymond. 2001, Startcraft Intl.©*

Discussing this issue with four top female journalists, what emerged was that successful women tend to want to remain mainstream and to avoid involvement in spheres that would cause them to be branded. So, they shun women's affairs and organizations.

"Anything family, any organization that tilts toward women, I'd never be in it," states Nwogwugwu. "I don't believe women should segregate themselves. We are competing in an environment. We are all human. We get the same education. We get the same opportunity. Let's utilize whatever we have and make the best of it." For this reason, she does not belong to the Nigerian Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ). Janet Mba-Afolabi, ace crime beat reporter and now executive director of Insider Magazine, does not belong to NAWOJ either. "NAWOJ is trivial," she says. "My position is that women journalists should belong to mainstream associations such as NUJ (Nigerian Union of Journalists)."

Ronke Odusanya, assistant editor of The Punch, explains that it is the fear of professional labeling that feeds that position: "A lot of us don't want to be branded as feminists or 'women's libbers.' Their attitude is I'm a journalist. Period."

Angela Agowike knows the impact this fear has on the quality and frequency of coverage of women's issues. She was weekend editor of the Post Express before joining the editorial board of Daily Times. "Once you're writing a story on women in your paper, colleagues tend to conclude immediately that you're a feminist. A lot of women do not want this. I can understand this. But I tell them this: Somebody has to do it even if it is a way of encouraging others," she says.

Clearly, the apparent discomfort with gender matters affects the handling of news related to women. "For me it has. Definitely," admits Nwogwugwu. "I refuse to cover anything related to women. There are all sorts of businesswomen's forums. Once I get invitations, I throw them in the garbage. I'd never attend them."

And so, with the attitude set, the rising numbers and profiles of women in the media continue not to yield the expected fruit. Looking at the coverage of news in Nigeria's mainstream media, the globe has only shifted slightly since those early years when the amazons of Aba and Fumilayo Kutis of Lagos forced society's attention upon their issues through dramatic public protests. That Rose Ukeje is today the chief judge of the federal High Court; that Ndi Okereke is today the director general of the Nigerian stock exchange; that young Prisca Soares has been making waves as the managing director of the country's foremost insurance agency, NICON, and that numerous women are today chairpersons of outstanding banks, have not quite changed the dominant attitude toward news about women.

The old notion that their pretty faces are more marketable than their voices still prevails. Agowike is fully aware of where the problem lies and how it can be addressed. "We found that when there's need for opinions automatically they [journalists] go to men. What we're saying is that for the proper integration of women, make women's issues part of what you're talking about. If it is politics, there are male; there are female. Don't just talk to only the male. Talk to both."

It will take a total reorientation of the journalist to hear the clear voice of woman in the Nigerian media. "There are many women with great potential," Agowike says. "But they need a little push to get there."

That push, that media friendly environment that will give society the benefit of women's ideas in the public sphere, is undoubtedly a new challenge for journalism. But is society itself ready? ■

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An Absence of Women

At newspapers in South Africa, few women are at the top. Some wonder why and ask why it matters.

By Pippa Green

About a decade ago in South Africa, when apartheid was already on its deathbed, Mamphela Ramphele, then a university professor, spearheaded a study on employment equity at the University of Cape Town. The results were mainly unsurprising in a country coming out of 40 years of institutionalized racism. More than 90 percent of top-level academic and administrative positions were held by white men.

What was surprising was the almost complete absence of white women from the structures of power at what was considered a fairly liberal university. One of Ramphele's aides, who'd conducted the research, remarked at the time that the legacy of apartheid education, poor social and living conditions for black people, as well as racist job hiring practices built into the law, could explain the racial discrepancy. What could explain the absence of white women from top-level positions—women who'd presumably had the same privileges of education and opportunity as their male counterparts? The prejudices that excluded women must be so deep, she reasoned, that they were especially hard to unravel, let alone combat.

The same question might be asked of the media in South Africa. Seven years after the end of apartheid, and three years into a new employment equity law intended to promote blacks and women, there are only three women newspaper editors in the country. One is black, two are white. One is editor of a weekly, one an editor of a business supplement that gets inserted into the dailies of the biggest English-language group, and the third is editor of a business weekly. None is editor of a daily. There was one black woman editor of a small circulation daily in Port Elizabeth, but her management closed down the newspaper, and she now works for the government.

The depth of the prejudice was shown a few years ago at the special hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) about the media. A senior newspaper company executive said that when his (foreign) company had bought out the largest English-speaking news group in 1994, they could find no blacks or women in the entire company worthy of editorship.

It was, in retrospect and at the time, an astonishing statement. Women "manned" the engine rooms of newsrooms then, as now—they were copyeditors, chief copyeditors, news editors, and assistant editors. They were reporters on the frontlines covering

Mother and child, Guguletu township, Cape Town. *Photo by Mimi Chakarova.* (Chakarova is co-director of the Through Her Eyes project.)

Through Her Eyes

Taking pictures and telling stories, women in two poor communities a continent and an ocean away share their lives and hardships with each other and with the world at large by participating in Through Her Eyes, a project based in Oakland, California. Co-directed by documentary film producer Cassandra Herrman and documentary photographer Mimi Chakarova, Through Her Eyes began in Cape Town, South Africa by giving cameras to women to document their lives. A similar project is taking place in East Oakland. The hope is that through this work these women find commonality in their experiences, first by exchanging images and stories and eventually by meeting one another. More information about this project, as well as additional images, can be found at www.throughhereyes.org. ■

the apartheid regime and the uprisings against it. They were senior political reporters and foreign editors. And it was two young black woman reporters who first broke the story of Winnie Mandela's involvement in the murder of a child-activist in 1988 and of the murderous gang of "football players" she ran from her home. One reporter is no longer in the media. The other was Nomavenda Mathiane.

A portrait of a room in Guguletu township, Cape Town. *Photo by Alice Kotelo.*

Nomavenda Mathiane, a senior black woman journalist with a Johannesburg daily, was, 10 years later, one of only two women who testified before the TRC hearings about the media under apartheid. She recalled that many of the black women entered the profession with the same qualifications as their male counterparts. "However for years editors and news editors relegated black female journalists to fill up women's pages. In spite of the network of contacts that a woman might have had, and her high standard of education, she would be hired to report on domestic affairs, such as cookery pages, fashion, horoscopes, Dear Dolly columns, and church business," she said in her testimony. Her black male counterparts, who entered the profession at the same time as her, are now publishers or senior editors, in spite of the oppressive burden they bore under apartheid, she said.

Mathiane's cry to the TRC about the double dose of discrimination she suffered went largely unreported, except in the alternative press.

Only occasionally are the prejudices noticed. Independent Newspapers, which runs the largest group of newspapers in the country (and now has two women editors out of its 14 titles), has an international advisory board. Appointment to this is a sinecure: Board members include David Dinkins, former mayor of New York; Ben Bradlee, former editor of The Washington Post, and Anthony Sampson, Nelson Mandela's official biographer. There is not one woman on the board.

One board member, who prefers not to be named, recalls how his wife, in order to highlight this anomaly, suggested at one board banquet to be addressed by South African president Thabo Mbeki that the board members sit separately from their spouses. When Mbeki walked in, he saw one table comprising only men (the board members), and one table comprising only women. He couldn't help but remark on it.

Mbeki made a similar observation at a meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government in late 1999, when the only woman on a stage full of premiers, apart from the Queen of England, was the prime minister of Bangladesh. The only two other female heads of government were absent. "Our continuing failure genuinely to respond to the challenge to attain human equality, is demonstrated by the very composition of our meeting, according to which, clearly, maleness continues to be a critical criterion for accession to political leadership," said Mbeki in his opening address. "The Commonwealth contains a significant proportion of the women of the world. It cannot be that we pride ourselves as a Commonwealth when that special collective distinguishes itself by defining women as alien beings."

For the media, though, the real question is why it matters. It's easy to see in a country such as South Africa why rapid black advancement matters. With a black majority and blacks controlling government, there is huge potential instability in the fact that whites still control most businesses and professions. It is also easy to see why recruitment and promotion of African-American journalists mattered in the United States at a certain period.

Jerelyn Eddings, who has run the Freedom Forum offices in Johannesburg for the past four years and is a 1985 Nieman Fellow, was recruited into the media at the time when the civil rights movement and black urban protests in the United States were at their height. White journalists simply couldn't get the story. "In those

days, African-American journalists were practically grabbed off the streets," she says. In the United States (and probably in South Africa), says Eddings, racial and ethnic diversity is more important in allowing the media a broader worldview, but gender is increasingly important. "South Africa missed the women's movement," she says. "So a lot of the battles that were fought earlier in America and Europe, they're only having here now."

But is there "women's news" in the same way as there is "black news"? South Africa's three female editors are not convinced there is, but still believe their presence makes a difference. "It would be wrong to assume that we have a different world view simply because of our gender," says Paula Fray, editor of the Saturday Star and a 2001 Nieman Fellow. "Just as we have been trained to write news with an inverted pyramid model, our concept of what now defines news has been molded by an essential white male model. I think that is part of our challenge—to recognize that we, too, hold stereotypes molded by the environment we have grown up and have been socialized in. I think the greatest challenge I face as an editor is to recognize that and create a space in which reporters and production staff can debate and redefine how we cover stories, whose stories we cover, and whose voices we use to give life to those stories."

Alide Dasnois, editor of Business Report, a business supplement inserted into most of the Independent newspaper titles, says it means writing about issues in a slightly different way. She says her presence as editor means that there is a conscious attempt to get black and women economists or businesspeople into the paper. "Some of the top economists in the country are women," Dasnois says. "They don't have to prove anything, but it's rare they get quoted."

I would argue there's another reason that "women's news" is critical in a country such as South Africa. Since the demise of apartheid, our greatest social challenges are arguably violence against women and children and the terrifying AIDS epidemic spreading through the country. As recently as two years ago, several male editors dismissed stories about AIDS or rape as being too gloomy. When I ran the oped pages of one paper, I suggested publishing a story by a journalist who was also a rape victim. The story was a critique of the criminal justice system and the way it dealt with rape. My then-editor responded: "But we've done rape; we did it last week." In a country that has one of the highest rates of rape in the world, it seemed odd to have considered rape "done."

Even today, many attempts by male editors to "take women seriously" are clumsy. At a recent editors' conference a senior editor said: "We must realize that women are an increasingly important part of our society."

"It's as if he were talking about another species," said one of the two women present. "Imagine if a woman were to say: 'We must realize that men are an increasingly important part of our society.'"

In South Africa, the voices of women are critical because the rapid spread of AIDS is closely related to their status. It is not only rape that spreads the disease. Many poorer women, particularly those in rural areas where AIDS is most devastating, have no power to insist that men use a condom and little power to stop certain rough sexual practices that increase their vulnerability. There is also a widespread myth that sex with a virgin cures AIDS, and as a result there has been a frightening rise in incidents of child rape. The most recent and horrific example is the case of a nine-month-old baby gang-raped by six men. It is encouraging to see that one of the biggest dailies, The Star, has taken up the issue with unprecedented energy (the editor, by the way, is male). The incident hogged Page One for more than a week, and the paper has even started a public fund to support the damaged baby.

There may be a bottom-line reason, too, about why women in the media matter. South African newspapers have experienced falling circulations in the last few years, despite the increase in literacy and the rise of a black middle class. One newspaper in Britain has decided that the way to increase circulation is to attract more women readers. It is a lesson that seems to have been taken to heart at The Star. There is hardly a day when its readership is not confronted with news that a few years ago would have been relegated to the women's pages.

Nearly half a century ago, a group of women drew up a "Women's Charter" in which they said: "The level of civilization which any society has reached can be measured by the degree of freedom that its members enjoy. The status of women is a test of civilization. Measured by that standard, South Africa must be considered low in the scale of civilized nations."

The women were members of the African National Congress (ANC). The Charter preceded one of the biggest protests ever against apartheid when thousands of women marched on Pretoria in 1956 to protest the extension to women of the oppressive "pass laws" (whereby all African men had to have a permit to be in the cities under pain of instant arrest). Famous were the remarks of men who supported women in their quest but for quite different reasons. "The government cannot give your women a pass if you do not want to, because the women she is under the control of a man," one man was quoted as saying at an anti-pass meeting.

We are a long way on from 1956. The ANC now rules South Africa and the Constitution enshrines equality across race and gender. Yet it is hard to imagine how the media today, which relies on democracy for its own freedom, can sustain that freedom without including in its most senior ranks a diversity representing our whole society. Perhaps, too, media managements might also find that equity pays off—in readership, in credibility, and eventually, yes, in the bottom line. ■

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Community Radio Provides Women a Way to Have Their Voices Heard

Rural African women are trained in the use of reporters' technological tools.

By L. Muthoni Wanyeki

The 1990's witnessed dramatic changes in the print and electronic media in Africa. These changes both contributed towards and resulted from the movements towards political pluralism experienced across the region. Accompanying trends towards economic liberalization and privatization did not leave the media untouched. Today, most African countries have several independent print outlets, including some publications in local languages. And, with the exception of only a few African nations, broadcasting is no longer the preserve of the ruling political parties.

Debates in Africa about freedom of expression and information are now less about how much exists and more about content, which has yet to fully break away from reliance on traditional sources and formats. The voices of many who live and work outside of urban areas are rarely seen and heard. International, even regional, news continues to be largely received through the filters of global news agencies. At broadcasting outlets, the spoken word to music ratio is usually grossly unbalanced. Since very few African countries have media regulations that seek to promote local content, much of the music is also externally produced.

In nearly every country, there are now women's media associations: The Association of Media Women in Kenya, the Ethiopian Media Women's Association, the Tanzanian Media Women's Association, and the Uganda Media Women's Association are a few examples. There are also a couple of regional women's media umbrellas, such as the African Women's Media Centre and the Federation of African Media Women.

The focus of these associations has primarily been on how to improve the representation of African women within the mainstream (public and private) media. Research papers that examine conditions in some of these countries attest to the underrepresentation of women at all staffing levels within the African media and increasingly so at decision-making and managerial levels. The absence of in-house policies to address gender stereotypes and the male-oriented working conditions and associated informal decision-making processes means that African women miss out on internal opportunities (if they are not willing to put up with endemic sexual harassment). Women journalists also are assigned "soft" coverage—relegated to the features and opinion sections—and this compounds their lack of exposure and access to training opportunities likely to bring professional advancement.

A secondary focus of these associations has been to improve the capacities of their members. Training sessions on a range of relevant issues have been held nationally, sub-regionally and regionally. Some sessions stress areas of technical competence, such as the use of new information and communications technologies to improve reporting and editing. Other are content-oriented, for example, focused on specialized reporting on economic or environmental issues, or on reporting about gender issues, human rights, and the legal system.

These two areas of focus need to be intertwined. Without advocating fair gender policies and establishing a conducive regulatory environment, even the most well-trained African women journalists are unable to utilize the skills they learned once they are back at work. And without the technical training, when advocacy efforts are successful African women will find themselves not ready to assume their rightful places within the media.

These efforts have had some positive results. In many African countries, advocacy work regarding laws and policies governing the media by coalitions of media stakeholders (unions, freedom of expression organizations, professional associations) has involved key demands about gender representation and content. A few media organizations have adopted new in-house gender and sexual harassment policies. And the efforts women have made within their respective media have led to interesting and useful partnerships with women's organizations to improve coverage of gender-related issues. The annual global campaign against violence against women, for example, now has mainstream media support in several African countries. Throughout the duration of the campaign, advertising and editorial copy for the print and electronic media will dedicate time to coverage and analysis of these issues and the campaign's events.

In some African countries, repeated coverage of the violence against women campaign during a period of two to three years has enabled women journalists to successfully lobby for more coverage of this topic apart from the campaign. Sections of newspapers where these stories are now featured are—finally and thankfully—very different in content than traditional women's sections and shows which focused on cooking and housekeeping and child raising. These new "gender" sections and shows are dedicated to discussions of key contemporary discussions and debates, some of which focus on harmful traditional practices,

on African women's constitutional and legal demands, and on African women and their decision-making. Including African men in such sections and shows, when it is relevant professionally, clearly marks an important shift: Gender is now portrayed as being a key variable to all critical public policy debates, and this enables public support to increase for these various causes.

Outside of the mainstream (public and private) broadcast media significant changes have occurred as well, but concerns remain, including issues of access to media production. In Africa, with its disproportionately low literacy rates, most new electronic media do not extend their reach beyond capitals and large urban areas. This means that African women of lower income levels, in both urban and rural areas, suffer from lack of access to information. They also do not have the means to express their own realities, debate their interpretations of those realities, and engage in discussions about potential solutions with decision- and policymakers at the national level.

In an attempt to remedy this situation, community broadcast media have emerged. These are participatory, community-based and -managed broadcast media with a developmental agenda. Development Through Radio in Zimbabwe, for example, links a series of rural women's listening and production groups with one another through a public broadcaster. In Mali, open media regulation has allowed for the formation of six women's community radio stations, similarly linked to exchange programs and ideas. There are now women's community radio stations in Malawi, Senegal and South Africa. Most of the community radio stations are not specifically managed by women, but women's representa-

Changing the Way Women's Lives Are Portrayed

'Ordinary women only are considered news when something they've done is "bad"....'

By Lettie Longwe

Khayelitsha township, Cape Town. *Photo by Monica Bekwapai.*

While there are a good number of women who work in the media in Africa, their impact is still not yet significant. To some extent, the reasons emerge out of the cultures in which these women work. But other challenges seem more a by-product of the ways in which these occupations operate and the skills that are required and rewarded. For example, some attributes are admired and encouraged in men, yet seen as unacceptable in women. And when the media focus on these qualities, it is women who are normally punished for having them. Perhaps this is most visible in coverage of politics: Women who "play" the media are seen as being manipulative, while men are merely regarded as politicians.

Within the African media, many women who have achieved influential positions do not want to assist other women below them. Now that they are in high positions, they believe they should associate only with people who will further enhance their positions. They do very little to encourage, help and associate with other women. They literally turn a blind eye and deaf ear to discrimination going on around them.

And those people—men and women—who make decisions about media programming do not see a financial gain in focusing on women, so coverage of women does not become a priority. Programs targeted at women are dominated by stereotypical notions of women's interests—such as taking care of the house. And women's sports receive little attention, often none at all, yet women are very active in netball, basketball, tennis, even football. Nor is there much coverage of violence against women. As news, a story about rape is rare, and when it does appear, its presentation is stereotypic. Earlier this year, when a public message about rape was screened on South African TV, it raised such an uproar from men that it was finally removed from broadcast.

For those of us who work in community radio in Africa, the audiences we serve often have high rates of illiteracy. Therefore, radio is the primary source of information, and members of the

tion and gender are key components of their mandate.

To cater to the needs of African women in community radio, the Women's International Network (WIN) of the Africa section of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) has developed a training program aimed at improving the technical and editorial capacities of women. This editorial training introduces them to gender analysis and to the tools they'll need to link themselves with various women's organizations. This creates a bottom-up, local-to-national flow of information and improves advocacy on gender. The training on technologies teaches them to use radio as a bridge to the Internet, again by supplying tools to feed their productions into a community radio exchange that reaches across Africa.

The potential of such a community-to-community exchange to articulate, legitimize and catalyze African women's mobilization for change is enormous. The impact of changes and initiatives on the gender agenda is slowly but cumulatively building and being felt. When we can turn on our radio stations and hear about what rural women in the Sahel are doing about desertification and be able to immediately contrast that with the experience of similar women in the Horn—or when we can listen to the voices of women involved in conflict resolution from Sierra Leone to Rwanda to Somalia—then we'll know we're getting somewhere. ■

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media work hard to find ways for community members to participate in production of the news. Because of this, news coverage is mainly based on information deemed relevant by news broadcasters and the communities that they serve. Even though women form the majority of radio listeners, men still dictate what is listened to. Knowing this, the attitude in newsrooms remains very traditional and male dominated.

AMARC Africa—through its Women's Program—works with women in community radio to help empower them through training and other developmental programs. [See accompanying story by L. Muthoni Wanyeki about these training programs.]

When women are the subjects of news coverage, they are usually considered to be among the influential and powerful people in the society, such as cabinet ministers, members of Parliament (if they are vocal, otherwise they are not much noticed), high office officials, women married to important men, and beauty queens. Ordinary women only are considered news when something they've done is "bad" or when they do something more than "extraordinary." There is little connection between women being in high places in the media and the coverage women, in general, receive. News coverage of women is more closely linked to an individual woman's social status.

Are there ways to make things better, both for women who work in media as well as for coverage of issues of importance in women's lives? AMARC is working with other stakeholders to urge those in positions of power within the media in Africa to operate gender-balanced management systems, programming and employment practices that oppose discrimination and that are open and accountable to all. Women in the media are also advised to advocate for gender and communication policies in their countries and to use lobbying, networking, training and research to fight for their equal representation and coverage of women's lives.

Women journalists are being encouraged to become more active in their efforts to report stories with more realistic and positive portrayals of women. For instance, instead of covering violence against women in such a way that portrays women only as victims, coverage can focus on ways to alleviate this violence and also report on the perpetrator. And the few successful women in the media should work towards encouraging and supporting others. These women could start by joining and actively participating in women's media associations whose main objective is to empower and raise the standards of women in the media. ■

Khayelitsha township, Cape Town. *Photo by Monica Bekwapi.*

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'Who Makes the News?'

The Global Media Monitoring Project 2000 finds great disparities in news coverage of men and women.

By Teresita Hermano and Anna Turley

When we look at news coverage through the prism of gender, what we discover ought to startle those who think women's perspectives and issues are being well represented. Even though the number of women journalists is increasing, when it comes to coverage by news organizations women's visibility is much more limited.

In two separate investigations—separated by five years—the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) provided just this kind of information. "Women's Participation in the News," an examination of the day's news on January 18, 1995 in 71 countries, revealed that women were the subject of news reports on radio, television and newspapers just 17 percent of the time. [That left men's visibility at 83 percent.] Five years later, after a period spanning a myriad of women's campaigns, including the massive World Conference on Women in Beijing and the post-Beijing activities, a more in-depth Global Media Monitoring Project took place on February 1, 2000 in 70 countries. The main findings, published in "Who Makes the News?" had hardly changed. Women in the world's media that day were found to be just 18 percent of the news subjects. These findings emerged at a time when women made up 41 percent of announcers and reporters of the news.

GMMP 2000 was the work of the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) Women and Media Programme. For more than a decade, the WACC Women's Programme has been organizing and supporting workshops and conferences, including the international conference on "Women Empowering Communication," held in Bangkok and attended by 430 media and gender activists in 1994. One of the main recommendations of the Bangkok Declaration was the undertaking of a global media monitoring study. The 1995 effort, coordinated by MediaWatch Canada, and the 2000 effort, organized by WACC, are considered the most extensive analysis of women's presence and participation in the world's media.

WACC was determined that the broad aims of the GMMP 2000 would be to strengthen solidarity among women in the media, media literacy, and advocacy on media and gender issues. The work in 1995 had already helped to demystify this kind of research by providing a worldwide network of monitors with the opportunity and tools to assess gender representation in the media. By 2000, we were able to see not only what changes had taken place after five years and research new questions but to extend the use of our findings. We could offer various monitoring groups contextual analysis, including results from their own country and region, which they could use in their education and advocacy work.

Employment Practices and the Presence of Women Journalists in the News Media

During the last 40 years there have been immense changes in women's participation in the news media. In the 1960's and 1970's, it was a rare event to see women anchoring television newscasts, yet today women make up a slight majority of television news announcers (56 percent), according to data from GMMP 2000. There have been less dramatic increases in women's participation as reporters—a large majority (69 percent) of reporters are still male.

The increasing presence of women in television news media is undoubtedly an important advance, yet even a cursory look at employment practices in the news media reveals a less rosy picture. At WACC's regional conferences on Gender and Communication Policy—held in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific between 1997-2000, many women journalists revealed that their appearance rather than their intellectual abilities or experience is frequently used as part of the criteria for their selection. This evidence is supported by GMMP 2000, which showed that although there are more women news presenters on television, they tend to disappear from the screen at an earlier age than their male colleagues do. From Asia to Africa and the Middle East, participants at the WACC conferences also confirmed that while women are more present in the newsroom, they continue to be victims of harassment and discrimination.

News Reporting and the Gender Division of Labor

What news do men and women report? Research has shown that there is a clear gender division of labor in news reporting, and this finding was confirmed by GMMP 2000. Women journalists are often confined to reporting local news rather than national or foreign news and "soft" topics such as entertainment or health more often than politics or crime. This gender segregation of labor, in addition to the relative values attached to "hard" and "soft" news, mean that while women

now comprise a greater proportion of news reporters than before, they are not enjoying equality with their male counterparts.

Women Journalists and Gender Sensitivity

Whether an increase in the number of women journalists will lead to improved coverage of women and women's issues in the media is highly contested. Recent research has done little to throw light on the matter. Although some argue that a critical mass of women working in the media can and will make an imprint on media content, others have highlighted the need to consider the more dominant impact of media ownership and the prevailing culture within the media industry.

The difficulties associated with women's representation in the media cannot simply be reduced by notching up a few percentage points in the share of women's time on air or in print. As Margaret Gallagher observed in "Gender Setting: New Agendas for Media Monitoring and Advocacy" (London, Zed Books 2001), "What is at stake is not just the number of women who appear in the media, but the weight of their voices." [See Gallagher's article on page 63.]

Evidence has, to date, been mixed. In "Who Makes the News?" the following information was gathered:

- In stories by female reporters, 24 percent of news subjects are women, whereas in stories by male reporters, only 18 percent of news subjects are women.
- In female reporters' coverage of "hard" news, 15 percent of news subjects are women, compared to 12 percent in coverage by male reporters.
- In "soft" news coverage by female reporters, 32 percent of news subjects are women, yet by male reporters, 27 percent are women.

Both "hard" and "soft" news stories by female reporters clearly do have more female news subjects than do those by male reporters, yet the portrayal of women in the media has not improved dramatically. Perhaps, then, the crucial question is, as Gallagher states, "not who is telling the story but how the story is told."

The Presence and Portrayal of Women in the News Media

One of the most startling results of GMMP 2000 was the discovery that women are a central focus in only 10 percent of stories. But even these stories are rarely inspired by a concern with women's relationships to or views about political, economic or social matters. Instead, many of these stories focus on women in stereotypical roles.

Quite common was the portrayal of women as victims, particularly of crime. While victims are, in general, common currency in news programs, women were found nearly three times more likely to appear as victims than men. Other stories from GMMP 2000 showed women's success in beauty contests or in weight reducing competitions. A few highlighted the more serious achievements of women, and a sprinkling actually addressed questions of women's rights or status in the political or social world.

As Gallagher shows in her analysis of the findings of GMMP 2000, while these sorts of stories do give time and space to women in the news, the content rarely advances the featured women's concerns or the interests of women overall. An extreme example comes from Turkey where only three percent of stories in the media focused on women. One of those was a television item about research into the link between heart attacks and snoring in women—a serious issue—yet the video footage used to illustrate the report showed women in bikinis posing on a beach.

Also missing from news stories that focus on women are the voices of the women concerned. Though not totally silent, their voices are heard only in the margins of the news agenda, rather than at its core. Frequently news accounts miss the opportunity to broaden the scope of their stories by including women's perspectives, even in cases where those views seemed essential to the story. One of the most striking examples in GMMP 2000 came from a Sudanese newspaper story about the problems faced by young women when they move away from home to study in another town. The article interviewed a male teacher and a male student, but did not include any words or views from a female. As Gallagher shows, this tendency to talk *about* rather than *to* women illustrates not only the very real absence of women's voices, but the profound lack of attention paid by the news media to the telling of women's stories generally.

Our monitoring efforts allow us to scrutinize what and how the news media are doing in regard to news coverage of women. But they also create a tool for action. Networks of women are energized by the organization and work of monitoring and once the findings emerge, they are empowered to promote change by the knowledge they have acquired. While we often hear that news is simply a reflection of what is happening, this close-up look, across borders and time zones, reminds women that reflections of their lives and their issues are still absent, despite their increasing presence in newsrooms. GMMP 2000 has provided the means for us to answer some of our questions, but what it does is raise so many more to which answers must be found. ■

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In Poland, Women Run the Largest News Organization

But critics contend that coverage of women's news is 'unpredictable and ignores many key issues.'

By Peggy Simpson

Helena Luczywo and Wanda Rapaczynski are powerhouses behind one of Europe's newest media empires, Agora. It owns a flagship newspaper in Poland, Gazeta Wyborcza, 17 radio stations, an Internet portal—and more. It also made millionaires of many of its workers with the largest employee stock offering in Central-Eastern Europe and now controls more than half of Poland's advertising revenue.

When Luczywo attended a media conference in Prague in July 1990, there were dozens of wannabe media moguls then surfacing from the ruins of state socialism. Few made it. Some sold out to foreign media companies; others proved to be inept managers with a tin ear for what readers wanted. The success of Agora was by no means certain, either. Yet today it is seen as one of the best-managed companies in Europe, with a commanding editorial and financial clout. This spring, Rapaczynski made Business Week's list of top 50 executives in Europe.

The Agora inner circle also includes Adam Michnik, a philosopher-writer who is the eloquent public voice of the paper, and publisher Piotr Niemczycki, Rapaczynski's alter ego on the business side. Without the linkup between Luczywo and Rapaczynski in 1990, however, there is scant chance that Gazeta Wyborcza would have prospered as the first independent newspaper established from the former Soviet bloc—let alone that Agora would be an $800 million media empire now poised to expand beyond Poland.

Luczywo and Rapaczynski had known each other as children, but their lives took dramatically different turns in 1968. Polish Communists launched an anti-Semitic campaign blaming Polish Jews for the worker-student revolts against the regime. Luczywo's family stayed put. Rapaczynski's left. From that time on, both women honed their management skills—but on incredibly different turf. Luczywo edited underground publications, keeping one step ahead of the communist cops. After the Solidarity free trade union was banned in late 1981, she edited its underground newspaper, Tygodnik Mazowsze (Mazovia Weekly), which sustained the movement even after most leaders were jailed. She put out 80,000 copies a week on 20 printing presses on a monthly budget of $1,000 from overseas donations—"quite a lot in those days."

Wanda Rapaczynski, president of Agora, created a media empire in Poland.

Rapaczynski went to Italy, then Sweden, before settling in New York. She married, had a daughter, earned a doctorate in psychology and then an MBA. On her first trip back to Poland in January 1990, she was scouting virgin territory for Citibank as head of their new-products research team.

Gazeta Wyborcza had been created in April 1989 as a limited liability company. Solidarity negotiators at the Round Table Talks with the Communist government argued for a private newspaper to be started to report on the first partly free elections June 4. Lech Walesa asked Michnik to start the paper; he enlisted Luczywo, and she brought along her staff from the Weekly. The May 8 first issue of 150,000 copies sold out quickly. Three weeks later Solidarity candidates won every contested seat. Within weeks, the Communists had handed government over to them—the first step in the collapse of Communism itself.

Despite the paper's instant success, Luczywo knew she needed help. She pleaded with Rapaczynski to find her pro bono experts to help shape a business side to the newspaper. Rapaczynski also was asked to find investors—and to develop an internal decision-making process to replace the chaotic socialist "egalitarianism."

Luczywo and Michnik were training their own reporters and, even in 1989, sent foreign correspondents to Washington, then to Moscow. Today they have eight correspondents, none of whom are women. (At the corporate parent, Agora, men direct all seven departments; on the newspaper, one woman is among four deputy editors.) Reporters learned on the job how to cover "shock therapy" economic reforms and to tell readers who was buying up what from the ranks of ex-Communists. They reported on payback demands by the Catholic Church, which had provided safe haven to Solidarity dissidents. And they

supported the 1990 reforms, even when it meant a showdown with Walesa, who was running against Solidarity economic reformers in the November 1990 presidential campaign on a plank to give every Pole an ownership stake in socialist enterprises. (A similar voucher privatization program was subsequently tried in the Czech Republic with disastrous results.) Gazeta Wyborcza backed the reformers, not Walesa, and he later demanded that the editors remove the Solidarity logo.

In retrospect, that was the start of the paper's real independence—even if they were not out of the woods financially. Luczywo and Rapaczynski agreed they needed a foreign investor to help finance rapid growth. "Our goal was to get 'clean' money that wouldn't be a political obligation," said Rapaczynski. This was easier said than done. Poland's reforms today get much praise, but back then the country was seen as a black hole and investors didn't want to be around for factory-floor showdowns over layoffs.

Agora had been created as a parent for the paper. Owners of The New York Review of Books loaned them $300,000 in 1990 for printing supplies. But most banks and venture capitalists turned them down. Rapaczynski's daughter wrote 400 letters to U.S. foundations but got back mostly questions—including "how long will this freedom last?"

Foreign media magnates wanted control with their investment. One rebuffed investor was Italy's current president (and media baron) Silvio Berlusconi's Fininvest media. The breakthrough came in 1993, when the Atlanta-based Cox Enterprises Inc. took a 12.3 percent stake in Agora, paving the way for eight million dollars in debt financing from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). They paid back the 1990 loan, built a $21 million printing plant, and computerized the newspaper. By 1995, they started buying radio stations and proved the skeptics wrong by successfully adapting a "golden oldies" format used by Cox.

Today, the newspaper has 19 local editions and 11 special sections including two quality magazines: Magazyn and High Heels (Wysocki i Obcasy) targeted to the interests of women. Rapaczynski has a $340 million acquisition pot. Luczywo left editing two years ago to prepare the Agora Internet portal, which was launched in early 2001.

Agora's 1999 public offering raised $93 million with part of the money going for stock options to 1,500 of the 3,000 workers, based on seniority, who could buy shares for one zloty (about 25 cents). When they could sell two years later, the shares had gone up to zl 104 (about 25 dollars).

But the Agora saga is not just about money. Many promising startups from 1990 fell apart because of the "culture" inherited from state socialism. "It was really difficult for many of us to switch from working in informal groups, as members of the underground, to learn to work in big organizations and then a big corporation," said Luczywo. The challenge was "getting out of the fog, so to speak," says Rapaczynski. "This organization doesn't lack in intelligence, but if that translates into everybody talking, that's a lot of wasted air." Her mantra was "focus, focus." She also imported Western solutions and scoffed at arguments that Poland was "different" and had to shape a homegrown remedy.

Rapaczynski was struck by the different "levels of self-confidence. One thing you will never hear from an American team and was heard here all the time [in 1990] was 'this can't be done'—'nie mosliwa.' I finally said I wouldn't stand for that phrase. And let's think about *how* it can be done." This approach paid off when tabloids and fancy magazines began to siphon off customers. At Gazeta, they'd established a framework for correcting mistakes. And there were plenty of them, from too-high newsstand prices to passive "order-takers" on the advertising staff. Then there was the two million-dollar "image advertising" campaign that Rapaczynski concluded "was a total waste of money." Circulation didn't go up. "We learned the hard way," she said.

The editors also got wakeup calls. As Poles put together "normal" lives, their overriding passion for politics waned. However, in time, Gazeta Wyborcza learned to connect with readers on issues far afield of Luczywo's passion for politics—on such mundane issues as finding jobs, cars, homes and the accoutrements that the "acquisitional" Poles insisted on having. They also learned to listen better to core concerns of readers about this transition.

The turning point was a groundbreaking series on maternity hospitals. A male editor (and new father) suggested that readers tell them their "birthing" experiences. An outpouring of horror stories resulted about poor facilities and demeaning attitudes. There had been reports of this before—feminists had had a seminar on "totalitarian practices in maternity hospitals"—but the Gazeta Wyborcza series made this a national issue the policy chiefs had to address.

Has this media empire run by two women made a difference for women in Poland? Opinions differ. Poles probably underestimate the impact of a commitment of resources needed to produce a high-caliber women's magazine. Few Western papers have done this. Rapaczynski wanted to snare more women readers but, even more, to give advertisers a vehicle to reach women, "specifically for beauty and fashion." And, she says, "we see a very nice fit." High Heels, the magazine supplement, boosted Saturday newspaper sales by eight percent its first year.

High Heels is far more than a fashion magazine, however. Cover stories feature women with wrinkles, not just under-30 beauties. Feminists write columns. Cutting-edge issues get explored at length, along with health and fitness pieces that advertisers prefer. But Rapaczynski says "we finally are beginning to show our feminist face—which is long overdue."

Maybe. Women's rights groups say the newspaper is unpredictable and ignores many key issues, for instance the reasons why far more women are unemployed than men (including women who held 80 percent of jobs in the decrepit textile garment industries that have disappeared with the loss of the Russian market and influx of Chinese imports) and the formidable work

and family issues. Rapaczynski contends that Polish feminists are "much more focused on politics versus bedrock issues…. They are Warsaw University feminists who are class oriented—who have an outflowing of rage on behalf of cleaning women who want an earlier retirement age. It is extremely irritating."

The paper's editorial stance on the key hot-button issue of reproductive rights stops short of being pro-choice, and there is not a lot of attention paid to the ramifications of illegal abortion in a country where underground abortions flourish. Luczywo says she is "very, very uncomfortable" with a "completely pro-choice position," partly because of abuses under Communism when contraception was not available; the state promoted abortions—and woman had an average of 20.

In many ways, "women's place" in society was up for grabs in the new Poland. The Catholic Church urged women to go home, as full-time wives and mothers. Women who took demanding jobs in the new economy faced irate husbands who still wanted meals on the table—at four in the afternoon. And early reporting in Gazeta Wyborcza was spotty. A story about a 1991 march by the Polish Feminist Association quoted an unnamed man as saying, in essence, that the activists were so ugly they needed "a better sex life." A Polish-American woman, who had donated to underground Solidarity, wrote Luczywo to congratulate her on the success of the paper—and to express dismay at the slurs in that story. Subsequent news stories did a better job of tracking "women's place" incidents. Some examples:

- An Exxon billboard used a "dumb broad" message to sell motor oil, complete with a smirking husband next to his distraught wife at the wheel. Fledgling feminists took umbrage and substituted their own message, an incident that was written about in Gazeta Wyborcza. Few advertisers made that mistake again.
- When a high school principal limited a new computer class to boys, parents of girls sought out a Gazeta reporter to complain. Girls were admitted.

Under Communism, many special privileges were given to mothers and not to women in general. With capitalism, it's become more expensive to hire these women; taking away the benefits is politically risky. Maternity leaves are paid for 24 weeks and employers must retain a woman's job for three years if she takes a full maternity leave. Western-type pay disparities also exist since women held many top professional jobs at hospitals and universities, which today are among the lower-paid jobs in Poland—much lower, for example, than the pay for jobs in male-dominated professions such as financial services.

These are complex issues related to the nation's transition and are, in many ways, more difficult stories to cover than those from earlier times when women might have been barred from universities or top jobs or from receiving credit. Gazeta Wyborcza covers these issues, but women's rights leaders often complain that they don't do it well enough.

Wanda Nowicka, director of the Polish Federation for Women and Family Planning, is a critic of the paper, but she is glad that High Heels has proven a success despite "writing serious stories." That, she concedes, will help legitimize those issues across society.

One can hardly ask for more praise than that. ■

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Reporting on War, Listening to Women

An Indonesian journalist argues that women have a 'psychological map' of war.

By Ratih Hardjono

Women living in conflict zones have strong views about conflicts that overtake their lives and community. They have political views about their situation but, for most of them, politics isn't the most important thing. What they care most about is assuring the survival of their families and communities. And, since men dominate the political arena, it is usually they who decide whether a war will be fought, then fight it. Women are left to cope with the results once the war has ended.

In the coverage of war, it is stories about women's lives that often go untold. In 1995, I attended a funeral of a young Hutu man killed in Bujumbura, Burundi. Foreign journalists waited in the front yard while a coffin was hastily being built out of leftover fruit boxes. When we got to the graveyard, we waited again while his family dug the grave. During this time, a wild-eyed woman approached me, pointed to my camera and pulled my hand gently. She then sat by the fragile coffin and looked straight into my camera. After taking her photo, she wrote her address on a tiny piece of torn paper and gave it to me. I assumed it was natural that she would want a picture for her and her children, for memory's sake.

There was no exchange of words between us. We didn't share a common language but even if we had, she

also gave the impression that she didn't want to talk and that she needed to stay silent and be strong to face her husband's burial. This was a critical time for her, a time when she had to start making decisions regarding this new and poorer life she had entered. She was grieved by the loss of her husband, but she was also terrified of entering even deeper poverty, something I learned when I came back later with an interpreter. She spoke little but kept saying how different life was now. She explained to me that she would only send her son to school and only to primary school. Her daughter was going to stay at home, and by not attending school would, like her, enter the cycle of poverty.

Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world. In any underdeveloped country with a large peasant farmer population, the death of a young able-bodied man means a great loss of income to his family. Expenditures must be reduced; the widow either reduces the amount of food she buys or the quality she has been trying to maintain. Sometimes, she decides she will eat only once a day.

I find the silence of women like this one expressive of a point of view. Talking about the tragedy unfolding uses up much-needed reserves of energy. The combination of observing, taking in, and emotionally processing the new realities of one's life requires extra strength and resiliency. These women will need to dig deep into their internal reservoir of strength to survive.

For journalists to penetrate this protective wall of silence requires time and effort. Yet when these women tell their stories, they are so very different than men's and necessary to hear if we are to understand the consequences of war. To speak with men in areas of conflict is to hear them offer precise descriptions of what happened—how many people died, where the war was fought, a bravado about their men colleagues, and a strong perception of the enemy, which is not necessarily accurate. Although the social and historical backgrounds are different, I found this to be a common thread as I reported on conflict in Bosnia, Burundi, Rwanda and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Among women living amid conflict, there is a ruthless practicality. They are very conscious of the fact that they don't have mobility and that at any time they could become refugees. Young mothers are burdened both by the care they give to their children but also to their elders. Yet their constant state of readiness is different from the men's, who think primarily about fighting back even if it means losing their lives. For the women, its about crisis management and different calculations, such as thinking about things to be packed and what is possible to carry if they have to suddenly leave their homes for good. It is also their responsibility to think about how to allocate tasks to members of the family if the time does come to leave their home.

I have watched refugees at the border of Burundi and Rwanda and in Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia. Perhaps because of the ways in which they've had to think about all of this and prepare for it, women cope better with being a refugee than do men. A Serbian woman left the Krajina, which is sandwiched between Bosnia and Croatia. Along with 250,000 refugees, she walked into Serbia carrying her family's clothes in a hand-embroidered tablecloth. I admired the light yellow tablecloth with the exquisite blue and white flowers strewn around the cloth and told her so. She smiled sadly and while stroking it explained that she did it herself when she first got married. Her children who were with her were now teenagers. This tablecloth will become an important part of her family history. Her smile said so much; no words were necessary to know that she and her family were never going back to the Krajina. The tablecloth symbolized the loss of her home and land but connected her to her past identity in the Krajina.

What I find most fascinating is how women have a "psychological map" of the war that is critical for the survival of their families in the longer term. This map offers them a way of seeing the world in its entirety—in its past and present and future simultaneously. In interviews, this idea doesn't always emerge as clearly as this, and often to hear women speak of this can be confusing to listen to. But there is a strange human filing system there among their jumbled emotions. A journalist needs to go back several times and speak with other women in this community. Out of these conversations will emerge similar themes and reoccurring threads, all of which will create a story that should be told.

This psychological map consists of emotional and psychological happenings of the family and community, things that become the cornerstones of family history and, when brought together, create a community's collective memory. In many countries that experience war, records are rarely kept of what actually happened: women's collective memories become crucial to the perception of that country's history.

Women are also, in many instances, the instigators of peace. On the island of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, conflict broke out between local landowners and the mining company and the government on the other side. After some years of conflict the women started to initiate dialogue with the aim of establishing peace. Finally a peace agreement, initiated by these women, was reached. So, too, in Sarajevo when by the end of 1995 the women had had enough of the miseries of war. In my interviews with them, there was already talk of pushing the men towards accepting peace. Although what happened politically was more complicated, the women's role as movers of the peace process cannot be underestimated. Peace is not a political or ideological stand for these women, rather it is seen as a necessity. As one woman put it to me in Sarajevo, "Peace is a strategy, so my children can live a normal live."

One problem with telling these important stories is that they are difficult to tell. They take time and sensitivity to report and cannot be told in quick soundbites or written as typical news stories with a tidy beginning, middle and end. For example, when a war ends, and the United Nations and foreign journalists go home, it is left to

those who are scarred by war to rebuild. And this process can be as painful as the war itself. How do you start rebuilding Rwanda as a nation, both physically and emotionally? Can you really forgive your neighbor who killed your husband and made your life poorer?

Rape stories are the hardest to report. I never know whether or not to write them. By reporting them, I highlight the atrocities and, perhaps, lead to stopping the perpetrators, but at the same time I know the shame that the women and members of their community feel when their story is told to an international audience. I also cannot be certain if my reporting would help or worsen the woman's life.

In Bosnia, many women who had been raped came to Sarajevo for protection. I interviewed a Bosnian minister about one woman, and he told me everything had been taken care of. He said the woman was taken back into her community and, if a child was born, the child would be given her father's surname. But when I finally tracked down a building where several of these women were staying, a female director asked me to "preserve our dignity as women." Contrary to what the minister had said, she told me that the best thing for these women was for them to leave Bosnia and begin a new life in another country. She explained that these women had been ostracized by their own communities; they were seen as "soiled" by the enemy.

All of these women were wounded in some way. Some required intensive psychological counseling and then might return to their communities. Many survived psychologically and attempted to start living again. A common thread among most of them was that they did not yet want their stories to be told. After listening to them, I felt as if bringing attention to their rapes might only delay their ability to rebuild their lives. For the women themselves, the rationale of not attaching priority to their conditions was also part of the ruthless practicality some of them used to survive. I learned that when each of the women was ready, she would speak frankly about it. For the Dutch women who were forced to become "comfort women" for the Japanese during World War II, it is only recently—more than 50 years after it happened—that they have started to tell their story, as part of the last stage of their recovery, when

Women, War and the Media

In October, Indian author and journalist Ammu Joseph presented a lecture on covering gender to students at the Asian College of Journalism in Chennai, India. An essay, based in part on her lecture, was published on The Hoot (www.thehoot.org), the Web site of the Media Foundation in Delhi, India. Excerpts from Joseph's essay follow:

Recent critiques of media coverage of the aftermath of September 11 have dealt with a number of ethical issues that confront the media during times of conflict: patriotism vs. accuracy and fairness, official vs. self-censorship, national vs. public interest, majority vs. minority opinion, and so on. However, little attention seems to have been paid to the media and gender in the context of terrorism and war….

Ever since the so-called U.S.-led/British-backed attack on Afghanistan began on October 7, I have been vaguely conscious of a particular anomaly in the media's coverage of the war. I recognized what it was while watching an October 24 television report on the gathering of Afghan leaders in Peshawar for a discussion on the post-war scenario in Afghanistan: There were hardly any women in any of the reports (apart from female journalists, who have been quite conspicuous by their presence).

It seemed to me quite extraordinary that anyone could look at that overflowing hall in Peshawar and not notice that there was not a single woman there…. I was amazed that journalists covering the event did not find it remarkable that the future of a nation was being discussed without even one representative of one half of its citizenry…. Especially when everyone knows that the women of Afghanistan and their children have paid the highest price for the wars that have been raging in their country for two decades—wars that they have had no role in waging….

The gender angle to war coverage cannot be seen exclusively in terms of reports on violations of women's right to physical security, including rape, sexual harassment, and sexual exploitation—widespread and serious as these tend to be. It needs to also take into account women's heightened experience of violence and trauma during periods of conflict—both physical and psychological, both within the home and outside it. It needs to spotlight the ways in which "culture" and "tradition" are often used during times of political tension and strife to curtail women's human rights. It needs to take note of the additional social and economic burdens placed on women's shoulders at such times, when they often find themselves solely responsible for their families (including the very old, the very young, and the sick) under circumstances where even food and shelter are not always available. And it certainly needs to focus attention on women's political rights, including their right to participate in decision-making and governance.

If women hold up half the sky during peacetime, they hold up even more of it during wartime. This is surely a fact that the media have a responsibility to recognize and report. One way to begin is to acknowledge women as legitimate and vital sources of information, as well as insight, even in the context of war, the ultimate manifestation of machismo. ■

Ammu Joseph's article about women and journalism in India is on page 85.

the ordeal is put to rest.

War stories captivate TV audiences with scenes of destruction, but stories of rebuilding are more fascinating because they are about a community remaking itself and human beings surviving. Today, modern technology reports news faster and more vividly through television, but this means the entire story is rarely told. So many facets of this Hutu family's life and their community don't have a chance to be told, given the tools now used to convey most news. Speed has usurped depth in reporting. But in this story, this man's killing was part of the ethnic violence in Burundi and Rwanda in 1995, so the story is much larger than his death. And for women living in war and zones of conflict, not many journalists consider their stories dramatic enough to qualify as "real" war stories. Often, their stories—if covered at all—are referred to only as "soft" news.

Print journalism tries to go deeper into these stories, but also comes up against the problem of space and the fact that they are competing with the vividness and speed of television for the attention of an audience. The routines of everyday life are really hard to write about, even if an editor can be made interested in such coverage. And this story is rarely a visual one.

Given the potentially long-term war against terrorism that is now being waged and personal concern for security, perhaps the dizzying pace of life will be slowed. Perhaps this means that we will find more reporters willing to spend time interviewing women—such as an Afghan woman in a refugee camp to learn what her family and community life has been like and learn what visions she has for rebuilding her community in the future.

Being a woman journalist covering war, it has been a most humbling experience. It has made me conscious of women's crucial role as keepers of oral history who are critical in preserving a community identity. I always return home admiring the strength, the resilience, and the resourcefulness these women have. ■

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Storming the Citadel of Hard News Coverage

Women report alongside men but their impact can be difficult to discern.

By Ammu Joseph

Indian journalists of both sexes are covering assorted aspects of the terrorist attacks in the United States, the retaliatory military attacks on Afghanistan, the implications of both for India, South Asia and the world, and the subsequent worldwide panic about the apparent spread of anthrax. Women have been conspicuous by their presence in the Indian media during this period as correspondents and commentators, editors and anchors, interviewers and hosts of current affairs programs, especially on some high-profile television news channels and in the indigenous English-language press.

However, it is difficult, if not dangerous, to deduce from this discernible reality that gender is no longer an issue in the Indian media. The story about six blind persons and their descriptions of an elephant—based on the part of the animal they were able to touch and feel—is appropriate to recall in this context. Sub-continental India is arguably the mother of all elephants, and the Indian media is one of her sizeable pachydermatous progeny. Both defy definitive description. Nevertheless, some clarity about the current situation of women in the Indian media, particularly the press, has emerged from discussions among women journalists within the country over the past couple of years.

There is little doubt that the number of Indian women in journalism had reached an unprecedented high by the turn of the millennium, although there is still no quantitative data to corroborate this observable fact. In the print media, female bylines have become commonplace during the past decade, not only in magazines and features sections but also on the news and editorial pages of dailies, including the front page. Apart from a large number of female staff reporters and sub-editors (or copyeditors), the Indian press currently boasts many women who are senior editors (including political and financial editors), chief reporters, chiefs of bureaus, special and foreign correspondents, business journalists, sports reporters and columnists, not to mention magazine editors and feature writers. It also harbors a few female sports reporters and photojournalists, as well as a couple of female cartoonists.

Women journalists now write on a wide range of current events and issues spanning a broad spectrum of subjects, including high-profile topics such as politics, business and economics, international relations and what is euphemistically known as defense. A number of women have managed to storm the citadel of hard news coverage. Many are recognized for their reportage from various areas of conflict in and around the country, having broken exclusive stories and secured rare interviews with leaders of militant organizations operating in these hot spots. Several women journalists have

The author's book examines gender and the media in India.

been associated with some of the most sensational scoops of recent years. Quite a few have also made names for themselves in the prestigious field of political reporting or analysis or both.

However, this apparently encouraging state of affairs is far from universal. There are significant differences in the situation of women journalists across the country and the press. For instance, the growing number of women in the metropolitan media workforce has created the impression that the barriers that once restricted women's entry into the press have been overcome. But resistance to the recruitment of women still persists in many places and in certain sections of the press.

Similarly, the increasing visibility of women in the indigenous English-language print media—generally known as the mainstream, national press because of its unique reach and influence—suggests that there are no more impediments in women's path to the top of the editorial pyramid. But many female journalists still experience slow and limited progress, if not total stagnation, in their careers. And the existence of a glass ceiling, which currently keeps women from occupying the very top spots in the editorial hierarchy (of newspapers, in particular) is widely acknowledged, even by women who have reached relatively high positions within their news organizations.

The spectacular success of a number of women in a wide range of high profile areas of journalism hitherto assumed to be male terrain implies that there is nothing to stop competent and determined women from fulfilling their professional dreams. However, the tendency to relegate women to particular functions and beats within the press has not completely disappeared. And many women allege that they are not given a chance to demonstrate their capabilities, especially in what is commonly, if erroneously, viewed as hard core, mainstream journalism.

Gender-based problems are particularly acute in the Indian language press, which thrives in at least 100 languages and dialects, and reaches a much larger proportion of the country's reading public than the more conspicuous English press. Another factor that bears consideration in this context is the reality of minorities within minorities. If race piggybacks on gender, and vice versa, in some parts of the world, in India class, caste, creed and ethnicity often play a critical role in determining who, even among women, gains entry into the media and has the opportunity to rise in the profession, although, at present, no data exists about the socio-economic and cultural composition of the Indian press corps.

There is little doubt that women have contributed significantly to broadening the scope of press coverage to include more and better reporting on and analysis of social issues in general and women's issues in particular. Women journalists have definitely played an important role in highlighting a wide range of issues related to human development and rights, social and economic justice, culture and other vital aspects of life and society that were earlier neglected by a press traditionally preoccupied with politics (in the narrow sense) and government. Women have been noted for their coverage of social trends. They are also credited with having introduced more human interest in the media, even while covering hard news.

Back in the 1980's, the reports of many women journalists reporting on caste, communal or ethnic conflicts stood out from the rest because they included the experiences and perspectives of ordinary people caught in the crossfire, especially women and children. Now more journalists of both sexes seem to focus on the human dimension of such stories.

At the same time, it is difficult to state categorically that the presence and rise of women in the Indian media have had a perceptible, positive impact on mainstream journalism and media coverage as a whole. Women's capacity to influence the agenda, practice and output of the media is currently limited by several factors. They include:

- The number of women in key decision-making positions is still relatively small.
- Many successful women journalists tend to adopt, or at least adapt to, the prevailing values and norms of the profession, like the majority of their counterparts elsewhere, in the media as well as in other professions. At present, such conformity appears to be an effective strategy for career advancement; those who retain an alternative worldview seem to come up against the glass ceiling sooner rather than later.
- A third inhibiting factor is the apparent shift in the Indian media's pri-

Deshabhimani, Malayalam newspaper office. *Photo courtesy of The Hindu, India.*

orities and preoccupations during the past decade due to a number of developments, especially within the economy, that have affected many aspects of society, including the media. Influential sections of the media today seem obsessed with the lives of the bold and the beautiful, the rich and the famous, the pampered and the powerful, and consequently less receptive to the interests and concerns of those who do not belong to this charmed circle. In this altered media environment, there is less time and space for in-depth coverage of serious issues, including many relating to gender.

Like the media everywhere, the Indian press, too, has a predilection for events, especially dramatic ones that involve or threaten violence or conflict. As a result, the gender-related issues that routinely receive the most media attention are those that fit into dominant perceptions of what constitutes news. Among these are violent atrocities such as rape and dowry-related murder and political hot potatoes, like the recent threat by a militant organization in Kashmir to disfigure or kill girls and women who ignore its edict on the wearing of the burka (an alien garment for Kashmiri women, including Muslims). Even here, the notoriously brief attention span of the media—a familiar global problem—militates against sustained, consistent coverage. For instance, a spurt in prominent reporting about "dowry deaths"—often spurred by a particularly sensational case, a public demonstration, a court judgment, and/or release of new research findings—is usually followed by a fallow period when the same kind of news reverts to being treated as a routine event and is relegated to its usual obscure place within the paper.

…it is difficult to state categorically that the presence and rise of women in the Indian media have had a perceptible, positive impact on mainstream journalism and media coverage as a whole.

The media's tendency to focus on events rather than processes often results in the neglect of many important issues concerning women—for example, the combination of chronic malnutrition and overwork that threatens the health of millions of women and the initiation into public life of thousands of rural women elected to institutions of local governance from the mid-1990's onwards. When such issues do get covered, it is because of the efforts of women—inside and outside the media—more often than not. However, there are signs of hope in what can appear a bleak scenario. Certain kinds of gender-related issues now seem to be accepted by both men and women in the media as legitimate subjects for mainstream media coverage. At least one journalism school offers an elective course on gender amid reports that others might soon do so.

Meanwhile, awareness and concern about gender-related issues are very much alive and kicking among a cross section of media women today, including young professionals. According to one young female journalist, this is not just because they are women but because such issues are inherently important and involve a section of the citizenry that does not easily find a voice in the media. "Our generation has little idealism left," says another. "But the little that remains seems to be with the women." ■

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Media Don't Portray the Realities of Women's Lives

Business decisions and societal ambivalence in India leave many women's stories untold.

By Sakuntala Narasimhan

Take one billion people, add a mind-boggling diversity of lifestyles, and what you have is a nation of paradoxes. There were, at last count, 49,145 newspapers and periodicals in over 100 languages and dialects in India, but the country also has the largest number of illiterates in the world. Indira Gandhi, a woman, was prime minister for 16 long years, yet more than 250 million Indian females remain unlettered.

To portray the changing role of women in journalism and the changing ways in which women are portrayed in the media, it is to images I turn, like someone pulling snapshots from albums to describe an evolving place and people.

In the first set of snapshots, a popular Tamil-language weekly serialized a story some 50 years ago in which the protagonist, a battered wife, decides finally to break away and takes off her "thaali" chain (the sacred marriage symbol that a bridegroom ties round the bride's neck, never to be removed as long as he is alive). Though fictitious, the gesture brought angry waves of protests from outraged readers. She could leave her husband, but to remove the thaali? Sacrilege!

Today, a young bride in "Kora Kaagaz," a popular family serial, enjoying a high viewership on nationwide television, yanks off the same auspicious marriage symbol and walks out of a sham marriage. And millions of viewers applaud her spunk.

In another set of snapshots, 20 years ago, I was asked to contribute a short story to Savvy, a leading women's magazine. I wrote about a young, recently widowed woman who refuses to dress in drab white or remove her bangles (as decreed by custom) and decides to continue to dress and live the way she used to, for the sake of her young son. Brickbats flew. Some readers accused me of "destroying our glorious culture of fidelity and purity in women." (How wearing a green, rather than a white, sari constitutes infidelity I haven't yet understood.) Some praised it for its "boldness."


A 'golden' visit by *mast mast* girl

Woman ends life over dowry

Victim of dowry harassment dies of burn injuries

A comparison between coverage of beauty and dowry deaths.

Today, this story wouldn't raise half an eyebrow.

And so the comparisons go on: During 1984, when I produced a radio documentary on women in Indian society, a woman reporter I interviewed commented on her fight for inclusion in riot coverage assignments. "Well, don't come crying to me later, when you get hurt," her male editor quipped. "Male reporters can be just as scared by bullets—they too can get hurt, right?" she argued.

Today, Barkha Dutt has won kudos for her courageous reporting from a bunker in war-torn Kashmir, with missiles whizzing past her ear.

A Sunday morning in October 2001: Every paper carries, in its supplement, a "women's section" ranging from serious/feminist to frothy/frivolous. But even in the ones that carry strongly feminist columns, the matrimonial ad section is an eye opener. "Wanted, fair, tall, slim bride," says an advertisement from the parents of a software engineer based in the United States. (There are no such specifications in the "grooms wanted" columns.)

I asked an editor if he had considered refusing such ads for "fair" brides. "You must be joking," he retorted. The ads go out on the Internet and mean revenue. Market forces (not social ethics—much less gender equity) dictate contents, with profits the main criterion, especially when most publications are owned by businesses. A strong, high-profile woman edits the popular weekly section of the paper. I

"Liberation and empowerment have become equated—even in a women's magazine professing to be substantive—with sauciness or 'becoming more like the west' rather than addressing some of the harsh realities that affect the lives of millions of disadvantaged women."

ponder this paradox and conclude that even if today most editorial supplements are edited by women, the contents of the main paper are overseen and decided by male editors, therefore changes in gender-linked perceptions of "news" are merely superficial.

There have been exceptions, such as when women in the media made a significant contribution to gender equity in regard to the law involving rape. In 1979, the Supreme Court exonerated a policeman of rape on the grounds that the victim, a teenage tribal girl, had had sexual relations with her boyfriend and was therefore of lax morals and could have consented to the policeman's advances. Women activists, supported vigorously by women in the media, succeeded in raising a national outcry and in reopening the case. The rape law was subsequently amended to put the onus of proving innocence on the accused rather than the victim, especially in custodial rape cases.

There is today, compared with a generation ago, an overwhelming visibility of women in the media. But that does not necessarily translate into gender equity in terms of the content of what goes on the pages. What we tend to forget in this confusing scenario is that "engineer" or "doctor" does not necessarily equate with "liberal-modern," and "unlettered" does not mean lacking in spunk. Nanjangud Tirumalamba, a pioneering woman journalist of 100 years ago, was married at 10 and widowed at 14. Forced to sit at home thereafter as an "inauspicious outcast," this woman taught herself to write, went on to start a journal in 1917 and, through her work, became a role model for younger women. She died in 1982 at the age of 93, and a prestigious prize—competed for by women writers and journalists—is now given in her honor.

Eighty years ago, male journalists ridiculed Tirumalamba's writings through scathing criticism. Today, women journalists complain that many male editors still regard them as suitable only for covering "soft" stories—fashion and flower shows, for example. "I wanted to do a story on the problems of women commuters on buses—seats reserved for women are often taken by men who abuse us about wanting equality," a female reporter explained. "My story was reduced to a small item of 300 words with women's strong comments edited out and men's frivolous ones left in, raising a laugh. It was also relegated to an inside page, though working women make up 50 percent of bus commuters." Another trainee journalist said, "I submitted a piece about men being taught to share kitchen and child-care duties. The editor said, 'Why don't you turn it into a humor piece?'"

The recent attacks on Americans took more than 3,000 lives. Many more women die every year in what are called "dowry deaths" in India. When they bring dowries considered insufficient by their in-laws, they are doused in kerosene and burned. The news of each such incident appears as a tiny, two-column-inch item tucked in an inside page. There is little media outcry, except for an occasional article written by a woman activist, and little public outrage. More women work as journalists today than ever before, yet dowry deaths continue not only to occur but to increase in number. In contrast, a four-minute visit by a movie actress on a soap brand promotion tour gets reported prominently (10 column inches), with a large color photograph and gushing descriptions of what she wore.

I pull out Femina magazines from the 1970's and compare them with current issues. Even before looking inside, the covers make a statement: In the old issues, the covers seem soft, demure, feminine and "goody." They show smiling women, hair tied back neatly, holding up flowers or a heart-shaped card saying, "Happy 1979." A contest for children, hairstyles and star forecasts are the highlights.

Today the cover girls appear in skimpy, barely there western clothes, hair blown loose, mouth open, bellybutton exposed (message: "be daring!"). Designer clothes, a quiz on

"Is he the love of your life?" and "You can ask him out" are the highlighted features. Liberation and empowerment have become equated—even in a women's magazine professing to be substantive—with sauciness or "becoming more like the west" rather than addressing some of the harsh realities that affect the lives of millions of disadvantaged women.

The concerns and needs of the 240 million rural women of the country become largely irrelevant, because they don't buy magazines. Once in a while, a gutsy rural woman does get profiled in the mainstream papers, but the norm is still to stick to fashions, fancy cuisine, and fitness regimens (to fight obesity) rather than focus attention on hunger and destitution among the teeming millions. A class/income divide operates, within gender.

Television has a wider reach. More than 87 percent of Indians have access to it, so TV could contribute effectively to women's empowerment through innovative programs. But again, profits are determined by sponsorship, and sponsors (mostly multinationals, thanks to the new economic policy of globalization) don't want grim tales of oppression or gender inequities because these will not sell their lipsticks or cola drinks. ("Why else would we sponsor, except for boosting sales?" says one marketing executive candidly.)

"I can't glamorize feminist issues. If I don't glamorize, I don't sell. If I don't sell, I lose my job," an editor concedes frankly, while another adds, "It is like carrying cigarette ads: Everyone knows cigarettes kill and yet you find full page ads because they bring attractive revenues. So also with sexism."

Women journalists break stock exchange scam stories and, at the same time, sexist depictions of the female continue to appear alongside their work. What we are experiencing in mainstream media as well as in women's magazines is an amorphous mix of traditional and "modern" viewpoints and perspectives. And this is happening, in part, because the status of women in Indian society is itself in a state of flux, and the business priorities override the efforts and sensibilities of those who argue that the realities of women's lives—both their achievements and their huge challenges—ought to be honestly portrayed. ■

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Bringing Women's Stories to a Reluctant Mainstream Press

At Women's Feature Service, journalists write about women's lives.

By Angana Parekh

In New Delhi, India, is the headquarters of Women's Feature Service, an international news organization directed and staffed by women who produce articles reported from 40 countries for newspapers, magazines and Web sites. By gathering and providing access to these stories about women's lives, Women's Feature Service (WFS) seeks to create "space" for women's voices and experiences in mainstream media, where such topics don't usually receive this same kind of attention. WFS produces and markets women-centric articles. It also lobbies decision-makers in newspapers and magazines about such coverage and trains journalists to be able to recognize stories about women's concerns, to use gender-correct language, and to ask the right questions of appropriate sources.

WFS exists because of the felt need for a gender balance in news coverage and because of dissatisfaction about the ways in which news organizations—in India and elsewhere—treat news coverage about women. Often, the media either ignore important stories altogether, relegate reporting to obscure places in the newspaper, or sensationalize incidents without examining the underlying context or causes. The media tend to focus on women only when it comes to "women's issues," forgetting that women also have an equal stake in so-called "male concerns" such as the budget, economy, globalization, agriculture and conflict resolution.

Our experience shows us that newspaper and magazine space for articles on gender-focused subjects is shrinking as commercial pressures increase and owners focus on the balance sheet. We've analyzed which of our stories sold well between January and September 2001; those that did include articles on women's health, women in conflict (including stories about fundamentalism, domestic violence, and human rights), education, religion, political empowerment and travel. WFS's efforts to speak with senior jour-

Women engaged in processing coir fiber (fiber obtained from the husk of a coconut). *Photo courtesy of The Hindu, India.*

nalists (both men and women) in newspapers have resulted in serious articles being published by national dailies, state-level newspapers, magazines and some leading Indian-language publications. We've also learned that the ways in which we package our stories, and their relevance to current news, matter. But constant effort with marketing these stories is required.

Certain news stories rarely do well. When the subject is domestic violence, rape, dowry deaths, laws on inheritance, divorce and maintenance, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, lack of access to education and health services, police cruelty, and reproductive rights, it is only sensational "bad news" stories that generate interest. Despite the presence of women journalists on the crime beat, incidents of rape and dowry deaths (shockingly regular occurrences in the Indian subcontinent) are usually reported in a routine manner with the police being the sole source of information. Deadline pressure is one reason, but the other is that editors rarely insist that reporters get more information from other sources. Nor is there often any follow-up to an incident. When it comes to issues that impact most directly on women, news that should cause concern and lead to analytical articles that examine a particular issue in depth is often dismissed in a couple of paragraphs on an inside page.

Villagers in West Bengal line up before panchayat (village council) polls. *Photo courtesy of The Hindu, India.*

The responsibility of the media to educate, inform and stimulate debate seems often to be forgotten. Moreover, coverage of women's issues tends to be event-based, not sustained. For instance, little serious writing has been done on proposed laws on domestic violence and sexual harassment in the workplace even though non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and India's National Commission for Women have been working on them. The interface between NGO's and media needs improvement. These are the kinds of stories that we can and do pursue through the Women's Feature Service.

The other drawback is that there are only a few women writers—and fewer men—who can give a fresh perspective or insights into issues that concern women. Many women journalists have been conditioned (both socially and through the competitiveness of this profession) to adopt masculine attitudes and values. For instance, for a month after the United States declared its "war on terror" and began bombing Afghanistan, none of the leading newspapers in India wrote on its editorial page about the women in this conflict. At the same time, a leading women's activist wrote for WFS a thought-provoking piece that argued that the terms of both war and peace were masculine and coercive and that these terms had an impact on women. The article was published on the editorial page of India's largest newspaper, The Times of India, and subsequently by other publications. [More information about the activities and history of WFS can be found at www.wfsnews.org.]

In India, there is a glass ceiling that women journalists have yet to break:

Not a single mainline newspaper in India has a woman chief editor. One reason, of course, is that women joined the profession late—the first batch of women entered the profession in the 1960's—and took to covering politics even later. But it must be pointed out that there are male chief editors who are much younger than many senior women journalists are. Though women journalists have proved as competent, if not more, than men, they still lag behind in the power game. Two women who are at the top—Shobhana Bhartia (managing editor of The Hindustan Times) and Malini Parthasarathy (executive editor of The Hindu)—both belong to the families that own the newspapers. They've had to work hard to prove themselves and overcome some amount of intra-office opposition, but the fact remains they would not have risen this far but for their family connections. Interestingly, both do not have brothers, giving rise to the question: Would they have been given these opportunities had there been male siblings?

At The Hindustan Times and The Hindu, the presence of a woman editor has not made much difference in terms of news coverage and treatment. Nor is there any special concern for women journalists (flextime, provision of child care). In fact, when The Hindustan Times had a case of sexual harassment some time ago, the young woman sub-editor was asked by the female managing editor to drop the case she had filed in the court. (The sub-editor went to court after she received no response to her complaint from the management.) The senior male colleague against whom she had filed the case was removed from his position—and promoted! Finally, working conditions in the paper became so hostile that the sub-editor left. She now works as a freelancer.

In 1994, women journalists based in Delhi formed a body called Indian Women's Press Corps (IWPC). The IWPC seeks to encourage women journalists, promote debate about women's issues, and provide a forum for networking with fellow professionals, politicians, bureaucrats and academics. While many of these aims are being realized, problems like sexual harassment or discriminatory treatment have not been adequately addressed. One reason is that most members are also employed by publishing houses and wish to avoid unpleasantness—or worse, coercion—from employers.

Women journalists in India have made a lot of progress but still have a long road ahead to gain equality with their male colleagues and influence the manner in which news and issues are handled. ■

Angana Parekh is a senior journalist who has worked for 18 years with two of India's leading newspapers, the Indian Express and The Hindu. She is now director of Women's Feature Service, treasurer of the Indian Women's Press Corps, and serves on the executive committee of WomenAction, an international network of women's organizations.

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In Pakistan, Journalists Maintain Women's Lesser Status

[Journalists] 'have a somewhat conformist approach towards women's issues.'

By Massoud Ansari

A man slaughtered his wife and mother-in-law in Hyderabad in the wee hours of a Sunday morning. After six months of marriage to Khan Mohammed, Surahia had moved in with her mother after developing differences with her husband. Mohammed sneaked into the house and attacked his mother-in-law, Jameela, 45, with a sharp-edged weapon while she was asleep. He cut her throat and other parts of her body, then murdered his wife when she woke up and cried for help.

Sources claimed that Mohammed suspected that his estranged wife had developed illicit relations with an unknown local and that was why she had separated from him a year and a half before. "He slaughtered his mother-in-law because he believed that she was also a part of the crime," one source said in a newspaper report that appeared in a major paper in Pakistan. As often happens in coverage of such stories, the media—by their use of a quote like this—provide justification for such murders.

Women activists in Pakistan believe that by reporting such incidents this way, journalists reflect—and do not challenge—the nation's cultural traditions, and they perpetuate male domination in the society. Religious convictions also play a major part in portraying a woman (or wife) as this story did.

Traditional media in Pakistan tend to praise women who are submissive and conform their actions and words to reflect more docile virtues. When a woman demonstrates her independence, whether financial or intellectual, resentment rises against her, and this is reflected in the way such women are portrayed by the press. Says Rehana Hakeem, editor of Newsline, a leading newsmagazine in Pakistan, "Other than the religious or cultural obligations,

one more reason that the plight of the women is underreported in Pakistani media is also because of the fact that—except for the English press—if you visit Urdu and regional newspaper offices which captures more than 80 percent of the newspaper market, you would hardly find women workers. It all is a male domain and they have a somewhat conformist approach towards women's issues." Hakeem says that many women are denied jobs in the Urdu newspapers. Those who are hired are hounded by the male staff, often to the extent that they decide to quit their jobs.

Women in Pakistan have long been treated as property. All important decision-making that pertains to a family—and even to a woman's own rights—is done by the man. "She has no right to marry, and if she ever tries to defy it, she is killed. But once married, she is taken as a kind of a machine who only produces children and supposes to raise them. If she chooses to seek divorce, she is denied her right to keep her children, and the media in Pakistan are generally a reflection of this," laments a women's rights activist at the Aurat Foundation of Pakistan. Another observer at the Human Rights Commission in Pakistan says that "it is unthinkable in media to sell the idea to make husband stay at home and take care of the children and the wife may go to work if she is more qualified than her spouse. In every advertisement, you would see women taking care of the kids, while the husband is always projected as professional."

Women's rights campaigners believe that the media in Pakistan are hypocritical in their portrayal of women. Sakar Moloo, a women's rights activist, explains that "when it comes to the projection of their objects or products, they would cross all the cultural or religious bindings and would not hesitate to highlight her nudity, but when it comes to her genuine problems, she is not helped." Moloo cites as an example the exploitation of women who are denied a male partner by being "married off" to the Islamic holy book, the Koran, to prevent the division of land and deprive them of their share of their parents' property. "But the local media have never discussed this most macabre tradition and have instead tried to hush it up. We only came to know about this barbaric tradition when BBC discovered it in a documentary," Moloo laments.

The plight of women has a long history in the religious society of Pakistan, where a majority of people believe that a woman is weaker and less than a man because Eve was made from Adam's rib for the latter's pleasure. The problems of women in Pakistan have multiplied, especially during the 11-year rule of Pakistan's model dictator, General Zia-ul-Haq. He managed to get various laws enacted, such as to define women's testimony as being worth half that of the man. Under another law, passed during the same period, the compensation for a murdered woman or a non-Muslim was set at half that of a murdered Muslim man. Yet another Zia-era statute mandated that four Muslims must witness a rape for it to be proved in the court. Women were also made to wear veils at their workplaces.

Women's rights activists contend that because these draconian statutes still exist—including the Zina and Hudood Ordinance in which a rape victim must produce four Muslim witnesses to seek justice—many women never complain to authorities or seek justice for actions done to them. What happens to women only catches the attention of the Pakistani media when they think that it might help sell their products, so "sensational" stories about women are the only ones likely to be told.

Naziha Syed Ali, an assistant editor of Newsline, noted that the vernacular press in Pakistan devoted a lot of attention to a recent incident involving Khar, a powerful businessman, and a call girl named Fakhra. By throwing acid in Fakhra's face, Khar mutilated her. "Most of the regional newspapers highlighted the call girl aspect—though it is irrelevant," says Ali. "Some of the headlines in these newspapers goes like, 'Raqaasa sai shadi ki aur usai jala diya' ('Married to a dancing girl and set her ablaze') or 'Khar aur raqaasa' ('Khar and the dancing girl')." Clearly, the sordid details interest newspaper writers more than the plight of the woman. "It all is a male centric, which stems more from traditional values rather than the religious convictions," Ali contends.

Not only do traditional media in Pakistan tend to highlight negative images of women but also they rarely draw attention to the lives of successful career women. Zulfikar Rajpar, the author of "Adhu Sach" (Half-Truth) says, "Even Akram Khatoom, who retired recently as one of the most successful bankers and set up First Women Bank in Pakistan, is hardly known because she has never been projected properly." Even though many of the commercialized banks in Pakistan are borrowing her idea of small loans (mainly to women who want to start small businesses), very few people know she originated this idea in Pakistan. Nor do many readers learn of the accomplishments of women who do borrow money to start these businesses, since such stories are rarely reported.

Women's rights activists in Pakistan believe it's time that centuries-old traditions can be broken and must be broken if the country wants to achieve economic prosperity. "The idea of confining 50 percent of the population back home would further put the country in economic limbo," says one activist. But if journalists, bound by cultural tradition, continue to portray women's lives as they do—ignoring their accomplishments and leaving unchallenged their social and legal circumstances—then the road to reach this goal will be longer and far bumpier. ■

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'Visual Voices': Photos From China

'Women turn the camera's eye on their own lives.'

The challenge was how to learn about the lives of women in rural China. The solution: provide them with cameras, teach them to use them, and let village women in Yunnan province create a collective self-portrait. Women between the ages of 18 and 57 took more than 40,000 photographs: 200 were selected for a traveling exhibition and 100 for a book, "Visual Voices: 100 Photographs of Village China by the Women of Yunnan Province." The photographs and captions on these pages are from this book.

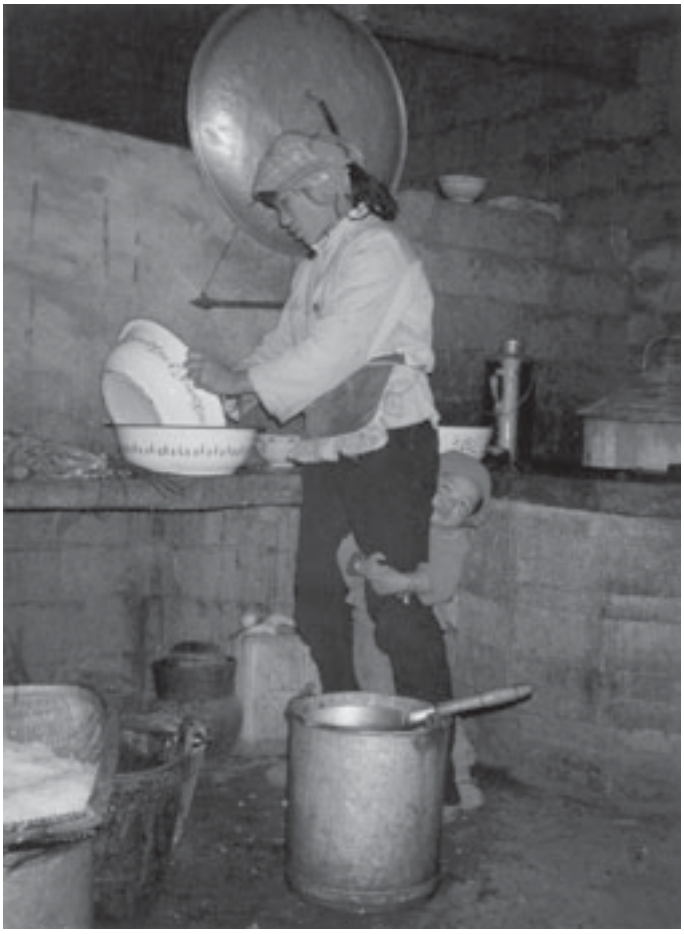
This photographic journey was part of a U.S. and China initiative, funded by the Ford Foundation, to assess the reproductive health needs of women in rural areas of China. By taking pictures of life in their villages, the women provided public health officials with the ability to see them as they see themselves. The photographs created a common ground of understanding from which discussions emerged; such conversations—about health and work and change—might not have taken place without this visual record to prompt them.

As Mary Ann Burris of the Ford Foundation wrote in the forward to "Visual Voices," the use of these photographs to generate conversation about aspects of rural life and the needs of women was "unique in contributing a positive and affirming map for change." Not only did the photographs depict the difficulties these women confront, but within these images is an awareness of the hope, pride and humor of their lives, as well as their visions of the future. ■

The grandmother and her grandchildren are standing on a side road outside the village. The old woman's face glows with a kindly smile. Already more than 70 years old, her spirit and health are quite good. On an average day, her main job is to take care of the grandson and granddaughter and to carry out tasks that she can manage. She finds life pleasing in these later years. ***Photo by Zhao Ju Xian, age 34.***

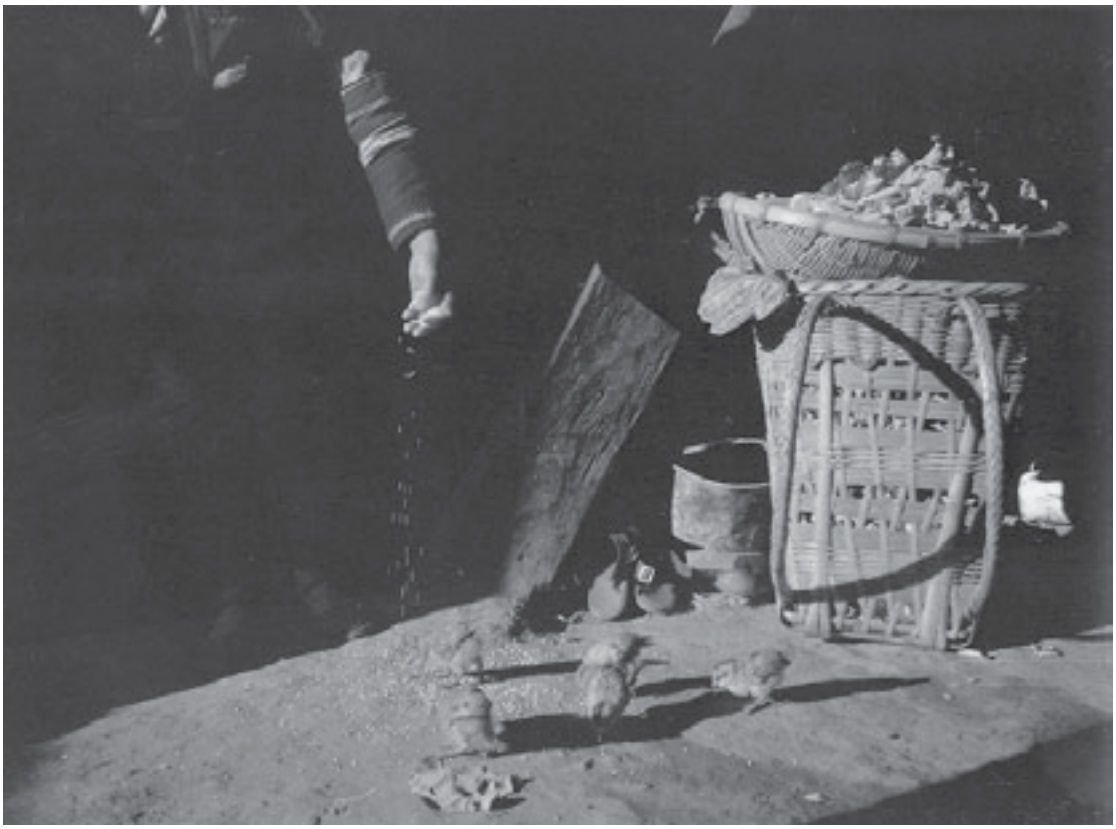
From a farmer's indoor decorations and displays in the home, one can see that people's ideas are changing. On the middle of the wall is a picture of the bodhisattva goddess that was put up by an elderly family member. Its significance is to bless the entire household with peace and health. On either side are movie star photographs put up by the girl. She hopes that her life will become more rich and colorful. ***Photo by Pang Mei Zhi, age 57.***

Tobacco planting in this local area yields a good income. With no one to help with day care, this woman's only recourse is to bring her child to the field. ***Photo by Jie Xiu Mei, age 20.***



In our mountain area, all the children are cared for by the mother. When there is no elderly person to help, this young mother always keeps the child right by her side whether she has gone to till the field or has gone to do work at home. ***Photo by Tao Li Li, age 18.***

When women drive horse carts, it is no longer sensational news. In the past, women usually did not drive carts. Today, men and women are equal. Anything men can do, women can do, too. *Photo by Zhao Ju Xian, age 34.*



In Yi nationality mountain villages, rural women are known for their diligence and capability. They take up the farm work and production, do housework, raise the children, provide care for the old people, and at the same time raise livestock and poultry to subsidize the family expenses. *Photo by Li Pu Zhao, age 49.*

The Varied Pace of Women's Progress

Surveys by the International Federation of Journalists find similar challenges but contrasting results for women in different countries.

By Bettina Peters

"Women journalists are cracking the glass ceiling, but we must remember that when you break glass you may get scratches from the splinters. Women must be ready to take power in the newsroom; don't wait for the men to give it to you."

Dupe Ayayi-Gbadebo, editor in chief and managing director of Sketch Newspapers in Ibadan, Nigeria earned loud and prolonged applause for those comments at a women journalists' workshop in Lagos at the beginning of November. Dupe Gbadebo knows what she is talking about. At 45 years of age, she is one of three female editors in chief in Nigerian media (none at a major daily newspaper). It took her 20 years to get to the top, and she lost many female colleagues along the way who left journalism for advertising or public relations because they felt they'd never make it beyond sub-editor.

Women leaving journalism is not only a problem in Nigeria. Female reporters from countries as different as Brazil and Belarus report that lack of career perspectives, long hours, and bad pay have driven them to look for work outside journalism. In 1996 a study by the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance in Australia found that 23 percent of women journalists had left their jobs because of promotional discrimination.

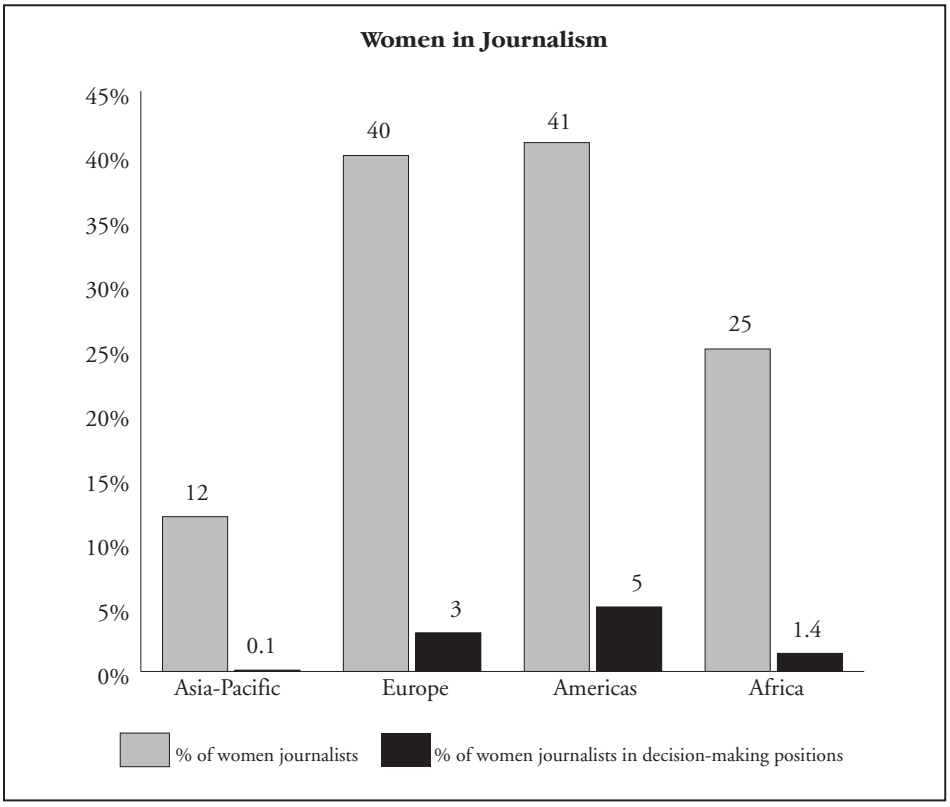
Women in top media positions remain a rare breed even though the number of women in journalism has been growing steadily. In 1991, a study by the International Federation of Journalists [IFJ] found that 27 percent of journalists were women; today they represent 38 percent of the profession, but there are large discrepancies among various countries. For example, the percentage of women journalists in countries such as Finland and Thailand is close to 50 percent, but in Sri Lanka and Togo, it is six percent.

A study published this year by the IFJ found that even though more than a third of today's journalists are women, overall they comprise less than three percent of media decision-makers. Their percentage is higher in North America and Latin America. In Mexico, for instance, 19 percent of media owners or editors are women. In Asia, the percentage of female media executives is the lowest and barely perceptible.

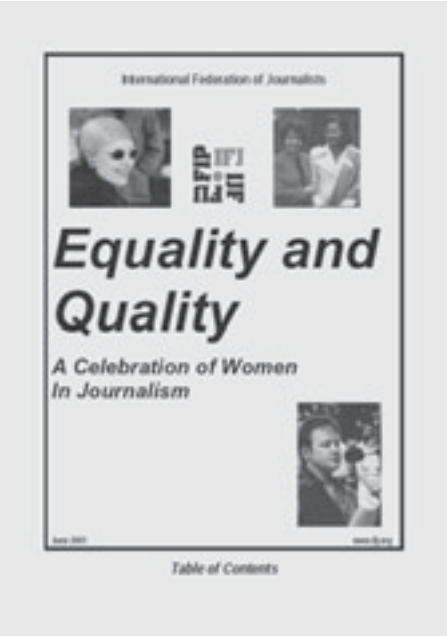
Female journalists still have to overcome many barriers if they want to reach their full potential in the profession. The list of obstacles is long and it is the same whether drawn up by women journalists in Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, Africa or Europe:

- **Stereotypes**: cultural attitudes expecting women to be subordinate and subservient and negative attitudes towards women journalists;
- **Employment conditions**: lack of equal pay, lack of access to further training, lack of fair promotion procedures, lack of access to decision-making positions, sexual harassment, age discrimination, and job segregation;
- **Social and personal obstacles**: conflicting family and career demands, lack of support facilities, and lack of self-esteem.

The stories of women journalists who make it to the top are often ones of personal struggle and sacrifice. But these pioneers do inspire younger



A comparative graph of women's roles in journalism. ***Chart by IFJ.***



A publication of IFJ.

women to follow in their footsteps.

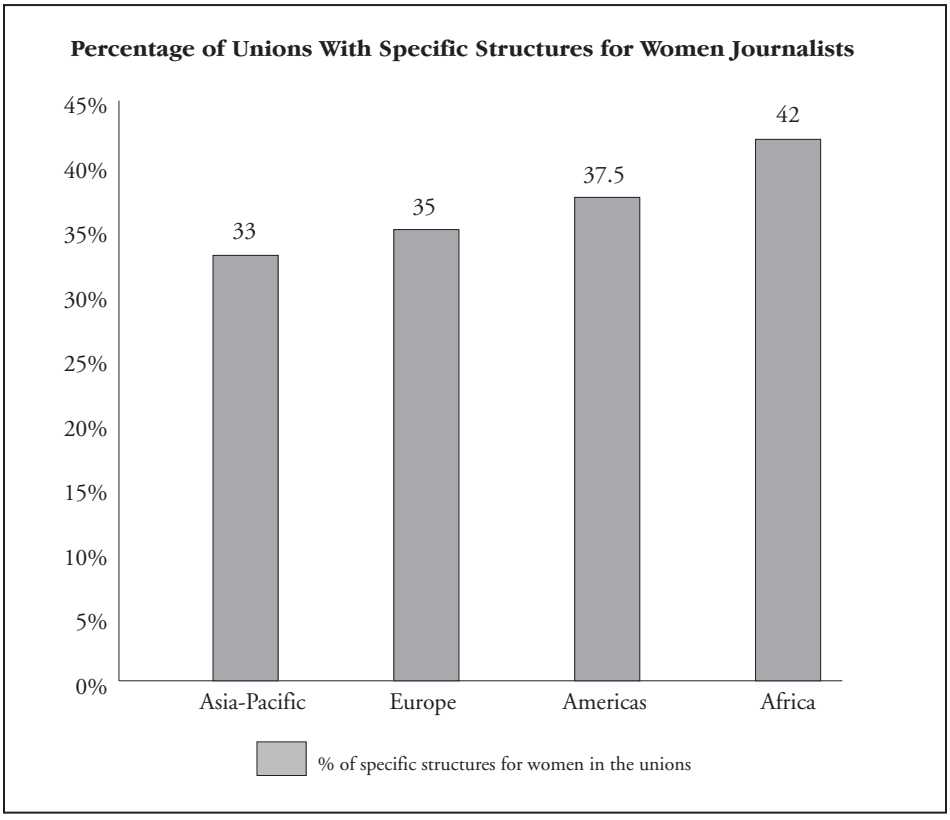
"Without Najma Babar I would not have stuck with journalism," says Beena Sarwar, editor of The News on Sunday in Pakistan. "She was my role model when I started at The Star in 1982. She was not only a real professional but she also put women's issues on the news agenda. Without her, the story of trafficking of women from Burma and Bengal would never have been covered."

Angela Castellanos, a freelance journalist from Colombia, observes that "courageous women reporters have made real inroads into a profession characterized by machismo. But we have paid a high price for recognition. Last year, two female journalists were killed, 11 were threatened with murder, three had to seek exile abroad, and one was kidnapped and tortured." That journalist was Jineth Bedoya, a 27-year-old journalist working for El Espectador who was kidnapped, tortured and raped by paramilitary groups. In spite of her ordeal, Bedoya stills works in journalism. She says she was lucky to have the support of her editor: "Normally in Colombia there is no support for rank-and-file journalists, only for the famous ones."

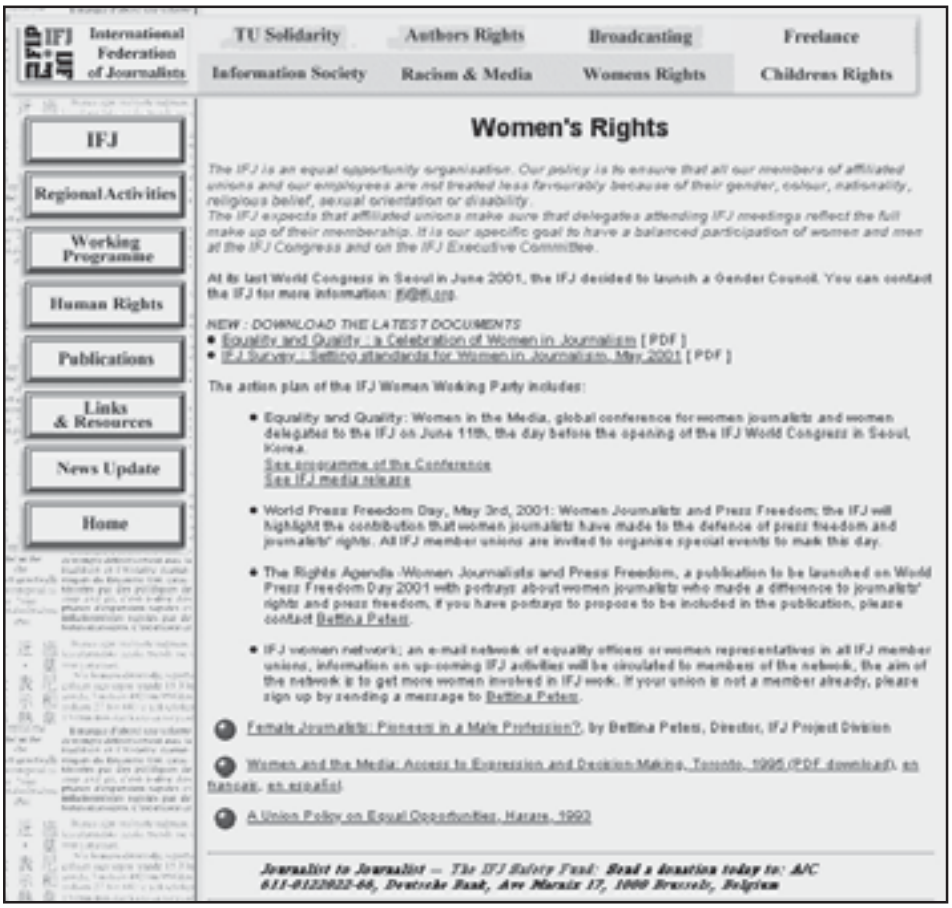
But it takes more than a few pioneers to make a real difference in dismantling the barriers that women journalists confront. The role of journalists' unions is crucial in defending the professional and material interests of their female members as well as helping to create structures in which women can reach their full potential in the profession. As the number of women in journalism grows, so does their membership in journalists' unions. In several countries in North America and Latin America there are more female than male union members (around 55 percent). And the percentage of women in union governing bodies (17 percent) is higher than of women in decision-making in the media in general.

But for journalists' organizations to take up these issues, they often have to reform their structures to ensure female representation in the unions' policymaking and governing bodies. One way to increase the involvement of women is to create specific structures, such as women's committees or equality councils, to give women's concerns a voice in the union. "It is thanks to the equality council that parental leave or day care have become key demands in collective bargaining," says Karin Bernhardt of the German Journalists' Association (DJV). "These issues used to be bargaining chips to be dropped off the list of demands in favor of higher salaries. The work of women inside the union has helped to make employers and male colleagues see that extended parental leave can be much more important than a few dollars more in the purse."

But so far less than half of the unions surveyed by the IFJ have established women's committees or councils. The highest number is in Africa, where women's media associations have been created in most countries. These associations operate independently of the journalists' unions but are normally affiliated with them. "The women media association has become an effective network for women journalists," says Khady Cisse, who is also a member of



IFJ has explored the role of journalists' unions in defending the professional and material interests of their female members.



A page from the International Federation of Journalists' Web site.

the board of the journalists' union in Senegal. "It is through the association that we have been able to discuss issues like portrayal of women and sexual harassment."

Outside of Africa, the model of women media associations or committees has started to take root. Women journalists from Asia, where the level of representation is lowest both in the profession and in the unions, agreed at a conference in Japan last year to create women's networks to promote their cause. As far as Ezki Suyanto, producer of the "Voice of Human Rights" radio program in Indonesia is concerned, this step is long overdue: "Women must get together and claim their rights. Why do they remain silent if they want more responsibility?"

The issue of portrayal of women in the media remains a much-debated one. The U.N. Beijing declaration, adopted more than five years ago, called on media owners and media professionals to develop and adopt codes or guidelines to promote a fair and accurate portrayal of women in the media. An IFJ report prepared for the UNESCO conference on "Women in the Media: Access to Expression and Decision-Making" (Toronto 1995) found that: "…after more than a decade of research indicating that women are dissatisfied with their media portrayal, the industry has done little to change its practices. Women are grossly underrepresented and, where they do feature, they are still portrayed in a narrow range of stereotyped roles."

The IFJ survey aimed to get the unions' point of view on this issue and asked whether IFJ unions felt that the portrayal of women in the media was an issue for them and what actions could be undertaken to promote an accurate and fair media portrayal of women. Close to half said portrayal was an issue and one being discussed within the union. Those who do not discuss it gave different reasons for the lack of debate in the union. One union in India said that since a free press exists in the country, the issue of portrayal is not a pressing one. Several unions (in Benin, Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Bulgaria and Paraguay) stated that other concerns are more important, such as basic violations of labor and human rights or that other groups exist that take up the issue. The Japanese unions said given the low number of women members, the issue had not yet made it on the union's agenda of priorities.

One-third of the unions surveyed said stereotypes or the presentation of women according to prejudices that do not correspond to reality are the main reason for an inaccurate portrayal of women in the media. About one-quarter of the unions said the lack of female sources, experts or spokespersons in media coverage accounts for a distorted image of women in the media. Another 20 percent believed that the media do not sufficiently cover issues of concern to women or report reliably on their perspectives on development in society.

Journalists and media organizations might disavow responsibility for the non- and misrepresentation of women. This issue is but one aspect of the general debate about quality of content in media. There is little doubt, however, that media professionals, whether they own the newspapers and broadcast media or are employed to gather, edit and disseminate information, have an urgent need to articulate principles of better performance and make themselves ethically accountable in a transparent and public manner. Such resolve should apply to challenging media stereotypes of women, as much as it applies to efforts put forward to challenge intolerance and hate speech. ■

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Women Bring a Certain Look and Feeling to News

A South American journalist believes stories women cover best are what the public now wants.

By Veronica Lopez

The forgotten town of Alto Hospicio (Shelter in the Heights), which lies amid the torrid, windy sand of a relentless Chilean northern desert, tragically came to life last year. From mid-2000 through 2001, every other month, 13- to 16-year-old girls disappeared from the streets. They'd leave home on their way to school one morning and never be seen again.

In frantic despair and begging for help, each of their families, who were low-class, mostly unemployed workers who survived on the leftovers of the nearby port of Iquique, summoned the police and the authorities. But there wasn't a clue. Combined with the complete failure of police investigations, the message sent by varying authorities was an inconceivable "you better forget about them." Those girls had probably left by themselves, they'd say, looking for better opportunities elsewhere, or had been convinced by third parties to do so. In both cases, they had surely hit the big cities and had become what everybody expected from them: prostitutes. Case closed.

Further, the police would tell families that their daughters had left, not wanting to stay anymore with them for one of these reasons: alcoholic father beats mother; stepfather rapes stepdaughter; both parents jobless, violent and or depressed; no future in town.

The families organized themselves and kept demanding answers. But nothing happened until last October, when a 13-year-old girl was found bleeding, almost unconscious, walking out of a rubbish dump outside of town. This ninth victim of a psychotic serial killer had survived. She had been kidnapped and raped by a 35-year-old taxi driver who had left her naked, covered with stones, and had told her he would come back the next day to throw her into an old well, where he had buried eight other girls before her. Public opinion was overwhelmed.

Chilean news media, mostly led by men, had followed exactly what the police said about this case. Conversely, feature stories in magazines and TV and newspaper supplements, mostly directed by women, would bring up the story of the town, the way of life of its people, and the issue of unemployment. But, in either case, there was no additional research done on these cases, even though a year before this final kidnapping sociologist Doris Cooper mentioned the possibility of a serial killer. She had urged authorities to look at the pattern—all girls, the same ages, same schools, same town, every other month. But nobody, not even the police, followed her theory. "If I hadn't been a woman," she'd say later, "maybe somebody would have listened." Instead, during these 18 months, most agreed that the girls had run away from dysfunctional parents and left town. There were even sources who dared to say the families had probably sold their daughters for sexual trade.

Prejudice overruled attempts to examine other possibilities. After a while, editors would move away from coverage of this story and bring their reporters back. On the burial day of the eight corpses, in the midst of the tears of their mothers, everyone kept silent. The dignity of the families had been swept away. What news coverage showed was the coffins, but we read or heard no apologies.

The Role Women Journalists Play

A certain look, a certain feeling about social issues is the value women journalists bring to news coverage in Latin America. Our challenge is in trying our best to report on issues of poverty, discrimination and the tragedies like the one that befell these families in Alto Hospicio and, by doing so, perhaps move the public agenda towards them. Historically, women have shown interest in these topics, but editors and media owners—mostly men—have maintained traditional priorities in news: a reliance on daily headlines, little reporting and research, and a constant focus on politics, economics, sports and entertainment. One problem is that they've not realized that public opinion, deep within, has changed its focus. Today, people are not moved by bare facts but are interested in knowing and understanding people's feelings and reasoning. To

Even when we feel we are almost there, most of the time our issues are still left out. And what women face when we get to high positions is the challenge of either fighting for a change in the priorities of the news agenda or gradually yielding to our bosses….

put it simply, public opinion is not stuck on the same page as the male editors.

In our countries, the main issue that traditionally has moved public opinion—politics—is fading away and, frankly, it might be for good. Most leaders, when invested with authority, have abused power and/or economic interests. While people die of hunger and neglect in many places throughout the world, money accumulates in the hands of authority. Corruption sets in. People lose hope. Today, the more that sources of information come from formal authority, the farther away the people withdraw.

Media, as a whole, have been slow in understanding this. Women journalists, who have wanted to move the agenda elsewhere but who have had little or no space to do so, have been the exception. We have longed to cover issues that public opinion now seems focused on—human relationships, the workplace, gender issues, discrimination, AIDS, poverty, home violence, raising children, and quality of life. But these issues have had to wait too long, beaten back by stories that lack a sensible point of view, and have resulted in media standardization.

A massive funeral for eight teenagers raped and killed by a serial killer in Alto Hospicio in northern Chile. ***Photo courtesy of Paula magazine.***

In mid-1999, Uruguayan journalist María Urruzola, a victim of constant sexual harassment from one of her colleagues at work, wrote an article on what was going on at her bureau. She described her treatment in its utmost detail and summoned other women in the country to speak out. She told her male boss that she wanted the piece to be published in her paper, Brecha (The Gap). He agreed. Good for María and good for Brecha. This unlikely outcome gave the newspaper the high credibility it has held ever since.

Women's impact in reporting and writing is often evident in the "feminine" point of view they bring to analyzing news. Women know about feelings and emotions, and they want to look at the social phenomena hidden behind the facts. And they usually know how to get at stories that other reporters have missed. In fact, recently Latin American women reporters have been bringing many stories to the fore about discrimination, gender, poverty, hunger in Sudan, nine-year-old girls being circumcised in 29 African countries, and what life is like for a Taliban woman under her burka, a story reported long before September 11.

A Mapuche woman from the south of Chile. Media often overlook this minority population's way of life and thinking, even while Mapuches fight for their rights. *El Sábado/El Mercurio.*

At times, however, they've put such issues on the news agenda but the newsroom—with its male editors—has failed to listen. If these issues are not considered part of the "big news" going on, then social issues, per se, seem to be of no interest. Furthermore, they do not sell. But what these editors and media owners miss is that credibility sells by itself.

Last year, Chilean First Lady Luisa Durán de Lagos launched a campaign called "Give a woman her smile back." She raised funds to pay for dental treatment that would make poor women who had lost teeth not only smile again but feel capable of asking for a job without being ashamed of themselves, act with personality before her husband and children, eat normally, and stand up with dignity. But most of all, Durán asked the media to contribute to this campaign. Of course, it became a 10th priority issue except for women reporters, who did their best to publicize the issue when given extra space or asked to "fill." Only one broadcast story showed images of the first women who underwent the treatment, talking about the complete change that had taken place in their lives.

Recently, I was in a southern fishing town doing a story on a craftsman who builds marvelous violins from a native Chilean wood called "alerce" (the larch tree). While I talked with his toothless wife, I said to myself: "I won't write the story until I get her teeth back. I'll drive everybody nuts, but his violins and her smile are the same thing to me."

By assuming top positions, women journalists can create the possibility for positive steps forward for others. In Chile, we are getting there. Feature story magazines are edited by women, and many radio broadcasts are run by women. The main TV broadcast news hour has a woman editor. But the other four TV broadcasts do not, and there are no women running newspapers or newsmagazines. Only three women sit on boards of the two big media companies. Even when we feel we are almost there, most of the time our issues are still left out. And what women face when we get to high positions is the challenge of either fighting for a change in the priorities of the news agenda or gradually yielding to our bosses, who in turn yield to political and economic pressures that won't easily accept anybody changing the order of things.

Women with independent points of view who work inside big media companies and who want to work with their colleagues and bosses to prepare the way for new topics, pluralism and diversity, usually fail. We are either moved to another position or a new boss is placed above us, and our power is diminished. Chile, for example, is the only country that does not have a divorce law. Our media—conservative and reactionary—allows discussion of this in some sections focused on women or family (usually written by women), but the lead "news" article, usually written by men, will always be against.

Women in independent media, however, usually do succeed in their efforts to favor pluralism and diversity and place social issues on the front page. Chilean Internet newspaper El Mostrador, run by a woman editor, has become a hit in breaking news. Its headlines and very good reporting have been considered the standard of several Chilean news media for more than two years now. Yet, the lack of advertisement on the net hurts the paper so it is not clear how long it will survive.

What worries me—and ought to worry others—is that independent media are disappearing everywhere. We either fight for their survival, or we will need to work out a new agenda from inside the core of big media companies. We won't be alone in this because public opinion badly needs more information on these hidden issues. Following September 11, nothing will be the same. People need and want to know more, to dig in and understand the reasons behind the facts.

Thus, women journalists have a chance now. Editors will turn to us. As women, we know and have experienced discrimination. We understand minorities. We wake up every day intertwining emotions and human relationships, trying to understand others and to work things out from the point of view of those who are affected. And we go to sleep at night thinking about steps we have walked either towards or away from our mission. We have been waiting too long to speak up, for ourselves and for others. We have to take the chance that is now presented to us and go for it. ■

Veronica Lopez, a 1997 Nieman Fellow, founded and was the editor of several magazines in Chile (Cosas, Caras, El Sábado de El Mercurio, among others) and in Colombia (Semana). She has taught journalism at several universities. She serves on the board of the International Women's Media Foundation and of Chile 21 Foundation. At present, she is studying the launching of new independent magazines.

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Between the Rhetoric of Equality and the Harsh Reality

In Latin America, women journalists share experiences to find a way forward.

By Blanca Rosales

A Brazilian woman journalist tells us that her worst boss had been a woman. Another, a Chilean colleague, remarks that competition in newsrooms was very stiff, and that being a wife and mother is forbidden for women aspiring to leadership positions. The editor of one of the largest dailies in Argentina says that even today editors—most of whom are men older than 50—address women reporters not by their names but by a caramelized, "Hey, sweetheart."

During three different workshops—sponsored by the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) in Latin America and held in Managua, Nicaragua, Buenos Aires, Argentina and Quito, Ecuador during the first half of 2001—stories like these were told again and again. More than 70 women reporters from 16 Latin American countries attended these workshops, and the issues they raised and the stories they told seemed to follow predictable patterns as they reflected on work environments, the possibilities of leadership in Latin American media outlets, and hopes for the creation of organizations that foster training and networking and that provide professional and personal support.

I was the facilitator during the leadership workshops at each of these gatherings, so I can identify some shared characteristics despite the particular circumstances of the individual countries from which participants hailed. There are logical differences based on the level of development of the media outlets, which is closely tied to the economic development of the respective country.

As I listened, it became apparent that women journalists' leadership in the work environment is a collective aspiration that is still far off in the distance despite the huge contribution of women and the infamous feminization of the journalistic field. The situation can be imagined as a triangle whose apex is filled mostly with older men who have difficulty welcoming the few women who manage to break the barriers to the top. Women journalists mentioned the tricks used by male colleagues to make them feel out of place, as though they are invaders. Some men use off-color jokes; others relate to women based on a father-daughter dynamic; others attempt sexual advances, which reinforce the exclusion of women from a sphere reserved for men.

In September 2001, after the establishment of Alejandro Toledo's government, protesters in southern Peru demanded that the government follow through on its promise to build a highway to link Peru to Brazil. ***Photo courtesy of Archivo Diario La República.***

Those women who do assume leadership positions must sacrifice their personal and family lives to reach their professional goals, and in some cases they must relinquish their aspirations for starting a family if they want to continue ascending the ranks. Sexist commentaries about pregnancies and the special benefits often requested by working mothers are commonplace in Latin American media. Another argument used when determining promotions is whether women are ready to take on risky and demanding assignments that require more responsibility. Even today it is normal for women editors to work on supplements geared towards women or families, or departments related to health or children. It's unlikely that a woman would be at the helm of departments dedicated to science and technology, the economy or computers.

And women who have managed to reach decision-making roles in the media don't feel the obligation to be trailblazers for other women. To the contrary, the pioneering generation does not recognize mentoring as a duty, and poor relationships between women supervisors and women subordinates are quite common.

The Brazilian journalist who shared

In a rural community outside the capital, children learn under precarious conditions, in plastic classrooms with dirt floors. *Photo courtesy of Archivo Diario La República.*

the story of her awful relationship with her female boss explained that she could not communicate effectively with her boss. Sometimes the reason was as absurd as her being more elegantly dressed than her superior was. Some comments that surfaced during the workshop dealt with the fact that some women, when commenting on other women's work, are incapable of separating personal attributes from professional qualifications. Some pointed out that it's common for a man, when speaking about another man, to comment, "he's a terrible person, but an excellent worker." It's almost impossible for a woman to state the same.

What happens next?

Participants in the leadership workshops stressed that it is essential to work in several areas to try to bring about constructive changes.

- **The professional:** There's a need for continuous training that would enable them to compete for professional opportunities on an equal footing. They considered business training fundamental in breaking the stereotype that women lack business sense and leadership.
- **The personal:** Women's self-esteem must be bolstered with tangible action, such as having them contribute to determining what is considered news. Some characteristics that are considered feminine are essential for improving the quality of the news media and for satisfying the public's new demands. It's also necessary to mention women's ability to organize, participate and lead professional entities, which allows for more democratically led organizations, thereby changing the traditional personality-based and tyrannical leadership methods that have characterized the media throughout history.
- **The collective:** It's important to reinforce the networks and groups established by women journalists, allowing them to connect with colleagues who share common interests.

There was, however, an awareness that any of these efforts to promote women's leadership will not yield the desired effects if some problems, which the workshop participants considered substantial, are not addressed first. Two of these appear to stand out in the minds of these women journalists: the conflictive relationship between women colleagues and the lack of conflict resolution training.

To improve the woman-to-woman relationship at the workplace, gender solidarity needs to be promoted without defaulting to permissiveness based on gender. Solidarity should be regarded as a tool for collective success, as a way to generate equal or better-abled female leadership that will lead the way for other women. After all, an intrinsic characteristic of leadership is the training of new and better leaders. Passing experience down and guiding the next generation towards personal and professional success demonstrates the leader's worth.

The IWMF workshop participants also discussed conflict resolution training and the fear of addressing conflicts. It is an area that is lacking and that must be addressed in this difficult process of strengthening women journalists' leadership in Latin America. Female stereotypes depict women as being afraid of confrontation and of asserting their personal points of view. The reality is that as women we have grown up avoiding conflict; that behavior has defined our filial and social environments, especially in Latin America. But it is impossible for women in the media to survive, and even harder for them to become leaders, if they lack the skills necessary to deal with conflict.

Women managers and editors gave concrete examples of how they gained such skills through formal training but also through assuming leadership positions in mixed gender situations where colleagues challenged their orders and decisions. Journalistic ability does not lead to leadership ability. It is necessary to be a good listener and to give orders when necessary. For that, women will no doubt need training.

Lastly, I'd like to share my enormous pride in the incomparable experience of those days of collective reflection and learning with Latin American colleagues. Our long hours of work, our debates, our laughter, and our shared dreams were characterized by solidarity, understanding and a sisterly bond with which we faced the obstacles we have in common.

There were women who, based on personal merit, held directorial positions in their companies, and they shared their experience with young professionals who dream of a successful career. Also, journalists who work in the alternative press shared their point of view with those who were hesitant about embracing the feminist cause. The extraordinary Colombian journalists, who confront political violence daily, the Peruvian journalists, who confronted a dictatorship and immorality with the resolve of their denouncements, and those from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Paraguay, Uruguay, Ecuador, Venezuela, Panama, Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mexico and Costa Rica, each of them shared a part of her personal and professional history, as well as her doubts and convictions and her hope and faith in a better future.

I urge women journalists to continue working towards a true leadership in this part of the hemisphere. ■

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Machismo Is Only One Obstacle Women Face

A Colombian war reporter becomes involved with women's issues.

By María Cristina Caballero

In Colombia, the role of the journalist has always been open to debate. Do we just report the daily atrocities or try to find ways to stop them? Just reporting what goes on in my country is perilous enough—34 journalists, men and women—have been killed trying to do their jobs during the past decade; three were killed this year [numbers based on research from the Committee to Protect Journalists]. Millions of Colombians have demonstrated in the streets, asking for peace. And Media for Peace, a network of more than 100 journalists led by Gloria de Castro, tries to influence reporters to write more balanced accounts.

Of course, trying to point to solutions can be a dangerous role for journalists, too. Many reporters and editors have been forced to leave Colombia because of what they have published. Still, despite the risks, I strongly believe that journalists must not only expose injustices but also try to improve the situation of countries as troubled as mine. When I graduated from Bogotá's Javeriana University in 1984, I wrote "The Social Responsibility of the Journalist" as my thesis; carrying out that mission remains my goal. As a journalist, I try to find out from all of the factions what their perspectives are, no matter what the personal danger might be. I've become accustomed to the risks and have interviewed not only the leader of the right-wing paramilitary forces, but also the military leader of the leftist FARC, the largest revolutionary force in Colombia.

The Macho World of News Reporting

There are many issues that all journalists in Colombia confront, but there are also ones that are particular to women who work in an environment often described as the macho world of Latin American male-dominated media. New York Times correspondent Juan Forero recently wrote that media in Colombia don't treat women very seriously: "Beauty is a national obsession in Colombia, readily apparent on the nightly newscasts, which often end with shots of bikini-clad young women." A week later, at Colombia's national beauty pageant, 400 journalists were accredited to cover it. In his article, Forero went on to observe that "it is clear when talking to contestants that while winning is paramount, losing is not bad either…. After all, newscasts are stocked with former contestants."

Florence Thomas, a leading professor at National University in Bogotá, regards such overwhelming media attention for such an event as "humiliating." "For me," she says, "[the beauty pageant] is like a horse fair…." And attitudes that accompany such events serve to undermine advancement of Colombian women in other fields; for example, only 30 of the 263-member Congress are women, despite the fact that urban Colombian women now attend universities in great numbers.

In this macho media environment, it is perhaps not surprising that when I began working in journalism I did not receive important reporting assignments. Those were tacitly reserved for men. So I looked for key issues to write about and, progressively, I became a very happy workaholic as I pursued my own investigations. When I finished, I presented my material to top editors. At first, they were astonished, but they grew accustomed to what I would produce and published my reports that probed deep into the Colombian drug cartels, into institutional corruption and the infiltration of drug money at the highest levels of government (more than a dozen politicians went to jail), and into Colombia's violence and human rights abuses.

"Are you crazy? Why do you write about such dangerous issues?" relatives and friends would ask me. Some wanted me to forget my idealism about using my journalistic skills to try to help my country. Others strongly recommended that I lead a "normal"

woman's life and forget traveling to war zones. Their advice sounded like this: "What kind of life is that of constantly receiving death threats?" "Why waste your youth trying to understand the unsolvable problems of Colombia?" "Get married and have lots of kids." "One of these days, they will kill you." I listened, but it just didn't sound right to me to surrender. I repeated to myself that I had to try. And the criticisms diminished as I began to win prestigious awards for my reporting.

Yet, so many times I found myself in troubling situations that today I think it is a miracle that I am alive. Ambassador Swanee Hunt, the director of the Women and Public Policy Program at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, thinks that perhaps the reason I was not killed on some of my dangerous assignments is that I am a woman. In an article she wrote in Foreign Policy about her work with Women Waging Peace, she noted that when I traveled alone for eight hours into the jungle to interview the paramilitary leader Castaño, I went "where a man could not go." She suggests that I looked like a "harmless woman" and therefore was allowed to cross some boundaries. And my former boss at Semana magazine said of me in Brill's Content, "She looks harmless and she has that sweet little voice, but when she is interviewing, she is like a rottweiler. She bites and she doesn't let go."

Though I always try to look for the human side of stories, I don't think this perspective can be exclusively categorized as being a woman's one. But, interestingly enough, last year, 122 international women leaders in journalism, surveyed by the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF), overwhelmingly agreed that women bring a different, more "human," perspective to the news: 92 percent responded that their presence in the profession makes a difference in how the news is covered.

While coverage of our nation's conflict has been my primary goal, I also reported a 10-article series in El Tiempo about the shortage of books. Two million Colombian children didn't have the money to buy them. Ironically, in many rural regions, children have more access to guns than to books. What followed was a two-year campaign that I led in which 30 public and private institutions provided more than two million books to poor students throughout the country.

Ongoing Struggles of Women Journalists

I had to leave Colombia in 1999 because of death threats and a gunman trying to kill me. Occasionally, I return to war regions to try to show the complexity of the situation of my country to an international audience, publishing articles and op-ed pieces in The Boston Globe, The Miami Herald, and CNN.com, among others.

In the meantime, some women colleagues, such as 27-year-old Jineth Bedoya, confront very difficult situations in trying to do their jobs. On May 25, 2000, when she went to a Bogotá-area prison where she expected to interview a paramilitary leader, Bedoya was kidnapped and raped. She was found in a garbage dump. In time, she returned to her job, and she continues to report atrocities.

Others strongly recommended that I lead a 'normal' woman's life and forget traveling to war zones.

Earlier this year, a U.S. State Department report on human rights dedicated a section to the situation of Colombian women in which it states that "rape and other acts of violence are pervasive. Women face an increased threat of torture and sexual assault due to the internal conflict." Unfortunately, violence inside their homes is rising as well. Experts believe that 95 percent of all abuse against women is never reported to authorities. Nor are such crimes generally covered by the Colombian press. Many reporters are simply overwhelmed by the increasing intensification of the nation's conflict in which 35,000 people have been killed during the past decade. Recently, the situation has been getting worse as extra-judicial executions and forced disappearances are becoming more common. One Colombian is murdered every 20 minutes.

In this environment, Jineth Bedoya's treatment received media attention because it was the first known case of a journalist being tortured and raped by alleged sources. As an expression of my support, I nominated her for the International Women's Media Foundation's annual award, which she received. At the ceremony in October, she said that "this award not only acknowledges the conditions for journalists in Colombia, but hundreds of women who have suffered rape and humiliation like I have, but who continue to live their lives."

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), last year was devastating for Colombian journalists. Seven were murdered for reasons possibly related to their work, including two women. María Elena Salinas (a freelance journalist) was found dead on February 20, 2000, in Antioquia, along with two members of a guerrilla group. According to the CPJ, Salinas was investigating armed conflicts in the Antioquia region at the time of her death. On July 4, Marisol Revelo Barón was killed in Tumaco, a town in the southwestern part of Colombia. She had worked as a news director for Radio Mira, an affiliate of the Caracol Radio network in Tumaco, and as a local reporter for Teletumaco and Impacto television channels. Others have received credible threats. Journalist Mireya Álvarez Ramírez says that 10 FARC members have threatened her. She is the owner of a bimonthly news-

paper La Palma en Facetas, operating in a town outside Bogotá. The FARC ordered her to leave the country in 30 days, otherwise she would be killed. In her newspaper, she often reported on guerrilla tactics such as the forced recruitment of peasants.

Reflecting on the Status of Women Journalists

Last year, I was invited by the International Women's Media Foundation to participate in a closed-door meeting in Washington and to become an active member of the organization. Since then, I've become more aware of and interested in exploring the causes of the gender inequalities in the media workplace and in seeking ways to possibly overcome these situations. In a detailed survey presented last July to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) 24th Congress in Seoul, South Korea, it was revealed that despite women comprising about 38 percent of the worldwide work force in journalism, fewer than three percent of media executive posts are held by women. The IFJ survey is the most comprehensive of its kind, with answers from unions in 40 countries representing 300,000 journalists.

As a journalist who has had the opportunity to be in management positions (as editor, adviser to the director, and director of investigations of three of the most important Colombian news organizations), these findings were very compelling. It is important to take into account that not more than 50 years ago, journalism used to be an almost exclusively male profession. According to the IFJ, even in 1972 a brochure issued by the German Federal Employment Agency stated that women lack the "sang-froid" and the analytical capacity needed to become a journalist.

Today female journalists still have to overcome similar barriers if they want to reach their potential. According to IFJ and IWMF, some of these obstacles include stereotypic assumptions and attitudes toward women, difficult work environments, and social and personal obstacles. Also, during the mid-1990's, Media Watch did a survey that revealed that most news stories showed women as victims, failed to provide women's last names, and neglected to mention most women's professions. In a 1996 IWMF survey of women in 44 countries, 64 percent of respondents said they believed that women are not portrayed accurately in the media. Some 67 percent said the media ignore women leaders.

Such findings indicate the importance of providing more coverage about women in positions of power and of taking the lead in changing the readers' perception of women. According to a UNESCO study in South America, women are 25 percent of the regional media workforce, but are more likely to hold part-time jobs and to work in administrative positions rather than editorial. When asked in a recent IWMF survey about what would most benefit women journalists, respondents in Central and South America said, "more women in leadership and management positions in the media" (68 percent) and "meeting and networking with women journalists in other Latin American countries" (57 percent).

After learning this information, I accepted an invitation to become part of the advisory committee of the IWMF Latin American Initiative. This will address the needs of women journalists by providing them opportunities to gain skills they need (through training programs) to be regarded and treated as competent professionals. And it will enhance women's access to decision-making levels in critical numbers. In May, we had a meeting in Ecuador to discuss proposals. We also had three leadership training programs that involved 75 Latin American journalists who remain in active contact through e-mail. In addition to a strong interest in management training, participants said they wanted training in journalism skills, specifically in investigative reporting and new technologies. Maureen Bunyan, who heads this advisory committee, believes that "the news media will not change in Latin America until there is a critical mass of women working at all levels of the profession."

IWMF was launched in 1990 with the goal of strengthening the role of women in the news media worldwide, based on the belief that no press is truly free unless women share an equal voice. Perhaps male-dominated media executives should take into account the interesting results of the Glass Ceiling Research Center's project, published in November's Harvard Business Review. The center tracked the number of women in high-ranking positions at 215 Fortune companies between 1980 and 1998 and compared their financial performance to industry medians. It determined there is a strong correlation between a company's profits and the number of female senior executives in its ranks. The author concludes that those companies that are slow to move women into top executive positions might pay a high price.

Two-thirds of women journalism leaders who responded to a recent IWMF survey consider that women's presence in the newsroom has far-reaching implications for news context, work environments, and even the whole society. As Bogotá Professor Florence Thomas has observed, "The advances of a country should be measured by the advances of its women." In Colombia, and in Latin and South America, how women advance in journalism will be a measuring tool well worth watching. ■

María Cristina Caballero, a 1997 Nieman Fellow, began working in journalism when she was 16. Her reporting in Colombia has received numerous awards, including several Simón Bolívar Prizes (the most important journalism award in Colombia), the Inter American Press Association Human Rights Award, and the 1999 Committee to Protect Journalists World Press Freedom Award. After multiple threats to her life, she left her native country and is studying for a master's degree in the Mason Program at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

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Breaking Down Barriers in the Arab Media

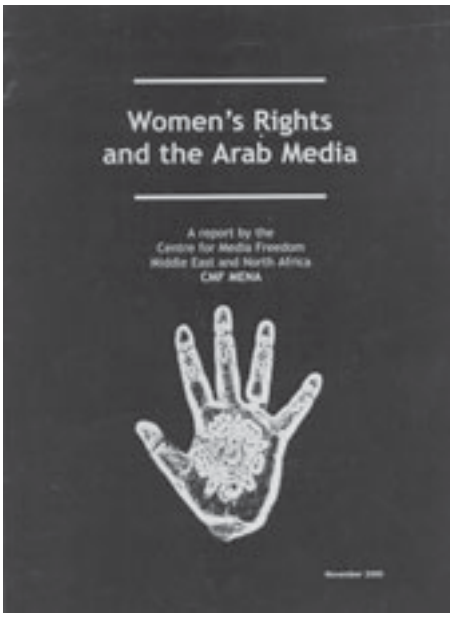
Women activists have shown that obstacles to progress take many forms.

By Naomi Sakr

What is the point of drawing up policies to make women's rights central to national development when, at the same time, negative stereotyping of women goes on daily in the national press and on television?

Women's rights campaigners in several Arab countries are organizing today to end this anomaly. They are exposing the negative aspects of media messages and working to overcome the hurdles facing women journalists and to empower them to counter the negativity. A multiplicity of deterrents means the campaign has to take place on several fronts.

Paradoxically, as I realized while researching a report on women in the Arab media for a media freedom center in London, the challenge facing women has become more daunting as the number of Arabic-language media outlets has increased. A popular perception has arisen in recent years that women are everywhere in the Arabic-language media, above all as glamorous news presenters on satellite television channels. The proliferation of Arab-owned satellite channels has also generated an increase in airtime for advertising, with commercials featuring women in large numbers mainly as impressionable consumers, decorative objects or cleaners and cooks. Indeed, in terms of both numbers and images, it seems that women's growing presence on Arab television, far from ending their subordination in the media, might be reinforcing it.



Evidence collected by Lebanese reporter May Elian and others supports this concern. It suggests that women are used by the appearance-conscious visual media to attract viewers. Worse still, they are used in a way that associates women with a superficial role, in the sense of reading from other people's scripts or delivering "just one question" reports.

Print journalism, in contrast, is still seen as a male domain because it involves "hard work" and needs to be "taken seriously." Elian presented comparative data to a seminar on Gender and Communication Policy held in Beirut in the run-up to the U.N. Assembly's Special Session on Women in 2000. She found that, whereas the dominant Lebanese television stations have many more women than men on their news desks, the gender ratio on newspapers is quite the reverse. Women media professionals surveyed by the Beirut-based Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World concurred that important editorial decisions in all media were still invariably made by men.

Hurdles confronting women in the media workplace are universal, as the International Women's Media Foundation has shown. The main ones are juggling family obligations with erratic work schedules dictated by breaking news, together with a lack of successful role models. Nagwa Kamel, a Cairo University professor, told the opening conference of the Arab Women Media Center in Amman in June 2001 that

Arab Women Media Center

In December 1999, the Arab Women Media Center (AWMC) was launched in Jordan. Its mission is to assist women who work in various media, including print, audio and video. The center's focus is on improving coverage of women, children and family, and human rights violations. Its vision is that more Jordanian women will become engaged in the work of their nation's development. To accomplish these objectives, staff at the center gather research about these topics, write and disseminate reports to inform journalists and governmental policymakers, and educate and train women in new media technologies. After a pan-Arab Women's Media Conference was held last spring, the need for a network of support for Arab women in media became apparent; providing such a network became another goal of the center. Also in 2001, AWMC began publishing AYAMM, a magazine that highlights the written work of youth in Jordan. The founding director of the center, Mahasen Al Emam, was the first woman editor in chief of a weekly Jordanian newspaper and the first female elected to the 10-member Jordanian Press Council. More information about the center can be found at http://odag.org/awmc. ■

media women in the Arab world face several other hurdles as well.

In Arab countries, where heavy media censorship puts publishable news stories at a premium, the best route to obtaining information is through the shilla, or friendship clique. Given the dearth of female ministers, lawyers or other highly placed female sources, the clique, whose members include representatives of the ruling establishment, is bound under current circumstances to be almost exclusively male. Thus a vicious circle is created, in which young women entering journalism are assigned to slow-moving coverage of the three "f's"—food, family and fashion. Since recognition in this field is hard to come by, training and promotion go to other staff and discouragement sets in.

Mundane explanations such as these for women failing to reach the upper ranks of media firms do not make headlines. Yet they do describe cycles that can be broken and challenges that can be overcome. The risk is that they will be overlooked when more violent (and, under current news values, more newsworthy) reasons are also valid. Examples of the latter include the brutal killings of women journalists during the civil conflict in Algeria and the assassination in March 2001 of Kuwait's prominent woman publisher and women's rights activist, Hidaya Sultan al-Salem.

Given obstacles such as these, one potentially positive outcome of reporting on women's status in the Arab media can be to highlight successful local initiatives that lend themselves to replication elsewhere. Palestinian women in particular have been proactive on this front. Having long played a central role in resisting occupation of their land, Palestinian women started worrying a decade ago that limited self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza would mean reoccupation of public space by patriarchal traditions.

In 1992 they formed a coalition of ideologically disparate groups with a small secretariat and a shared agenda of equal rights for women. Preparations for legislative elections provided a fertile environment in which to combine media and advocacy work. The coalition gained a foothold across the Palestinian media, guaranteeing women a voice on the full range of issues through regular radio and television programs and a newspaper supplement of interest to both women and men.

Another kind of initiative has come from Jordan. Because credible investigative journalism is rare in the Arab world, the work of Jordanian crime reporter Rana Husseini in exposing "honor" crimes against women was newsworthy in itself. Honor crimes involve the murder or attempted murder of women alleged to have besmirched the family's reputation; they are treated leniently under the laws of Jordan and most other Arab states.

Husseini's perseverance took her to distant police stations and hospitals and furnished the information on which efforts to amend the discriminatory article of the Jordanian Penal Code could be based. While Husseini's high profile as a woman in the Jordanian media was not unusual, the nature of her reporting broke through several barriers.

Traditional attitudes in Jordan disapprove of women traveling the country unaccompanied or questioning authority. At the same time, news stories about honor killings brought private family taboos into the public sphere and punctured national complacency about women's well being. They also involved coverage of court cases at a time when Jordan's 1998 press law had made such coverage technically illegal.

As these barriers suggest, women in the Arab media not only face obstacles based on gender but are also subject to government-prescribed limitations on freedom of expression. Tunisia is a country which has a long tradition of recognizing women's legal rights. That did not stop the Tunisian authorities from jailing Sihem Bensedrine, editor of an Internet magazine called Kalima, after she criticized Tunisia's human rights record during a satellite television program broadcast from London in June 2001.

Amal Abbas, editor in chief of the Sudanese newspaper Al-Rai al-Akher, withstood fines and jail terms in order to expose corruption among officials in Sudan. Al-Rai al-Akher has been subject to seizure and suspension by the Sudanese authorities for several years,

"In Iran, people have the habit of visiting their deceased relatives on Thursday nights. Then they sit on the graves, eat together, read the Koran, talk about their dead relatives, show pictures or share their food and sweets with other visitors. It is like a big family gathering of the living and the dead."—Katharina Eglau. *Photo by Katharina Eglau.*©

demonstrating that female journalists who seek to practice their profession honorably risk losing the platform from which to speak out. Being a woman reporter is one challenge. Producing a newspaper in the face of harsh censorship is another.

Another challenge is promoting the kind of environment in which women not only write and broadcast, and do so freely, but also vote and stand for public office. In Egypt, for instance, women make up an estimated 40 percent of journalists. Yet their number in parliament is under two percent, while less than 10 percent of Egyptian women are registered to vote.

Veteran journalist Amina Shafik of Egypt's leading government-owned daily, Al-Ahram, once headed her country's journalists' union. She and her colleagues say women's status inside and outside the media has regressed severely in the last 20 years. Concerned at the way women were being squeezed out of public life by fundamentalist misogyny and government apathy, Shafik formed a group called HODA (after the 1920's feminist Hoda Shaarawi), dedicated to helping local women overcome the cultural and bureaucratic hurdles that deter them from registering to vote.

Unfortunately, civil society groups working for democracy are highly vulnerable in Egypt, as demonstrated when the independent Ibn Khaldun Centre in Cairo, which provided logistical support to HODA and other women's programs, was closed by the government in the summer of 2000. A year later the Ibn Khaldun Centre's director, sociology professor and democracy campaigner Saad Eddin Ibrahim, received a seven-year prison sentence in a trial that international human rights monitors unanimously denounced as being unfair.

Initiatives like those mentioned in this article confirm that proactive women executives in the Arab media could help to disseminate positive images of women. In doing so they would respond to society's wider development needs. But attempts to translate this recognition into action have too often foundered because they require more freedom of expression than governments will allow. ■

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Moving Coverage Beyond a Woman's Veil

In Iran, important stories about women are submerged by inaccurate assumptions.

By Naghmeh Sohrabi

When I tell strangers and acquaintances I am an Iranian-American who travels frequently between the two countries, I am often asked whether it is difficult for me, as a woman, to be in Iran. Many of us have spent hours describing the degree of freedom that exists in Iran and explaining how Iranian women's situation is different from that of Saudi or Afghan women. In Iran, women are not always in the house, nor do they spend all their time thinking about the veil on their head, nor does every man have many wives. And, yes, even a single woman can buy a bus ticket in Iran.

The primary source of information about Iran is the media, given that few from North America and Europe travel there these days. Considering the prevalence of misperceptions about life in Iran, it seems important to ask what the media might do differently in its coverage of Iranian women.

It's been 22 years since the image of angry women, covered from head to toe in black cloth and shouting anti-American slogans, entered the consciousness of Western media. Since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, women in this country have been a focus of Western fascination. In this time, the changes that occurred in the status of women—particularly compulsory veiling and stricter marriage and family laws—have become the main line of differentiation between Iran and more "modern" countries. They are regarded as the ultimate sign of a country moving backwards.

During the 1990's, another type of change took place both within Iran and in its relation to the outside world. Iranian cinema presented international viewers with images other than bearded men and veiled women. More foreign journalists (including some Americans) were allowed into the country. And most importantly in 1997, with President Mohammad Khatami's election, the Islamic Republic of Iran emerged in the West as no longer an angry country but one struggling to release itself from the grips of its founding moment—that of the Islamic Revolution.

Through this time, the veiled Muslim woman has remained *the* image of Iranian women in the international media. At first glance (both literally and symbolically) this makes perfect sense. Anyone who travels to Iran is inevitably confronted with this most

obvious difference. Women are seen on the streets wearing veils, some happily, some not, many indifferently. And for many journalists who travel to Iran, who visit with middle- and upper-class families, the issue of compulsory veiling and other limitations on women's rights are often the first things that are discussed.

It is thus rare to read a news report about the social and cultural situation in Iran without a mention of veiled women. In these reports, a veil is used to either demonstrate a person's conservative viewpoint or to show the opposite—that despite the veil, a woman holds views close to our own more liberal, democratic ones. A recent article in The New York Times's "Week in Review" clearly demonstrates this point: While in one section the article states that Iranian women's wearing of the veil has led to their loss of freedom and rights, in another the writer notes the important role women have played in Iran's recent politics, "their covered heads and bodies notwithstanding." The problem, of course, is that because veiling is compulsory in Iran it is hard to use it as an indicator of any individual's political views.

There are many women—some more vocal proponents of women's rights in Iran—who would still wear a veil regardless of the law and who are against it being compulsory. Some of the country's more politically and socially active women are practicing Muslims; their objection to compulsory veiling stems not from their belief that the veil itself is oppressive, but rather from knowing that a law deprives women of their freedom to choose their clothing. These women, therefore, are not a moderating or reformist force "despite their veil." The veil, itself, has very little to do with their political stance.

"This young woman is totally veiled and studies at the niversity of Irbid, Jordan. It always surprised me to see women in such clothes, because in Jordan there is no law that forces women to be veiled like in Iran. But some of them do it because they are convinced that it is the right way of life for themselves."—Katharina Eglau. *Photo by Katharina Eglau.©*

Since 1997, there has been a shift toward articles that focus on the numerous women journalists, activists, parliamentarians and other public figures in Iran. There is also an increasing number of articles about Iranian youth, with special emphasis on younger women as the strongest force for reform in contemporary Iran. This shift is an important and welcomed one, reflecting the changing situation in Iran and the increased access of Western journalists to it.

Despite this positive change, a good number of articles still operate within a conventional framework and utilize stereotypes. The success of female public figures in Iran and the presence of Iranian women in the streets are often presented against the backdrop of the readers' (and sometimes the journalists') expectation that because the women are veiled and living in a Muslim country, they lack certain rights, behave in certain (traditional/conservative) ways, and hold certain views. This juxtaposition of look, beliefs and actions provides such reports with a sensationalist, shocking, or "newsworthy" quality: See the traditional woman act in modern ways.

Gender inequality is now the most common window through which the West reports on Iran. Yet other issues are of concern to Iranian women, and these concerns are ones that journalists could report on and other media could do a better job of portraying. But to do so means moving beyond the customary model for reporting on Iranian women.

Considering the constraints placed on journalists traveling to and reporting on Iran, how can the coverage of Iranian women in the international media be improved?

Here are four interconnected suggestions:

1. **Don't start reporting with preconceived assumptions.** The framework within which stories about women are sought and written about needs to change. If we start with the assumption that Iranian women are some of the most repressed women in the world, then anything that counters that image will be seen as heroic, subversive and unusual. The rise of Islamic movements in different parts of the Middle East in the 1990's and the Taliban in Afghanistan have for now fixed in the international mind the idea of Muslim women (marked by their veil) as oppressed by a Muslim patriarchy. It is against this image that much of the coverage of Iranian women occurs and many articles are read. The prevalent assumption that treats all women living in Muslim countries the same (regardless of country, social, economic and cultural factors)—an assumption that does not correspond to reality—is the cause of some of the problematic reporting we see.

2. **Don't think in terms of "Iranian women."** Ask how relevant the broad category "Iranian woman" is to

the story being reported. For example, rarely do we see articles speaking about "French" or "Italian" or "European" women. To speak about *those* women as though they are a collective with the same problems, reactions and predicaments would not be considered good journalism. Yet when Iranian women are written about—even when reporting on a particular artist, attorney, writer, or politician—the focus shifts from the individual's work to her life as an Iranian or Muslim woman. Many Iranian women who become the focus of the international media's attention and fascination are aware of the kind of boxes they are put into and often express frustration over this, noting how most of the questions asked of them by foreign journalists focus more on being an "Iranian woman" and less on their work.

"In Iran, the motorbike is very popular. Whole families travel on one motorbike because they cannot afford a car."—Katharina Eglau. *Photo by Katharina Eglau.*©

3. **Ask different questions.** The most important way to change our framework is to begin asking different questions. Familiar questions sound like this: "What do Iranian women want?" "What are the problems of Iranian women today?" "How can a woman be veiled and a feminist?" "How does it feel to be a woman in the Islamic Republic of Iran?" But these questions have limited utility. Instead, ask questions that will provide a broader context for deeper understanding. Instead of asking, "What do Iranian women want?" ask questions that add to gender issues other factors such as economics, religious beliefs, and demographic information. When interviewing various women, determine their background (Are they from Tehran or the provinces? Are they upper, middle, or working class? How relevant are their views/positions to their demographics, and how much relevance does this have to their being women?) Ask questions that allow individual women to hold myriad positions; don't box her into speaking for "Iranian women." The image of the veiled (thus Muslim) woman has become so all-consuming and stands in for so many things (political beliefs, economic status, demography) that, in using it, we lose sight of important differences when reporting on women who live in Iran.

4. **Learn about Iran before asking questions.** The two most important constraints on those writing about Iran are language and unfamiliarity with the subtle shifts and changes in Iranian society. Other than a handful of journalists who reside there, most travel to Iran for limited periods of time and operate under the pressures of navigating a difficult and different society. Fortunately, various resources are available to journalists both in and outside of Iran. An increasing number of Iranian-Americans (or Iranian-Europeans) travel to and live in Iran and can serve as sources of information. Because their relation to both societies is not just based on formal information (books, newspapers, interviews), they are in a position to understand the subtleties of Iranian society while at the same time appreciate some of the difficulties journalists face in trying to explain these subtleties to their readers. There are also Web sites, journals and online magazines that attempt to create precisely the kind of contextual information necessary for better coverage of Iran and Iranian women. The most important of these is www.badjens.com and www.tehranavenue.com. The former, in particular, was created to specifically address the problems outlined in this article and to allow those outside of Iran to see women in Iran not as Muslim/Iranian women but as they see themselves.

This critique of media coverage of Iranian women is a tricky one to articulate. I am aware that at times it implies that unless journalists are part of a culture, they cannot accurately cover it. Or that at times such criticism veers into a kind of cultural relativism that seems to make any type of general statement problematic. Neither of these conclusions is my intent. The job of journalists covering a culture and society so different from their own is a difficult one, and in Iran this difficulty is compounded by restrictions on the flow of information and, at times, by the contradictory nature of changes taking place inside of it. But it is precisely for these reasons that the job of journalists reporting on Iran, and particularly about women in Iran, requires a higher degree of self-criticism and awareness of the assumptions brought into the reporting.

The complexities of these women's lives might be difficult to report, challenging to write, and slow to be embraced by readers. But they are also the stories worth telling. ■

Naghmeh Sohrabi is a Ph.D. candidate in Middle Eastern history at Harvard University. She has worked as an interpreter for various journalists in Iran and the United States and is a regular contributor to the online magazine Iranian.com.

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Nieman Notes

Compiled by Lois Fiore

Interactivity Creates a Different Kind of Journalism

A former newspaper editor turned radio host discovers 'a forum, simultaneously public and intimate, for digesting news and debating its meaning.'

By Tom Ashbrook

Just before nine o'clock on the morning of September 11, I was turning into the parking lot of a venture capital firm in Westport, Connecticut when the cell phone beeped. "Turn on your radio," my wife said. "A plane has hit the World Trade Center."

That morning, we did not set out plans for a new media company, or for an old one, or for anything else. Instead, a knot of investors, entrepreneurs, secretaries, the UPS man, and a plumber sat transfixed around a television set pulled onto a long boardroom table and watched with the rest of the world as history exploded in our faces.

So many lives were changed in those few hours. My changes were utterly inconsequential in any greater scheme of things. But that morning did reshape, yet again, my experience as a journalist.

In the late 1990's, after my Nieman year, I left my editor's job at The Boston Globe to join the "new media" land rush with a team of wonderful dreamers. We launched an Internet company, struggled up a steep learning curve, raised $70 million, made something cool happen, learned the new media frontier inside and out—then watched as bust followed boom. There was plenty of hubris, a little madness—and the beginnings of a profound change in the flow of information that will play out for years to come.

The company survives, but by September of this year I had long stepped out of the management of HomePortfolio, Inc. I'd written a book chronicling my experience in the decade's boom and was enjoying a year off—writing, swimming with the kids, and dabbling very lightly in a completely new medium to me: radio.

Boston's national powerhouse of a public radio station, WBUR, had launched a great interview and call-in show called "The Connection," hosted by the inimitable Christopher Lydon. When Chris left the station, a stream of well-known broadcasting folk stepped in to take the microphone while station manager Jane Christo looked for a new host. NPR's Nina Totenberg, Neal Conan, and Robert Siegel took turns. John Donvan from ABC's "Nightline" sat in. Dick Gordon from the Canadian Broadcasting System was there. Judy Swallow from the BBC. And from the ink-stained world of newspapering, the Globe's Alex Beam and, once-removed, me. Gordon, a veteran CBC correspondent, was tapped for the job. But for me, just a week at the microphone had been a revelation. This was the original interactive mass medium, interacting with a great national audience and thriving on change, both social and technological.

Four days after the attacks, WBUR executive producer Ian Docherty called on a Saturday afternoon. Demand for coverage of the week's astounding events were pressing NPR's resources to the brink, he said. Would I come in Sunday afternoon, ready to help plan and host crisis programming that would go on-air nationally, five hours a night, starting Monday?

On Sunday afternoon, the station's top brass, producers and technical staff gathered around a white board with the scribbled outline of the programming. A staff of a dozen was put on the rush project. Public radio stations KQED in San Francisco and WNYC in New York mercifully picked up three of the five hours. On Monday, September 17, WBUR's "Special Coverage" went live for two hours at 7 p.m., flowing over hundreds of local stations in NPR's network. It's never stopped.

The show's format is simple and draws its energy from the diversity of response to stunning events: An eight-minute debrief at the top of the hour, digging in to the latest news from Washington, New York, Islamabad or Kabul, with radio or print reporters on the scene or informed analysts looking on. A longer interview, live, in the 40-minute belly of each hour, going deep with a newsmaker, scholar, artist or commentator, and opening the phones to listener comments and questions. And a "radio diary" in the last five minutes of the show, in which citizens, filmmakers, Afghan exiles and others have poured out their personal thoughts and emotions in taped segments. As host, I'm joined most nights throughout by the show's excellent news analyst Jack Beatty, a senior editor at The Atlantic Monthly.

So, crisis brings a newspaperman to the radio mike. And here's what I've learned. Radio's strength is its immediacy in moving information, its tactile power to evoke scenes and elicit re-

sponse, its ability to share conversations in their full human richness, and its power as a forum, simultaneously public and intimate, for digesting news and debating its meaning. Most newspaper interviews are, of necessity, highly filtered and structured for nuggets. Live radio interviews are full in-the-moment conversations, with all the nuance, emotion and palpability that implies. They can, on a good night, be more nimble and less predictable that many interviews converted to print.

Open the phones on air and the conversation becomes immediately multi-dimensional. Listeners are brave in their questions. This instant interactivity can be intense. Listeners' challenges and our guests' responses allow the entire audience to quickly triangulate for a personal view. Listeners can soon gauge a guest's awareness, sagacity and humanity. The role of the interlocutor—in this case, the host—is more transparent than in print. The audience sees the sausage being made, can poke at facts and their interpretation, and suggest entirely different perspectives on news and analysis—in the midst of an interview! It all happens in "real time," as I would have said last year, in new-media entrepreneuring mode. In a focused news context, this is thrilling. In a time of crisis, it feels invaluable. ■

Tom Ashbrook, a 1996 Nieman Fellow, is author of "The Leap: A Memoir of Love and Madness in the Internet Gold Rush." He was deputy managing editor of The Boston Globe and founding publisher of HomePortfolio Inc.

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—1955—

Archibald J. Parsons, a long-time newspaperman and a founding editor of National Journal, died on January 14, 2001 of complications related to cardiovascular disease and kidney failure. He was 75.

Parsons worked for The (Baltimore) Sun beginning in 1983. In 1987, he became The Sun's minority affairs correspondent in Washington. There he was criticized for being politically involved in support of the controversial Supreme Court nomination of Clarence Thomas. Parsons admitted that his political actions were contrary to his "ethical responsibilities," but at the same time "maintained that his stories about the nomination and the NAACP's opposition to Thomas were unbiased," according to his obituary in The Washington Post.

Parsons trained in aeronautical engineering at New York University, then studied journalism as a graduate at the University of Michigan. He began his newspaper career at the New York Herald-Tribune in 1949, eventually working for The Washington Post, the Washington Star, and The Sun.

At times during the 60's and 70's Parsons worked in public affairs, first for the Ford Foundation in West Africa, and later for the Democratic National Committee and the U.S. Information Agency. In the early 1970's he was a founding editor and executive editor of National Journal. He taught journalism at Michigan State University before joining The Sun in 1983.

Parsons is survived by his wife, **Sandra Roberts**, daughter Elizabeth Ross Parsons, and stepson, Adam R. Petrillo, of Rockville, Maryland.

—1957—

Anthony Lewis, a fixture on The New York Times's op-ed page for 32 years, retired in December. He spent almost his entire newspaper career—since the late 1940's—with the Times. In 1969, Lewis, already a two-time Pulitzer Prize-winner, began writing his column, then entitled "At Home Abroad," from the Times's London bureau. His last column was published on December 15 of this year.

Though not a trained lawyer, he is an authority and frequent lecturer on U.S. constitutional law, particularly on issues of free speech and free press. Lewis is noted for having spent most of his Nieman year at the Harvard Law School.

Lewis said he had decided to retire about six months ago. "My health is good, but I've been at it for 32 years. I'm 74—it was time to slow down," he said. He does not expect to continue writing for the Times as some retired columnists have ("a cutting of the silver cord," as he put it). Instead, in January, he'll be focusing on a course he will teach on constitutional law and the press at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

Lewis is the author of "Gideon's

The Murrey and Frances Marder Fund

The Murrey and Frances Marder Fund, established in November 1996, has provided the Nieman Foundation with support for four Watchdog Journalism Conferences. It also has paid for the costs related to publishing excerpts of the conferences and articles on watchdog journalism in Nieman Reports and on the Nieman Web site. An accounting as of 10/15/00 appeared in the Winter 2000 issue of Nieman Reports. An accounting as of 11/30/01 follows:

Income:	$235,221.67	
	$138,197.13	— Balance at 10/15/00
	8,191.90	— Interest on balance at end of FY'00-01 (6/30/01)
	88,832.64	— Income from endowment for FY'01-'02 (7/1/01-6/30/02)
Expense:	$22,241.37	
	$ 22,241.37	— Fourth Watchdog Conference (9/28/01 & 9/29/01)
Balance:	$212,980.30	

Trumpet" (1964), "Portrait of a Decade: The Second American Revolution" (1964), and "Make No Law: The Sullivan Case and the First Amendment" (1991).

—1973—

Wayne Greenhaw writes, "My 14th book, 'My Heart Is in the Earth: True Stories of Alabama and Mexico,' was published this fall by River City Publishing. A collection of pieces from my many years of reporting, it also contains never before published articles and accounts which bring together the two places I love: Alabama, where I have lived most of my life, and Mexico, where I went to school and where my wife, **Sally**, and I travel frequently.

The Alabama stories include tales of the late Governor George C. Wallace and of the man who wrote his inaugural address ('Segregation now! Segregation forever!') and who later wrote 'The Outlaw Josey Wales' and 'The Education of Little Tree;' tales of my grandfather and grandmother, of the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan, and legendary Alabama football coach Paul 'Bear' Bryant. The Mexico stories include the tale of my first journey by train from Tuscaloosa, Alabama to San Miguel de Allende to attend school in the summer of 1958 and 1959 when I met the Beat writers Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg; the story of the Alabama-raised William Spratling, who revitalized the silver industry in Taxco, and profiles of artists Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo.

I am now rewriting my history of Montgomery, published by the Montgomery Advertiser 11 years ago. With more information about the last decade of the 20th century and new details I have uncovered from further research, the book 'Montgomery: The River City' will be published by River City Publishing in the spring of 2002."

—1977—

Al Larkin was named senior vice president of general administration and external affairs, a new post, at The Boston Globe last September. In that capacity, he is responsible for the Globe's community relations, public relations, and The Boston Globe Foundation. Last January, Larkin was named senior vice president of human resources; in his new post, he will continue to oversee human resources and other administrative duties.

—1979—

Donald Woods was posthumously awarded an Al Neuharth Free Spirit Award by The Freedom Forum in November. Woods, born in South Africa, worked to expose the realities of apartheid in his country. Receiving repeated threats to his family, he fled the country to England and continued to campaign against apartheid with books, essays, articles and lectures. Woods died of cancer on August 19, 2001.

Three others received the award this year: Alice Randall, author of "The Wind Done Gone;" Erik Weihenmayer, the first blind person to ascend Mt. Everest, and Brigadier General Chuck Yeager, test pilot and the first human to fly faster than the speed of sound. The award is presented to individuals for their ability to inspire others.

—1981—

David Lamb, in the wake of the September terrorist attacks, updated and revised his 1987 book, "The Arabs: Journeys Beyond the Mirage," for republication. Then, in December, he headed off to Pakistan and Afghanistan for the Los Angeles Times to report the war against terrorism.

—1982—

Ramindar Singh is a fellow at The Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. Singh has been a journalist for three decades. From 1995 until March 2000 he was editor of New Dehli's The Times of India and, most recently, editor of The Sunday Times of India. During his fellowship he is pursuing his interests in press freedom and freedom of information.

—1984—

Nina Bernstein was one of five finalists this year for the National Book Award nonfiction category for "The Lost Children of Wilder: The Epic Struggle to Change Foster Care" (Pantheon Books). In her book she follows several generations of a family whose 1973 lawsuit challenged New York City's foster care system. The case was finally settled in 1999 and, in writing about it, she reveals much about the lives of New York's abandoned children. The other four finalists were Marie Arana, David James Duncan, Jan T. Gross, and Andrew Solomon, who won the award.

—1988—

Lindsay Miller has a new job at WBUR, Boston's National Public Radio news station and perhaps, she says, "most notorious as the home of the 'Car Talk' guys." She continues, "Having spent three years as senior editor of WBUR's 'Morning Edition,' I'm now a producer for 'The Connection,' a talk show about news and ideas that airs on NPR stations throughout the country. A lot of people listen to us online (www.theconnection.org). In normal times (which these are not), we do an hour a day of hard news and an hour on something soft but fascinating.

"It's a lot like being a Nieman. For one thing, I'm surrounded by really bright, cool people who are much younger than I. And I can pick and choose from a whole universe of topics, only this time I've got to write the papers. I've had Geneva Overholser (NF '86), Stan Grossfeld (NF '92), and a lot of other Niemans on the program. And I'm always looking for more."

—1990—

Goenawan Mohamad spent the fall as a Regents' Professor at the University of California, Los Angeles. His appointment ended in December 2001. He wrote, "Living in an apartment here in L.A. as a Regents' Professor reminds me so much of my Nieman year more than a decade ago. It remains a memorable sojourn."

Gaining New Appreciation for a Free Press—From Afar

Karl Idsvoog, a 1983 Nieman, spent seven weeks in Tbilisi, Georgia this fall on a U.S. State Department-funded mission through Internews, a nonprofit organization supporting independent media in emerging democracies. He went to train investigative reporters at Rustavi 2 Television, an independent television station in Georgia.

He writes: "It was a great time to be in Georgia. The interior minister threatened the station's CEO. The following week, the security minister sent agents to the station, who demanded various financial records of the station. The station CEO ordered every camera in the place turned on—they went live. Within minutes, citizens of Tbilisi were gathering outside of Rustavi 2. The following day, thousands marched on Parliament. And, subsequently, several ministers resigned.

"Rustavi 2 has lots of production and equipment problems, but the main thing it has is commitment. Those who work there believe in the importance of a free press to a democracy—something owners of America's broadcast corporations seem to have forgotten. As the ad market in the United States continues its slump, as stations continue to cut costs, there's one question every corporate executive and every American should ask: 'What price has our nation paid for the profit margins of America's news corporations?'

"At Rustavi 2 Television, all the journalists as well as their owners talk about the importance of a free press to democracy. And it's not just talk. Despite death threats (a popular anchor was recently murdered), journalists and their owners are committed to focusing on issues of critical importance to the developing democracy here. Yet in America, news corporations continue to cut newsroom budgets. What price, as a nation, will we pay?

"And despite some excellent newspaper reporting, for the American public to be informed the news needs to be on television. Prior to September 11, how much would the American public know from watching "20/20," "Primetime Live," "Dateline," the morning shows, and the entire Fox network about the threat of terrorism, American foreign policy, the attitudes of the Arab states toward America, world poverty and its implications on political stability? Anyone working on those shows as well as the American viewing public knows the answer. American broadcast corporations have failed miserably. Before September 11, with only a few exceptions, our so-called newsmagazines paid more attention to Hollywood than to Washington. That's not surprising. Unlike the owners of news companies here in Tbilisi who are concerned about democracy, the owners of America's news corporations are concerned mainly about money.

"Examining issues of significance to a community takes time and time is money. It's cheaper to do live-shot journalism. It's cheaper to replace experienced (more expensive) reporters with inexperienced (cheaper) ones. So, for the moment, the profit continues, but the public loses, and so does democracy. Terrorists will never destroy American democracy. But greed might."

In the United States, Idsvoog runs First Amendment Investigations, providing investigative data and video services to law firms representing media organizations. In the spring, he expects to be doing more work for Internews. ■

—1992—

Raymundo Riva Palacio is in a new editing position: "After several months of pressure from the Mexican Presidency, I was finally fired (the story of my life) from Milenio, a newspaper I founded (a 10-year project), which is part of a very important media group in Mexico. I am now working as executive editor of Detrás de la Noticia, a small multimedia group that produces TV and radio news programs, is an Internet provider, and a wire news service (that is quality, not quantity oriented), and publishes a weekly political magazine in several newspapers in Mexico, including El Universal, of Mexico City (total circulation, est: 250,000). I am also writing a twice-a-week column in El Universal."

—1994—

Larry Tye writes, "After 20 years at newspapers—the last 15 at The Boston Globe covering issues from medicine and environment to sports—I left this summer to try book writing full time. My book on the renewal underway across the Jewish Diaspora, 'Home Lands: Portraits of the New Jewish Diaspora,' came out in September. I just signed a contract with Henry Holt for another book, on the Pullman porters and how they helped spawn the Civil Rights movement and today's black middle class. I also am setting up and will run a fellowship program—sponsored by the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation—to train young medical reporters from print, radio and TV."

—1996—

Dave Marcus took a leave of absence from US News & World Report, to "write a book about teenagers who have problems at home and school. After covering terrorism for years, it was tough not to write about September 11, but I'm finally relishing life in Northampton, Massachusetts. The four of us can be reached at (413) 586-3732, or Dave@DaveMarcus.com. For more on my project: www.DaveMarcus.com."

—2001—

Sulaiman al-Kahtani is doing a postdoctoral fellowship at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University. The fellowship began in the fall of 2001 and will continue through the

end of July 2002. Al-Kahtani's research is a comparative analysis of the rules of poets in the old Arabic tribes and the current process of journalism in the Arab world. The major question in his research is "Have the Arab journalists replaced the poets of the old Arabic tribes?"

Sunday Dare has a new position: "I am currently the service chief of the Hausa service under the Africa division at the Voice of America in Washington, D.C. I took the job in early August. As chief, I decide the editorial direction and the generation of news materials for broadcast to our service areas. This also includes providing news information about the United States and seeking local content and resonance for Africa in major U.S. policies. The Hausa language is a major trade language in most parts of West Africa spoken by millions of people. Target areas are Nigeria, Ghana, Niger, Cameroon and Chad." ■

Letter to the Editor

November 2001

In Nieman Reports/Fall 2001, Jim Naughton writes that The Philadelphia Inquirer, formerly "one of journalism's top destinations, has become a departure lounge."

That's a cute, clever turn of phrase, but it's also cruel and cynical, coming from an editor who abandoned ship with a generous buyout six years ago.

Moreover, in my opinion, Naughton tells just one side of the story, the downside. It's certainly true that Knight Ridder's belt-tightening has cast a pall over the Inquirer's newsroom. Many talented journalists have left the paper, and these losses are tough to take.

But Naughton ignores what I see as the upside. For, despite the grievous blows it has sustained, I believe the Inquirer remains one of the nation's finest newspapers.

I've spent nearly 55 years in this lunatic business, including more than three decades competing fiercely against the Inky as a reporter and editor for the Philadelphia Bulletin. After we lost the newspaper war in 1982, I joined the Inquirer staff and have toiled here as a reporter, business columnist, and freelance contributor ever since.

That background gives me perspective that I think Jim Naughton lacks. And I'm full of admiration for the reporters, editors and photographers who fill the Inquirer's pages every day, people whom Naughton dismisses.

I'd like to name some of the outstanding performers, but there are too many of them. Suffice to say that I'd stack the Inquirer's current staff against that of just about any newspaper of comparable size in this country.

Never was I prouder of this staff than in its superlative coverage of the World Trade Center catastrophe. The paper's comprehensive work on this big story was truly stunning, and I say that as one who was totally out of the loop.

As the Inquirer's executive editor in its glory years, Gene Roberts attracted brilliant editors and reporters from all over the country, many of whom have followed him out the door.

They were totally committed to Roberts, my highly esteemed Nieman classmate, but not to the Inquirer, and certainly not to the quirky city where it is published. More's the pity.

Peter Binzen
Nieman '62

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Living Treasures

By Steve Northup

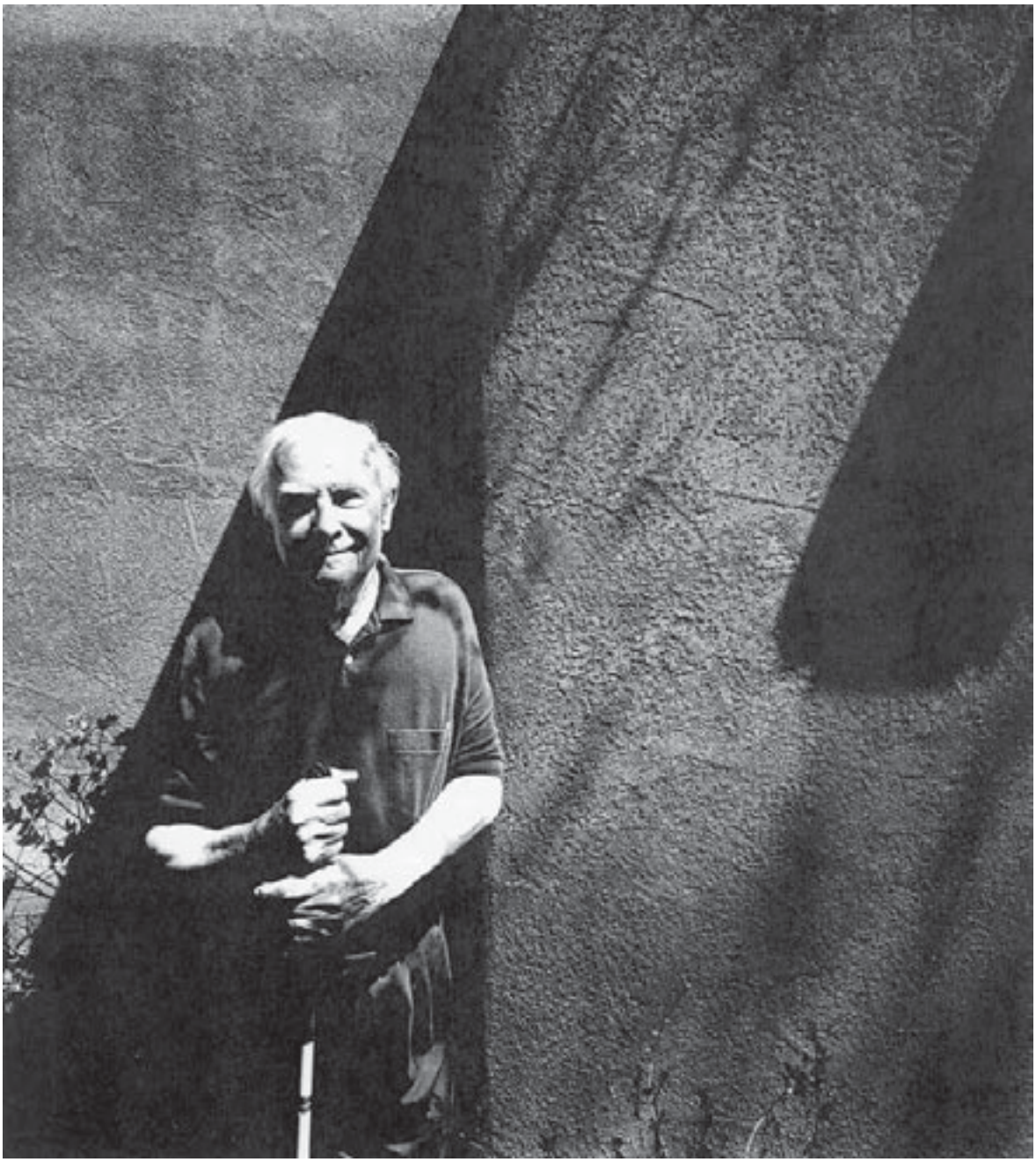
There is a small committee in Santa Fe that twice each year names three people as "Living Treasures." The name, and to some extent the content, is based on a model created by the Japanese to honor citizens for their artistic contributions. But Santa Fe honors a wider spectrum of service. There is an age requirement—over 80—but it is sometimes waved when there is worry about a recipient making 80.

Seven years ago, the committee came to me and asked that I take over the photography part of the program, doing a portrait of each treasure. I felt honored, and the Treasures Project was a precise fit into a portrait project I've been plugging away at for about 10 years: black and white, big negative (four by five-inch), wide-angle environmental portraits, done by available light. These living treasures seem to bring their own light to the process. For me, the best part is being able to spend hours with each of them in quiet conversation before the camera comes out of the bag. ■

Pedro Ribera-Ortega, majordomo of La Conquistadora. The statue came to New Mexico with the reconquest of 1693.

Abad Aloy Lucero at 92, Lucero continues to make furniture and carve saints.

Estafanita Martinez at a San Juan pueblo. A storyteller and linguist, she is compiling the first dictionary of her language.



Fred McCaffrey, a long-time New Mexico newsman, went blind a few months before this picture was made.