

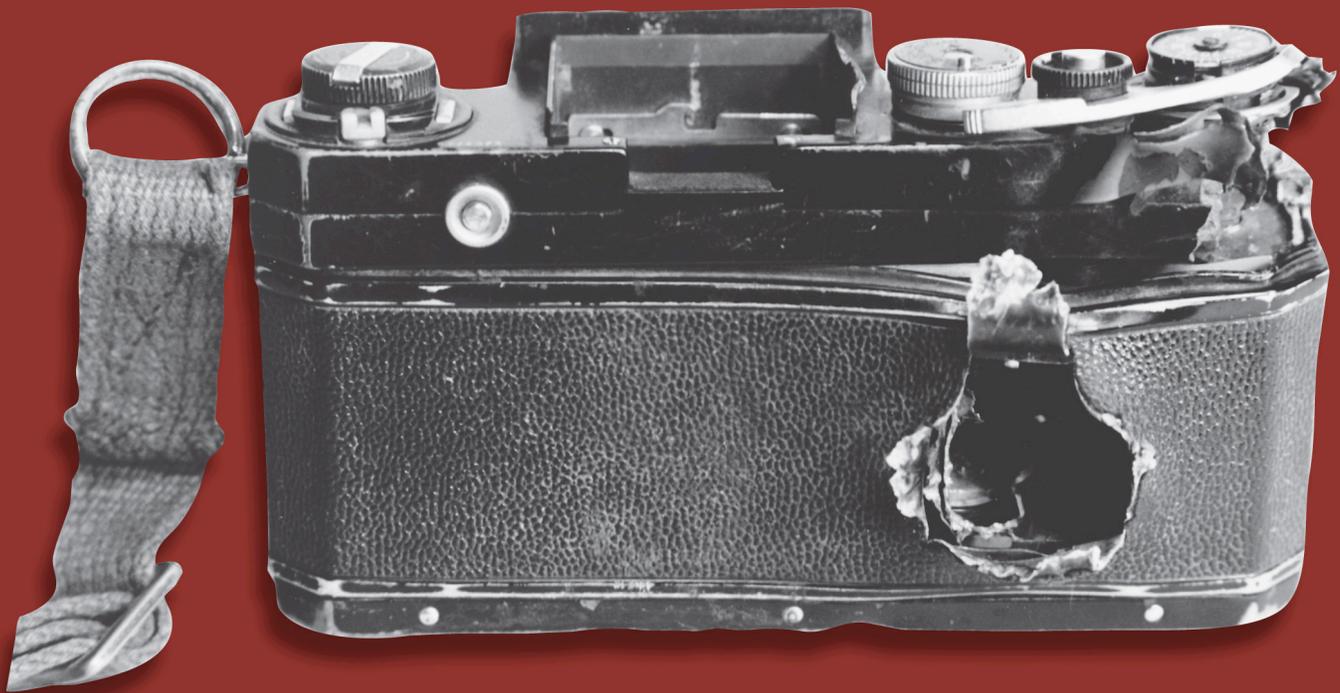
# Nieman Reports

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

VOL. 64 NO. 1 SPRING 2010

## Visual Journalism

Fresh Approaches and New Business Strategies  
For the Multimedia Age



Taizo Ichinose's Nikon took a bullet when he was shooting the Vietnam War. Cameras and images change, yet the photojournalist's mission is the same.

### Words & Reflections

From Engineers to Journalists,  
J-School Classrooms to Newsrooms

# 'to promote and elevate the standards of journalism'

Agnes Wahl Nieman  
the benefactor of the Nieman Foundation

Vol. 64 No. 1 Spring 2010

Nieman Reports

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Cover: Bullet-torn camera that belonged to photographer Taizo Ichinose who was killed during the Vietnam War, the year after his camera was shot. *Photo by Rikio Imajo/The Associated Press. Courtesy of IMMF Foundation.*

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# Global Health Reporting: Expertise Matters

For three years global health fellows have been a part of each Nieman class, and the great value rendered by their study and subsequent reporting is measurable.

BY BOB GILES

**D**iminished resources in newspaper and broadcast newsrooms are weakening the ability of journalists to report on the spread of disease as well as the dire consequences of poorly funded public health systems and corporate malfeasance. Also diminished is the capacity of news organizations to hold accountable those charged with delivering public and foundation money to people in need.

Without independent reporting on global health issues, the public and policymakers have less of a chance of obtaining reliable information about the effectiveness of treatments and whether rural clinics and vaccination programs are reaching those they should. Without investigative reporting, our understanding of the key roles government leaders, global trade policies and agricultural practices, pharmaceutical companies and medical practitioners play in a variety of health issues is diminished.

So when we discover the enormous value that a dogged and skilled journalist can bring to covering such a story it reminds us why independent reporting on global health is so critical today. Margie Mason is such a reporter. Based in Vietnam, she is a medical writer for The Associated Press (AP) and was one of the three Nieman Fellows in the 2009 class to specialize in global health. The terms of her fellowship—supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation—enabled her to develop an intensive reporting project during her time at Harvard. The project she settled on was drug resistance, a global health problem affecting the developing and the developed world—for when humans develop resistance to drugs used to treat diseases, then illnesses return and spread, some of them with deadly consequence.

Working with AP colleague Martha Mendoza, Mason devoted her post-Nieman fieldwork to this investigation. Mason traveled extensively to places where drugs were confronting major resistance. She explored how doctors are losing ground in treating malaria, tuberculosis, AIDS and staph infections and how the use of antibiotics in agriculture contributes to the problem. The two reporters delivered a groundbreaking series published late last year. Their stories moved on The AP wire and received extensive play in newspapers and TV stations in the United States and throughout the world. Papers developed follow-up stories and, weeks later, the series was still running in print editions. Several members of Congress have expressed interest in developing policy responses to the problems described in the stories.

In another example, Harro Albrecht, a global health fellow from Germany in the 2007 Nieman class, used his fellowship to take a comprehensive look at the growing industry of international aid targeted at health issues. His reporting from Uganda, Rwanda and India was published in the German newsweekly *Die Zeit*. The stories established him as an influential voice on global health matters in a nation that had yet to discover why it should even participate in the global fight against poverty and disease. During the past two years, Albrecht has written more than 50,000 words on global health issues and how they relate to people in his own country and throughout Europe.

Talking with global health leaders is another way we can measure the impact of this fellowship opportunity. Paul Farmer, a professor at Harvard Medical School and founder of Partners in Health, has described the fellowship as providing “comprehensive and nuanced understanding [that] can come only through long-term investigation and experience, following the arc of the story as it evolves over time.” While at Harvard, these fellows have helped to connect global health researchers working on similar topics who have not been in touch due to the compartmentalized nature of academic research, and they’ve introduced academics to the realities reporters face in doing their work.

Stefanie Friedhoff, a science journalist, 2001 Nieman Fellow, and special projects manager for the foundation, works closely with the fellows in developing their fieldwork projects. “Most of the philanthropic work that influences so many people’s lives is being carried out in a vacuum,” she says. Educational fellowships of this kind are essential because the public and the policymakers know so little even as international funding agencies and philanthropists are putting a significant emphasis on public health, hunger and poverty. Where do policymakers learn about what works in the field and what doesn’t? Primarily through the work of journalists is her reply.

Mason and Albrecht were two of nine journalists whose fellowships in global health reporting were supported over three years by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Now, the global health grants have expired, but the significant impact of their work affirms the Nieman Foundation’s commitment to this effort. It encourages us to believe that what they have done will inspire others to provide long-term financial support for a fellowship program that has demonstrated a capacity to expand public understanding of global health issues. ■

# Visual Journalism

## Fresh Approaches and New Business Strategies For the Multimedia Age

Context. Layered information. Voice. Movement. Transparency. Photographer as “author.” Subject as “storyteller.” Image as “instigator.”

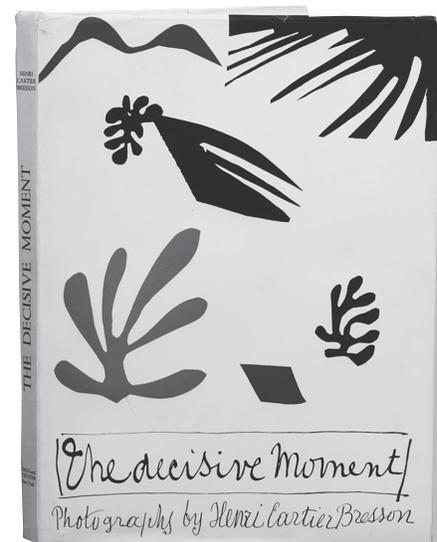
Words and phrases that even a few years ago were not used to describe the practice of photojournalism surface today with hesitant certainty. Where the digital road is leading those whose livelihood relies on the visual portrayal of our contemporary lives might not be entirely clear. By adapting to technology in shooting their images and in how they publish and distribute their work, photojournalists are constructing roads that are already taking them in new and sometimes unanticipated directions.

It was more than half a century ago when an American publisher placed an abstract painting by Matisse and an unforgettable phrase onto the cover of a portfolio of 126 photographs taken by Henri Cartier-Bresson. That title—“The Decisive Moment”—defined for the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century what photographers set out to capture. That the book’s French edition carried the words “Images a la Sauvette,” which translated is closer to “images on the run,” didn’t seem to matter nor did the different treatment of images and words; his French edition had captions, while the U.S. one did not.

A few years later, in an interview with *The Washington Post*, Cartier-Bresson observed: “There is a creative fraction of a second when you are taking a picture. Your eye must see a composition or an expression that life itself offers you, and you must know with intuition when to click the camera. That is the moment the photographer is creative. Oop! The moment! Once you miss it, it is gone forever.”

Today high-definition video cameras can create high-resolution images at a rate of 30 photographs a second, eliminating the need to know when to click the camera. With audio in the mix, the decisive moment yields to the visual voice. An image, still or moving when shot, will inevitably appear on a screen accompanied by the voices of the photographer and subject telling the story. This task was once left for a single immovable image to do.

In this Spring 2010 issue of *Nieman Reports*, photojournalists explore the new pathways that their images travel in the digital age. Those at photo agencies share ideas about online business strategies designed to give photographers the time and resources their work requires. Few photojournalists receive what David Burnett refers to as “magic phone calls” from photo editors, the ones sending them with pay and expenses on lengthy assignments to distant lands. So the need to find new revenue streams in a marketplace saturated with images rests heavy on their minds.



Photojournalism's destination and audience, once pre-ordained by the news organizations that paid the cost of doing business, are now in flux. Digital possibilities are limitless, but what is now required of photojournalists are an entrepreneurial mindset and a facility with digital tools.

On the Web, photographs now act as gateways to information and context, to stories told by participants and conversations held by viewers. Illustrative of this are two examples, separated by 10 years. One was created in 1996 as a portrayal of the Bosnian conflict, at a time before most journalists considered the Internet as being about much more than e-mail; the other, published more recently, provides a glimpse at the Web's potential as subjects in photographs come to life through flipbook-style animation.

In "Bosnia: Uncertain Paths to Peace,"<sup>1</sup> an early Web photojournalism project by The New York Times, Gilles Peress's photographs serve as links guiding viewers along a narrative trail of their choosing to background material about Bosnia and into discussion forums. Primitive by today's multimedia standards, this project was prescient in providing context with a click and in recognizing the expanded role of photographer as author.

Today photojournalists constantly consider which form and what venue will work best for optimum engagement with an audience. To display an uplifting visual story of daily life in Iraqi Kurdistan, photojournalist Ed Kashi partnered with MediaStorm to weave thousands of his photographs into a flipbook-style digital animation. The result is an emotional journey told through photographs that gradually change to simulate motion, as music paces the visual ride. An index of images on the site leads viewers to captioned photographs for deeper context.

Multimedia. Motion. Music. Maximizing impact. Measuring influence. Even words like "meta-photograph"—seeing the image as a digital entryway to revealing layers of content and context—sneak into the photojournalist's vocabulary today. In this issue, photojournalists write about pushing through the digital disruption to find inventive uses of digital media—ways they hope will pay. ■—Melissa Ludtke



Photographs create a navigational grid for the Bosnia project.

<sup>1</sup> "Bosnia: Uncertain Paths to Peace," is archived at [www.pixelpress.org/bosnia/intro.html](http://www.pixelpress.org/bosnia/intro.html), a Web site examining possibilities in digital media, directed by Fred Ritchin whose case history of this Bosnia project can be read at [www.pixelpress.org/contents/Witnessing/case/case1.html](http://www.pixelpress.org/contents/Witnessing/case/case1.html).

## Failing to Harness the Web's Visual Promise

Today, too many news organizations still don't take advantage of digital media's capacity to give readers contextual information and to engage them in finding out more about the story the pictures tell.

BY FRED RITCHIN

Sometimes looking back helps us to know more about why we arrived where we did. But this journey back in time can also be disheartening, especially when we discover that we don't measure up to our potentials.

Take, for example, a few words I wrote in the Summer 1995 issue of Nieman Reports:

Journalists are entering a time of great possibility when more effective models of reporting, explication and discussion of the news can be built, with greater involvement of readers and a variety of new ways to present information. It is also a moment of severe peril, for if the established news sources do not understand how to both safeguard the credibility of their reporting and incorporate new ways of sharing what they know, their role in this evolving information society will be severely eroded.

I concluded: "The implications for a democracy are overwhelming."

That journalism failed to move beyond the limited repurposing of the print and broadcast media and into the welcoming territory I wrote about—into places with an expanded sense of possibility—is beyond dispute. In part, this is because dissimilarities between digital and analog media weren't

taken seriously. Instead, repeatedly and almost universally we attempted to put what we'd previously done onto a screen-based template while marveling at the new efficiencies of the digital and simultaneously giving away our work for free. If this were Greek mythology, we—the know-it-alls in the journalism community—would be portrayed as having been devoured by a seductively ephemeral Web, not realizing it was much more than simply a substitute for "dead trees."

I still remember a mid-1990's Nieman conference in which Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., the new publisher of The New York Times, somewhat cockily announced that, while grateful to the Internet pioneers, the brand names had arrived and like Old West homesteaders would now be claiming the territory. But that brand name, like so many others, lost some of its place and reputation when available 24 hours every day, for free, in more or less the same form as on paper, and for too long relied upon its branding without recognizing that it also needed to be a pioneer. Nor did the Times's self-righteousness help when its reporting was too soft on the Bush administration's plans to invade Iraq without, as it emerged, any weapons of mass destruction to be found there. Those pesky pioneers writing blogs seemed, at times, more reliable.

I write this with regret because

*"A supple, politically astute, and fascinating account of the dizzying impact of the digital revolution on the trajectory of the photographic image." — PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, STARRED REVIEW*

# AFTER PHOTOGRAPHY

FRED RITCHIN



## Meditating on the Conventions and Meaning of Photography

Fred Ritchin's book "After Photography" is a rich stew of memoir, history (remember the darkened image of O.J. Simpson on the cover of Time magazine?), and philosophical discussions. Ritchin is a professor, an entrepreneur, and a provocateur. He likes to engage in debate, raise questions, and question business as usual: Does the rise of digital photography mean there is no reason to believe photographs anymore? Are photographers encouraged to deliver images that illustrate the preconceptions of their editors and is publication withheld if they do not? (His answer to that last one is "yes.")

Ritchin got an early taste of the ethical issues that arise in the business of photography when, as a young man, he worked as a picture researcher for

Time-Life Books. One photo essay he worked on, of a young couple having their first child, was ready to go to press when word came back that the man had left his wife because he was jealous of the attention his new son was soaking up. "So the staff simply rewrote the accompanying texts (it was too late to change the photographic layout), showing how the very same photographs now indicated the inevitability of the breakup," Ritchin writes, adding, "Not long after, I terminated my own fledgling career as a photographer, in large part because I did not want to provide imagery for others to misuse."

Picture editing, to Ritchin's way of thinking, is an underappreciated skill. "There are very few courses worldwide in which one can learn

picture editing. It seems so obvious that many believe anyone can do it," he writes. "Yet the choices reverberate, reinforcing stereotypes, opening up or closing discussions, accusing, or justifying a variety of attitudes."

Near the end of this wide-ranging book, Ritchin calls on the next generation: "Students in schools worldwide should not only be asked how media work, but also asked how they should work." The challenge, as Peter Plagens put it in an article titled "Is Photography Dead?" that appeared in Newsweek at the end of 2007, remains. Ritchin quotes Plagens: "The next great photographers—if there are to be any—will have to find a way to reclaim photography's special link to reality. And they'll have to do it in a brand-new way." ■—Jan Gardner

I was the one that the business side of the Times had asked in 1994, before the domination of the Web, to take a single daily issue of the Times and transform it into a multimedia platform in a project that lasted the course of a year. Back then, the Times online was charging foreign subscribers \$30 per month. While our somewhat idiosyncratic model was initially popular among the newspaper's management, the allure and uniformity of the Web was judged preferable, and the Times, like its competitors, joined the stampede to a reassuring homogeneity.

### The Photograph—New Views

In our increasing desperation for audiences and advertisers, we also have been profligate with our major asset—authenticity. Nowhere has that been more evident than in photography, where an indiscriminate use of Photoshop has moved photography from a too-credible medium to one that is being repeatedly questioned and repudiated. Somehow we have reached 2010 without the reader or viewer knowing, despite every media outlet's

privately held guidelines, what each publication considers permissible to do to a photograph without distorting its initial meanings—a subject that I warned about in The New York Times Magazine in 1984.

Recently, the picture editor of one of our most reputable national publications, when asked in a public gathering by a professional photographic re-toucher to define the boundaries of ethical image manipulation, could only respond, "I will know it when I see it." What then is the reader to assume?

Digital media give us ways not to depend upon the waning credibility of the photograph. On the Web, photographs may be contextualized so that readers can have a larger sense of what happened. Information can be embedded in each of the image's four corners. Online viewers can make that visible by rolling over each corner with the cursor, thereby revealing substantial amounts of context. Not only can a factual caption reside at one corner, but the photographer's personal opinion of what occurred can be found at another. Or an interview with the subject, pictures taken before

and after, and links to other sites that might be helpful, including the photographer's own Web site, could be hidden within the image for a curious viewer to explore.

As this photograph is shared—and re-published in multiple venues on the Web—all of this information travels with it, guaranteeing that the photographer's point of view cannot be completely overridden by the accompanying articles.

None of this could happen on paper.

As well, there are enormous new possibilities for storytelling in the hyper-textual environment of the Web. Photographs can be layered so that the initial image is amplified and even contradicted by the second hidden underneath to give a more complex point of view (such as to reveal the staging of a photo opportunity with the second photograph underneath, or to show another perspective of an event such as the expressions of onlookers). It is possible to think of photographs or even pieces of photographs as nodes that link to a variety of other media, what I call hyperphotography, rather than as images that are sufficient in

and of themselves. In this way, the reader becomes much more implicated in the unfolding of a story when she has to choose pathways to follow as a means of exploring various ideas, rather than being presented with only one possible sequence.

A large 1996 Web-based photo essay that I created for The New York Times online with photographer Gilles Peress, “Bosnia: Uncertain Paths to Peace,” did just that, leading one commentator to write in *Print* magazine:

Visitors cannot simply sit and let the news wash over them; instead, they are challenged to

find the path that engages them, look deeper into its context, and formulate and articulate a response. The real story becomes a conversation, in which the author/photographer is simply the most prominent participant.

I would strongly urge that mainstream media involve others, including those at universities, in coming up with these new strategies. It is young people who are going to invent their own versions of journalism if it is to be revitalized and appeal to their peers. Just as the capabilities of the iPhone have been amplified in multiple

directions by the tens of thousands of applications that people are writing for it, why can't journalism be rethought and enlarged by opening it up to new ideas and strategies from the non-professionals? This, in fact, might be the most salient contribution of what so many call “citizen journalism.” ■

*Fred Ritchin, a professor of photography and imaging at New York University, is the author of “After Photography,” a book about the new digital potentials that is being translated into Chinese, French, Korean and Spanish. His blog is [www.pixelpress.org/afterphotography](http://www.pixelpress.org/afterphotography).*

## Journey to a New Beginning

As the doors of established media slam shut, a photojournalist knocks on new ones to find the promise of more authenticity in his storytelling and greater control over his work.

BY ED KASHI

In the nearly 30 years I have worked as a photojournalist, my goals were simple. I wanted my work to appear in the world's most important publications, tell stories of concern to me, and try to make a difference in the world. An essential part of this process was to establish a personal vision and approach, uphold high ethical standards, and maintain the dignity of my subjects, all the while pushing the limits of the medium. What I couldn't plan on was the near extinction of this proud profession during my lifetime. At the moment it feels like after every step I take, I look back to where I was just standing and the ground is gone. The earth is crumbling and shaking all at once.

Yet, to paraphrase something Frank Zappa said about jazz, “photojournalism is not dead, it just smells funny.” Now is actually a time of unprecedented creative opportunities for visual com-

municators. Photojournalism and documentary photography have never been more alive, practiced by a broader cross section of humanity in places never before regarded as having talent.

Does the public care? Do publishers care? I know Wall Street doesn't care. But readers want powerful visual storytelling; what they don't want is to just be shown the problems without some offering of possible solutions and some hope. After all, dreams begin with hope. Feed people gloom and not only will we lose them as readers, but we will not be working to our full potential.

The nexus of still and video fascinates me and has animated my work for nearly a decade. It began when I started shooting video in 2000. My style and method of shooting were dramatically reshaped when I started using digital still cameras. It now feels like an organic personal evolution that

reflects the changing times. I shoot in more of a flow that challenges the conceit of “the decisive moment.” While Henri Cartier-Bresson's philosophy is valid and a building block for my generation, I see that there are many decisive moments in the natural flow of a situation. What I'm doing requires a different kind of precision, one filled with more happenstance and serendipity. It is less controlled and perfect so I call this “the abandoned moment.”

I prefer not to shoot both stills and video but when necessary I am willing to alter my approach and expectations. I resent the pressure put on still photographers to abandon the unique disciplines and essential skills to be a great photographer. And one aspect of multimedia that's been hard to accept is the need for more images, not all of which would be considered “great” photography. As I work in this new medium I do so with a willingness to

## Multimedia Adds New Dimensions to the Art of Storytelling

From a book to a Web site, from a series of photographs to a digital flipbook, my work—and that of many of my colleagues—is looking anew at the long-standing notion that it is the task of a photographer to capture a decisive moment. In these three multimedia projects, I have been able to tell visual stories in more dimensions and with greater authenticity. This enables me to give a bigger voice to my subjects while experimenting with new forms of self-expression. ■  
—Ed Kashi



Workers subcontracted by Shell Oil Company to clean up an oil spill in Oloibiri, Niger Delta use no safety gear. They are paid \$1 a day. *Photo by Ed Kashi from the book "Curse of the Black Gold."*

**"Curse of the Black Gold"** is a piece that was conceived not only as a companion to my 2008 book with the same title but as a tool for advocacy and education about what's happening in the Niger Delta.

[http://talkingejesmedia.com/niger\\_delta.php](http://talkingejesmedia.com/niger_delta.php)

**"Three"** is a conceptual piece that Julie Winokur produced as a companion to my newest book, "Three." It's a series of triptychs created with images culled from my archive.

<http://edkashi.com/three.php>

**"Iraqi Kurdistan"** is a flipbook coproduced with MediaStorm. With still photographs in motion, it looks at the daily lives of the Kurdish people in northern Iraq.

<http://mediastorm.org/0011.htm>

change and try new approaches. My "Iraqi Kurdistan" flipbook is a dramatic and forceful example of that as I threw caution to the wind and let the images flow in nearly the exact sequence in which I'd originally shot them. When I showed this to an editor while I was assembling it, he said, "You're going naked." What he meant was that I was not showing my "best stuff."

### Multimedia's Ups and Downs

The point of multimedia, especially with a project such as my Iraqi flipbook, is to challenge the canons of photography, play with the medium, utilize music and get away from the limiting hang-ups of our profession. To

me, this piece exemplifies a promising marriage of stills and video. Its stream of consciousness style of shooting captures decisive moments, but it also gives viewers a sense of the scenes' inherent movement. As a colleague who watched it said to me, "You've found the missing link between stills and video."

Multimedia gives us other advantages as well. By using it, photojournalists can also integrate the voices of our subjects in ways not possible before. This is important to me. In pairing our visual work with the voices of the people whose lives we're documenting, we can achieve a greater level of authenticity in our storytelling. Digital media also enables me to have a greater

degree of authorship of my work since it allows me to control ever more of the process—from shooting the photograph to determining in what form and format it will be distributed. Not only can I more easily integrate words and images to develop my narrative, but the digital tools of dissemination give us unprecedented access to far greater audiences.

The downside of the digital marketplace is the fragmentation of audience. This is a concern for the greater good of our society, given that we no longer share experiences of media in ways we once did when there were fewer outlets. I am also concerned about image piracy and how easy it is for unscrupulous or ignorant bloggers and

Web sites to appropriate my images without even giving credit, let alone offering compensation. As blogs and Web sites begin to make money, they must be prepared to pay for the use of images.

If this trend of cut-and-paste without compensation continues, how will we be able to create the images that so many people apparently want to use? This segues into the broader but related issues of fewer assignments for photojournalists, particularly for meaningful, essay-length visual storytelling and the reduction in licensing fees being offered by clients who are prepared to pay. We are being asked to do more and being paid less. Ultimately this is not sustainable.

Advocacy is playing an increasingly large role in my work. After my “Living Your Subjects” project and my

Niger Delta story, I have come to see the true value in the work I create. There is something exhilarating about creating media materials that foundations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), educational institutions, and even corporations find useful to their advocacy efforts. I’ve had a number of instances in all areas where my work—and that of my colleagues—has been used to advocate, teach and raise awareness. This is something the established media don’t do very well.

We must be prepared to change our expectations about how our visual work will be used. No longer will a magazine’s pages be assumed to be the final destination for our images. We must think instead about having our story or set of our images resold in different markets around the world—and this includes a foundation’s

Web site, an NGO’s annual report, or a charity’s external marketing. These and many more options now exist for producing, disseminating and getting compensation for meaningful, in-depth and powerful photojournalism and documentary photography.

Being open minded and opportunistic are the keys to survival in these fast-changing times. ■

*Ed Kashi is a photojournalist, filmmaker and educator dedicated to documenting the social and political issues that define our times. His images have been published and exhibited worldwide and have been honored by Pictures of the Year International and the World Press Foundation, among others. Kashi’s editorial assignments and personal projects have generated six books.*

## A Different Approach to Storytelling

‘... photographs require context to tell a more complete narrative. The best thing for photojournalists to do is to slow down, become a little more engaged, and spend a little more time on their projects in a much more intimate way.’

*Melissa Ludtke, editor of Nieman Reports, spoke with Brian Storm, founder and president of MediaStorm, a production studio based in Brooklyn, New York, which publishes multimedia social documentary projects at [www.mediastorm.org](http://www.mediastorm.org) and produces them for other news organizations. Trained as a photojournalist, Storm worked in multimedia at MSNBC.com and Corbis where he pioneered approaches to showcasing visual journalism in new media. In their conversation Ludtke and Storm discuss the limitations of photography in a time of digital media and Storm explains how the work of photojournalists can evolve to tell more compelling and complete visual narratives. Storm believes photojournalists, in developing new business models, can gain greater control over how and when their images are used. An edited transcript of their conversation follows:*

**Melissa Ludtke:** Let’s begin by talking about a photograph taken in Iraq by Los Angeles Times photojournalist Luis Sinco. His photograph of Marine Lance Corporal James Blake Miller, battle weary, with a lit cigarette in his mouth, became an iconic image, in your words, of the “macho bad-ass American Marines in Iraq.” I once heard you say that it was in the media’s response to this photo that you could see what’s wrong with photography as a medium today. Can you explain why this is so and where this thinking leads you?

**Brian Storm:** It wasn’t about what’s wrong with photography, but this image underscored one of the great limitations that a single photograph has. It’s that we each bring our own perspective, our backgrounds, and our own prisms to a photograph because still images inherently lack the con-

text—the rest of the story. The captured moment doesn’t tell you what happened before or after, though it can be incredibly powerful in getting you into an emotional state. I feel photography needs to have context around it to be the powerful storytelling mechanism that we’re trying to create here at MediaStorm in a multimedia format.

**Ludtke:** At MediaStorm, working with Sinco and Miller, you’ve created the multimedia presentation “The Marlboro Marine,” developed around this image. And it turns out that this Marine’s story is much different from this photograph—viewed as an iconic image—might have made it seem.

**Storm:** Very quickly the photograph became labeled as “The Marlboro Marine,” which is quite a title to give a picture. It created a lot of conversa-



tion, was published widely, but it's not an accurate representation of the real story. James is a human being who as tough and macho as he looks is dealing with incredibly severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from what he experienced in Iraq. Some estimate that up to 30 percent of our soldiers returning from conflict are dealing with PTSD. While he may look tough, his life has been turned upside down by what he's experienced, causing incredible conflict at home and in his life. He filed for divorce and he's tried to kill himself. He's really, really struggling with life. No picture conveys that in a way that a 16-minute documentary does when it gives him a voice and allows him to tell his story. Of course, Luis Sinco's experience on that story is also very compelling—his relationship with Miller and the many ways he crossed that line as a journalist where you get heavily involved with your subject.

**Ludtke:** Does this speak to your vision for a photojournalist's role in the future? To step away from shooting the image and do what? Engage with the subject more directly? What then is the difference from a photojournalist's work 10 years ago to now in the way that you envision this?

**Storm:** The biggest difference is slowing

down and spending more time with the subject. It's not just taking their picture; it's giving them a voice. To do that, it's not just using an audio recorder or a video camera to do interviews. It's asking questions which allow the subject to give context to the story—to provide the rest of the information needed to truly understand the power of those moments. I'm not suggesting at all that we stop taking still pictures; they are an incredibly powerful way to communicate. But photographs require context to tell a more complete narrative. The best thing for photojournalists to do is to slow down, become a little more engaged, and spend a little more time on their projects in a much more intimate way.

**Ludtke:** What training is necessary for extraordinary photojournalists, who have proven themselves in the old way of doing things, to get them to where they're going to feel comfortable moving in this direction? Or able to do it?

**Storm:** Photographers are inherently technical so adding audio and video is not a huge leap for them. Yet audio and visual storytelling are crafts. To become a truly terrific radio reporter is hard work. It takes the same kind of study and continual practice that becoming a great photojournalist

takes. Video is exponentially harder because you are dealing with a lot of things all together at once—visual sequencing, motion, audio levels, moments and so on. So I've always tried to encourage photographers to start by using audio only. They're already very visual people. And many of them are already spending quality time with their subjects. The biggest challenge is, as a photojournalist, we're taught to be a fly on the wall; we are taught to not engage with our subjects. Our job is to disappear, become small and invisible so that a subject can do exactly what they're

going to do without any coaching or any “can you do that again?” kind of thing, which is pretty common in the video world.

In a lot of ways that's why photojournalists are so well positioned to do these kinds of in-depth stories because they already know how to disappear. But at some point along that arc of reporting, a photojournalist needs to break that wall and say, “I know I've told you that I'm not here, I know I'm trying to disappear from your life and document it as it is, but I really want to sit down and ask you some very specific questions.” And that's a different kind of journalistic experience than I think photojournalists are used to having.

There's real tension around that. Why do it? When? And how? What questions can you ask? How do you ask them? All very important skills that photojournalists need to grow to do these kinds of stories. They're not new skills that haven't been developed by those in radio or broadcast so it's not like we need to reinvent how to do it from the ground up. It's not black magic but it is a craft and to do this in a way that is powerful and compelling is a skill that takes time to learn. You have to do these kinds of interviews a lot before you get to where it works well.

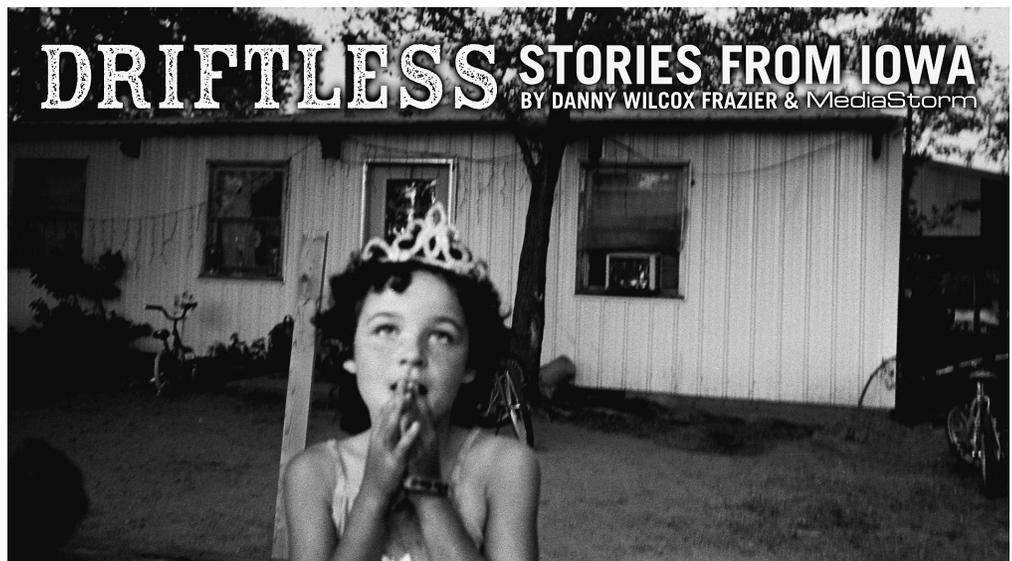
What we try to do in our workshop

is underscore how these are singularly crafted skills. One of the great challenges is to have one person do it all. It's very complicated. But take a story like "The Marlboro Marine." No question that Luis was the right person to have those conversations because of their relationship and intimacy gained through his coverage. A trust has been developed, and Luis knows James's story better than anyone. So this is not a daily turnaround; it required several years to play out, and it's still playing out. In those cases of long-form, in-depth coverage, I think the single vision is ideal. And that's where bringing multimedia skills to the reporting process is really critical.

Stories that are covered over a long period of time with a singular vision are very powerful to me. But it's rare for one person to have all of these skills. Collaborative teams to which people bring their expert skills are very powerful. Take Danny Wilcox Frazier who did "Driftless: Stories from Iowa." That is five years of work by a world-class photojournalist that was published in a beautiful book. But there are only 4,000 copies of that book, and on MediaStorm's Web site we had 10 times that many people watch the visual narrative of these stories on the first day it was live on our site.

So while the book is critical, it's not the key element of a photojournalist's franchise. The franchise includes the cinematic piece for broadcast, the Web, and mobile. There is also an exhibit and licensing of the project and still image for magazine publishing. Each of these elements has a role in the franchise. This is what we're about—helping photographers realize their projects across multiple platforms so they can get the most exposure, reach the largest body of viewers, and generate the most revenue possible so that they can continue to do this type of in-depth, long-form work.

**Ludtke:** I recall you saying "If you're a photojournalist today and all you do is editorial assignments, you're dead.



You have to have good syndication. You have to have multiple clients. You've got to do corporate jobs. You've got to do weddings. You've got to bust your ass." Your example of Danny Frazier illustrates that, right?

**Storm:** A very good example. Having a diverse business model is critical for any small business. We don't all have to shoot weddings but we need to think about creating a variety of opportunities for each project. Danny's project also exemplifies what needs to happen in the reporting process. If Danny started that project with a vision for the franchise, I think he would have reported very differently. His vision was to create a beautiful book. But in my opinion that was not as complete as what we're able to put together with additional reporting and collaboration. Danny partnered with Taylor Gentry, a terrific cinematographer, and they gathered video and conducted interviews after he'd already finished his book. Now what if Danny had those skills and had been gathering audio and video during the whole five-year period when he was doing this story? That would have been incredible.

**Ludtke:** Then what's on MediaStorm would have been a contemporary project in that sense.

**Storm:** Yeah. With this one, we're revis-

iting something where a photographer arrives with five years of work. "Isn't this amazing?" he'll say and I respond, "Yeah. But do you have audio?" That's sort of our first question. Without that it's really hard for us to take it into a cinematic state. So we're trying to get visual journalists to go out with this understanding. Change the way you report and all of a sudden you have a product for distribution in many different formats.

**Ludtke:** This is what photographers need. This is the reality today. To be a photojournalist means a level of engagement across so many different platforms in media. It's not just the photograph that's destined for a single publication or a contract with one magazine.

**Storm:** There's certainly room for photographers to focus on that, if that's their choice. It's just hard to argue with the impact that photographers can have if they evolve—evolve and become a more complete storyteller. The biggest payback is that really for the first time photojournalists have authorship. For so long, they have not had authorship in our craft. Usually they'll shoot pictures, send them somewhere, and someone else picks which one goes in; often only one picture of a three-day shoot gets used. This is why for so long photographers

have gravitated toward books as the premiere display of their work because they're heavily involved in curating the edit and it is their prized possession. When a photographer gives you their book, they're giving you a piece of their soul. It's just this really important object for them because they have had that authorship.

Now, with multimedia, authorship jumps several octaves; you're involved in a whole new way. In the epilogues of our pieces, Danny, for example, has the opportunity to tell how he put this project together, to talk about the rationale for why he did what he did, or how this project changed him as a person or to issue a call to action.

**Ludtke:** So a voice is not only given to the subject at the other end of the camera's lens, but the photographer is speaking, too.

**Storm:** That's an important issue. But I'd also caution that just doing multimedia with a photographer being interviewed isn't enough. We need to be more aggressive in reporting and in doing interviews and gathering information while the project is in play. Because the story is not about us; it's about the subject. The epilogue is incredibly valuable in terms of creating some transparency around who the photojournalist is who did the work because much of the public still thinks photojournalists are like paparazzi. And they're not. These are hardcore journalists doing sophisticated storytelling, tackling important subjects, and providing information people need.

**Ludtke:** What remains a bit of mystery is how the high-quality photojournalists are going to find ways of being

supported in the marketplace today.

**Storm:** That's obviously the question because the profession is shrinking and we're losing terrific journalists every day. Only the strong will survive. We're going to lose some of our best people and that keeps me awake at night. Constantly on my mind during the last decade has been finding a way to solve this issue of our best photojournalists exiting the profession completely and losing institutional knowledge.

The solution relates back to photojournalists creating their franchise—having one client that you're heavily reliant on is a recipe for a quick exit. Why take that approach when these new outlets are opening up and you can reach a larger audience and generate the kind of revenue needed to stay in business. And we're not talking about millions of dollars.

## Looking Beneath the Surface of Stories in Iraq, Iowa and Rwanda

Providing storytelling and context for photographs is a major motivation for MediaStorm's multimedia projects, such as the three that founder Brian Storm discusses in the conversation above.

**"The Marlboro Marine"** by Luis Sinco. This Los Angeles Times photojournalist's image of Marine Lance Corporal James Blake Miller became an icon of the Iraq War. "The Marlboro Marine" tells the story of how Miller tries to

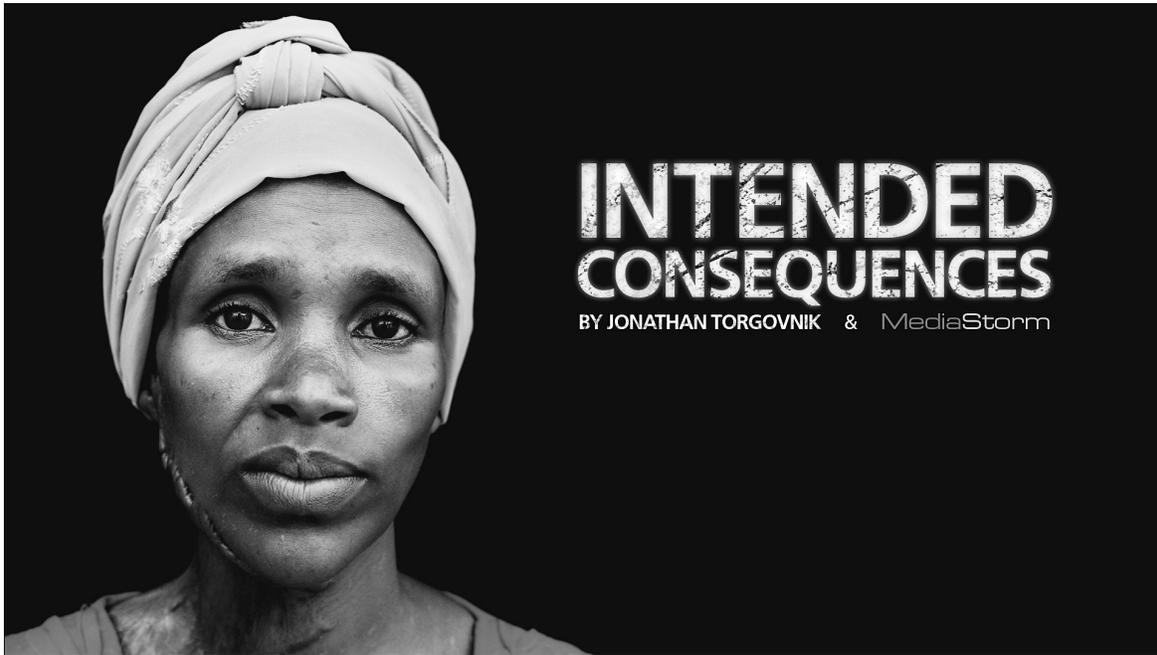
heal the scars of war and how two lives became connected by a photograph.

**"Driftless: Stories from Iowa"** by Danny Wilcox Frazier. As the economies of rural communities across America fail, abandonment is becoming commonplace. "Driftless" explores a Midwest that resides in shadows, a people quietly enduring America's new economic reality.

**"Intended Consequences"** by Jonathan Torgovnik. An estimated 20,000 children were born from rapes committed during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. "Intended Consequences" chronicles the lives of these women. Their narratives are embodied in photographs, interviews and oral reflections about the daily challenges they face today. ■



*These multimedia projects can be seen at [www.mediastorm.org](http://www.mediastorm.org).*



**Ludtke:** We're talking about having a decent career, decent living.

**Storm:** Exactly, and I think those opportunities are greater today than they've ever been.

**Ludtke:** They just have to be conceptualized in new ways?

**Storm:** Yes, and from the start of the reporting process. I'm excited about the next few years in this industry because I feel like people in the industry get it now. They understand they have to grow. Sure, it's hard, but if it was easy to do, everyone would be doing it.

**Ludtke:** This brings my thinking back to the ubiquitousness of visual images—cameras on mobile phones; Flip video cameras; high-quality, highly mobile, HD hybrid cameras; and the digital ease of instantaneous global distribution. Makes one wonder how images are valued at a time when there are so many.

**Storm:** I've been thinking a lot about this lately, and I have to say this is the best thing that's ever happened to our profession. The fact that everyone has a camera, that everyone can report

and can publish on YouTube. They're in the game. They are part of the process, and the audience now has a greater understanding of how hard it is to do what we do. And when they see something that's truly special, I think it resonates with them in a way that it simply could not have 10 years ago because they're part of the conversation. They are telling stories and they are completely engaged in the conversation.

A decade ago, when I sat in a newsroom and everyone said to me, "Nobody's going to watch a story about Rwanda. Nobody cares about Rwanda." I always was like, "What are you talking about? Of course they'll watch it. Of course they will care. We have to get them the product before they're going to watch it and care about it. If we cut it off at the knees because we think they're apathetic, it'll never happen."

The irony of what I see happening today is that the people who are apathetic right now are the ones who are sitting in newsrooms. They're seeing their resources taken from them at such a prolific pace and they're being asked to do more with less—right now the mainstream media has almost reached a level of apathy that's paralyzing. But the audience that you just described is

totally fired up. They're totally engaged. They're totally a part of the process of telling stories. And they are starving for good projects. And when they get them now, they spread them at a pace that we've never seen before via the statusphere and blogosphere.

**Ludtke:** So the digital distribution lines accentuate this?

**Storm:** Yeah, very much. We've never been in a situation where one person could, say, watch "Intended Consequences" [about Rwanda] and then turn around and post it on Facebook for their 600 or so friends. We've never been in that situation before where people could spread things as quickly as they can now. And what are they going to spread? They're going to spread quality. It's almost like a social currency now to say, "Hey, I think this is great." That social currency just didn't exist before. Now, you see something and immediately you curate that. Facebook is my new front page—it's how I access information from around the world. My social network is shaping and curating for me what is important, and that is absolutely revolutionary. ■

# Photojournalism in the New Media Economy

Success will depend on ‘seeing oneself as a publisher of content and a participant in a distributed story, the form of which helps reshape the content of the story.’

BY DAVID CAMPBELL

**F**ew journalistic forms have had their death foretold more often than photojournalism. Ever since weekly pictorial magazines like *Life* and *Look* closed their doors in the 1970’s, the demise of photojournalism has been declared at regular intervals. Recent upheavals in the media economy, signaled by the talk of the “death of newspapers,” have given rise in some circles to a new round of lamentation positing a dismal future for visual storytellers.

At the same time, the billions of still photographs produced annually, circulated globally, and consumed eagerly suggest no shortage of producers and no end to the collective desire to see our experiences portrayed photographically. In this vein, the renowned photographer Ed Kashi told a December 2009 forum at the London College of Communication on the new ecology of photojournalism that he saw the makings of a new golden age for photojournalism. [Read Kashi’s article on page 8.]

How can we understand this optimistic view of an uncertain future given all of the negative assessments of photojournalism in recent years?

Although the Internet is not responsible for all the problems of contemporary media, we need to appreciate how it has fundamentally reordered the media economy. After all, the Web did not, in Clay Shirky’s terms, simply introduce a new competitor into the old media ecosystem but created a fundamentally different ecosystem by severing any automatic link between the creation of information and its distribution. The Web also collapsed the cost of publishing and eliminated barriers to the formation of distributed networks. Given this, we live in a

remarkable time where our ability to communicate, share, collaborate and act has expanded beyond the limits of traditional institutions and established practices.

In this context, the claim that photojournalism is dying is actually about the collapse of traditional systems of distribution and payment rather than the end of visual forms of information. Some see the demise of print distribution and direct editorial funding as delivering a fatal blow to the practice of photojournalism. This isn’t the case, but at the same time no one should diminish the difficulties this change has produced.

Thinking about how photographers should proceed requires a realistic assessment of the past. In-depth photographic projects and challenging documentary work have always been difficult to fund directly. If there was a time when all the majority of photojournalists did was wait for well-paid commissions to produce important work for print outlets, that time is long past. And it won’t be returning regardless of an upturn in advertising or new paid content models.

Even so, I share Kashi’s reasoned optimism. The revolutions in the media economy driven by the Web’s cutting of the link between information and distribution provide photojournalism with new opportunities. Photographers can’t ignore other modes of distribution—print media, books, exhibitions, etc.—but the Web is the only platform that offers a growing audience for their stories and an efficient means of distribution. To be on the Web—and to be visual—now means multimedia storytelling, from photo galleries to stand-alone sites with stills, audio, video and text together. To tell stories

to a Web audience requires finding compelling combinations of sound and image.

## The Web Changes Everything

To say all of this is to state the blindingly obvious. Photographers have been using digital media for years in these ways. But what is at stake now is something more than having a shop window in which to display one’s wares on the Web. It involves seeing oneself as a publisher of content and a participant in a distributed story, the form of which helps reshape the content of the story. Rather than producing a single image or small series of images to be sold into another person’s story, multimedia provides numerous advantages for visual storytellers:

- It allows photographers to focus on a story and produce more content with greater control over how those pictures are presented.
- The meaning of visual stories can be directed through the construction of a narrative that draws on sound and text as well as photographs and video.
- It overcomes restrictions on getting longer and more complex stories published for a global audience, especially younger generations who do not consume traditional media.
- It is an effective response to the conceptual challenge of how to provide context for a photograph.
- It can overcome photojournalism’s objectification of people by giving subjects their own voice.

These benefits intersect with what has been identified as the emerging atomic unit of information on the

Web. With a shift from “article” to “topic” will be the move from “single picture” or “photo essay” to “visual story” as part of the multidimensional narratives that make up a topic. This visual story will be set in context, linked, updated and distributed across the Web. Importantly, this involves much more than a shift from taking stills to producing videos. It is about rethinking the capacity to tell stories in line with what Fred Ritchin calls a “new visual journalism.” [Read Ritchin’s article on page 6.]

This move from photojournalism to visual journalism, from photography to Ritchin’s “hyperphotography” does not involve either giving up on the still image or abandoning the documentary function of photography. It might employ a variety of new media formats, such as those used by Flyp magazine, or it might take advantage of devices like the Apple iPad. None of these will save photojournalism or any other part of the news business. What they offer are new modes of distribution that use the power of photography to help

structure a multidimensional story.

What’s been a bit mysterious—and in some ways worrisome—in this transition has been the relative silence of the photographic press in exploring in any detail the impact—especially the economic effect—of these media revolutions on its constituency. What commentary has occurred on influential Web sites such as The Digital Journalist has pined for the way things were and hoped for a return to those days. In the search for payment models, the impulse has been to say “Let’s do

## A Story Rooted in a Community Gives Voice to Its People



Ali Ahmed Ali was among a community of Yemeni sailors who lived in a boarding house in South Shields, Great Britain, between trips at sea. *Photo by Peter Fryer.*

of Newcastle in Great Britain photographing the Yemeni community. It is a project of immense importance for understanding both the history and place of a too-often demonized group in our region. He asked me to write the introductory text to his exhibition at The Side Gallery in Newcastle. Once I acquired some knowledge of Final Cut Pro, I proposed to Peter that we work together to produce a multimedia piece based on his photographs.

The end result, “The Boarding House,” is a long way from being perfect, but in constructing a narrative through the combination of text, audio interviews, and images we have made it possible for this story to travel to different places via different Web sites. Most importantly, it has become a valued resource for the Yemeni community in both England and Yemen, which participated in its production. ■—David Campbell

*To watch “The Boarding House” video, go to [www.vimeo.com/2931212](http://www.vimeo.com/2931212). To read the article as it appeared in Saudi Aramco World magazine, visit <http://saudiaramco-world.com/issue/200906/al-burdun.the.boardinghouse..htm>.*

While writing about the opportunities offered by the revolutions in the media economy, I have harbored a desire to engage in creative practice. I have always felt that no matter how good documentary photography was, developments in multimedia offered

the prospect for more complex and rounded stories in which the subjects themselves could speak. Collaborating with photographer Peter Fryer was my first opportunity to pursue this.

For the last decade, Peter has worked in and around my hometown

what music did with iTunes,” without digging more deeply to discover why what worked for songs doesn’t fit with all photos.

So how will photojournalists be paid to produce their stories? To start with, it will be essential for photographers to adopt a new mindset if they are to find a productive response to this challenge. Forget all the fuss around the Rupert Murdoch-inspired debate about paying for content or The New York Times’s proposed metering system or Steven Brill’s consortium approach. Even if any of these work (and that is far from certain), no photographers should pin their career hopes on a new subscription-funded editorial paymaster emerging.

The successful visual journalist in the new media economy is going to be someone who embraces the logic of the Web’s ecology. This will mean

using the ease of publication and circulation to construct and connect with a community of interest around their projects and practice. Photographers who understand they are publishers as well as producers, for whom engaging a loyal community is more valuable than chasing a mass audience, will be in a powerful position. They will be the ones who use social media in combination with traditional tools to activate partnerships with other interested parties to fund their stories, host their stories, circulate their stories, and engage with their stories.

The vital role that photojournalists play as our visual witnesses can be—and I’d argue will be—the basis for asserting their economic value in the years ahead. How they get paid has already changed considerably, with an abrupt shift away from once-reliable magazine and newspaper coffers

toward an inventive array of sources that revolve around projects but are not limited to the sale of individual images. What is shared by many of the leading photojournalists of our day is a commitment to using the best digital technology has to offer to distribute their work as widely and as effectively as possible. In doing this, they will be creating a new, if still uncertain, pathway for photojournalism. ■

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## From Film to Digital: What’s Lost? What’s Gained?

‘Today, it seems that speed trumps all else, becoming the way success is measured. It might be better if other factors—such as content, reliability and value—were to trump speed when it comes to evaluating visual journalism.’

BY DAVID BURNETT

**M**y camera filter—should it be 30 magenta? Ten never seemed quite enough, and 40, well, it was a little too magenta. For decades this decision punctuated my daily life as a photojournalist. Why? The short answer: fluorescent bulbs. For the past three decades, they’ve been ubiquitous, yet no color film worked without camera adjustments in this bluish/greenish light. Flesh tones came out a very ugly blue. Getting people to look “normal” required adding a little reddish filtration. Hence, 30 magenta—somewhere between purple and red, in mild enough amounts so that flesh tones could be rendered realistically.

There was not much that an editor could do to correct the image after my shutter snapped. Film was our medium. Digital rendering existed on music CDs and image scanning but the digital camera wasn’t yet the size that photographers could use. Nor was everyone eager to replace film. It had a certain physical sturdiness and the quality of its image, well, it would be hard to match. While processing time could be frustratingly slow, there was something that felt definitive and assuring when those individual frames were finally in your hands.

Film is now yesterday, and where digital will take us in photojournalism is impossible to know.

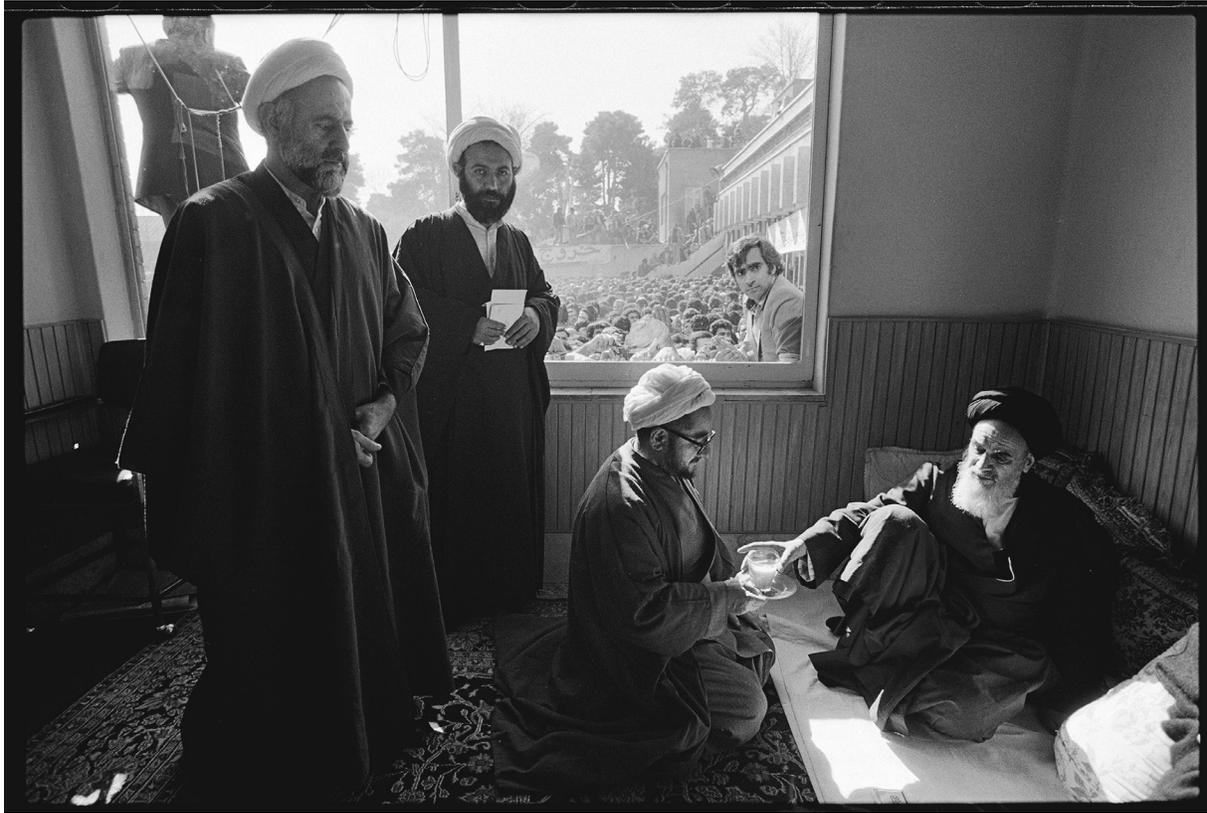
### Magic Phone Calls

For 40 years, I’ve worked as a photojournalist. Despite the rise of TV back in the late 1960’s, there were still plenty of magazines eager to publish photographs as their way of showing readers what was happening in the world. It was my good fortune to start out at such a time—when still photographers were much in demand and those magic phone calls from editors came my way.

In November 1978, Time’s picture editor, Arnold Drapkin, reached me with such a call.

“Are you free these days?” he asked. Not wanting to give him the impres-

## 44 Days and the Portrayal of History in Tehran



Ayatollah Khomeini is served tea in his room at the Refah School by Ayatollah Khalkhali. *Photo by David Burnett.*

I had been in Iran for more than a month when Ayatollah Khomeini returned from exile in France on February 1, 1979. He soon set up headquarters in the Refah School in a quiet Tehran neighborhood. Tens of thousands of supporters streamed through the school grounds each day to pay their respects. I photographed Khomeini from those crowds, standing in the midst of the excitement and tumult. After four days of quietly pestering the media contact who was a former economics professor pressed into service to deal with the foreign reporters, he finally agreed that perhaps seeing

the imam from inside the school was worthwhile.

Moments later, I was granted permission to enter a small classroom. If outside, where the crowds stood cheering, I'd been embedded in noise and chaos, when I stepped inside this room, I found quiet serenity as Khomeini handed his teacup back to Ayatollah Khalkhali, who later would be known as the hanging judge of Tehran.

This photograph could rightly be called a scoop, to use the language of that time. As I left the room, I stuffed the film canister deep into my jeans pockets and hoped for its

safe journey back to my hotel. From there, these undeveloped pictures would be taken to the airport and carried by someone I'd never met before on their journey to my editor's desk in New York.

Now, 30 years later, photographs I took during the 44 days I worked in Tehran are in a book, "44 Days: Iran and the Remaking of the World," which was published last year by National Geographic Books. ■  
—David Burnett

📷 *To view a slideshow, go to [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org).*

sion I wasn't working, I replied, "I could be."

By that afternoon, I was in his office. "We'd like you to go to Baluchistan," he told me.

"Great! Where is it?"

"I don't know," he replied.

On a world map on the wall, we located my destination in a western province of Pakistan, a scene of tribal activity and, even then, a center of intrigue. In the two weeks I was there I took pictures that ranged from Ashura self-flagellation parades to young girls weaving rugs to a portrait of the Khan of Kalat, one of the reigning tribal leaders. In the language of that time, such assignments were called a "country story," combining visual depth with comprehensive reporting. I left with dozens of rolls of Kodachrome and Tri-X lovingly packed into caption envelopes and headed for Karachi to figure out my next move. As often happened, rather than heading back to New York, we'd look for another story in the region, and at that time I'd been hearing about the unrest in Tehran. The shah was confronting the rise of fundamentalist forces so after talking with Contact Press Images, my photo agency in New York, I decided to go to Iran—and ship the film back to Time on its own.

## Tehran, 1978

Arriving the day after Christmas in Tehran, I found myself in a place that was slowly falling apart. The evidence was all around me: There was no immigration officer to stamp my passport, no interrogation as to how long I wanted to stay. I just walked through the airport corridors, got my bags, and found a taxi to the city.

Figuring out the logistics of how I'd do my work there was another matter. We had no mobile phones and no Internet, which meant no e-mail or easy way of communicating with those back home. And to get home what I would shoot meant finding people who were headed West and would agree to carry my film. (Now, when I hear those security announcements admonishing passengers not to accept

anything from strangers, I laugh at the memory of what we went through.)

Choosing someone as a "pigeon" started with a taxi ride to Mehrabad airport. With the dissolution of civil order, I'd walk unchallenged into departure lounges where I'd find crowds of travelers whose sole interest was fleeing Iran. My job then became convincing someone of the importance of this mission to get my film safely to Paris—and from there it would be flown to New York. What amazes me to this day is that every roll of film I shipped this way reached its destination.

Back on the streets of Tehran a day rarely passed without an event of some significance, but in an era before cell phones finding out where I should be proved a constant challenge. However, with Time's stringer in Tehran also being The Associated Press bureau chief—with his own team of stringers alert for news tips—my sources were good and reliable as they used phone booths on the street to report on what was developing.

The revolution was bubbling up on Tehran's streets and at University of Tehran. Messages from Ayatollah Khomeini—still in exile in France—were played at Friday prayer gatherings on audiotape cassettes. On the street I had the feeling that I was chasing a race already in progress; the starting line had already vanished and no one could tell where the finish line would be. So I leapt into the middle and followed the action, and thereby came to learn more about what was happening.

Back in New York, editors followed news reporting about the increasing unrest. In some ways, the few days of delay that existed before my film reached them was good since by the time they saw the pictures they had a good sense of what they were looking for. Today, this idea seems quaint as satellites—and Twitter and Facebook—deliver live video feeds and TV stations often broadcast unedited video before journalists there have even absorbed its significance (or insignificance) for themselves. For me, the idea of having a knowledgeable editor be the one to

look first at my images always made sense.

## Enduring Value

Today, it seems that speed trumps all else, becoming the way success is measured. It might be better if other factors—such as content and reliability and value—were to trump speed when it comes to evaluating visual journalism. Add to these elements the enduring power of an image and its ability to touch the public in ways that provoke thought and motivate them to become engaged, and now we're arriving at what might be a pretty good formula for figuring out what that elusive word "value" means.

During the past decade, many photojournalists have swapped their camera bag for a backpack. Gear for the camera is now supplemented by a laptop and wireless card, audio equipment, and other multimedia devices. Yet with us now, perhaps not so visible but just as weighty, is another companion—the feeling we have of always rushing. Competition in our business seems to be more about speed than value.

With cameras everywhere and everyone having one, the playing field of image taking and instant distribution is leveled. Still, how an image's journalistic value is evaluated ought not to tumble down to the lowest common denominator. Speed matters. To pretend it doesn't is to be out of touch with our digital age. But there are (and will be) times—and I hope plenty of them—when lasting dividends will come by taking a deep breath, sitting back, and absorbing what well-conceived photographs tell us. It's remarkable what a picture can convey when we give it time to do so. ■

*David Burnett is cofounder of Contact Press Images, a New York City-based photojournalism agency. His images, shot in some 80 countries have appeared in Time, Life, Paris Match, Geo, and Fortune.*

# Steps Learned Along the Way: Redefining Photojournalism's Power

'Even in the best of times, even when highly recognized within the field itself, our images are only tools, not an end in themselves.'

BY WENDY WATRISS

Taking photographs and telling a story with them is only the first step. Photojournalism at its best embodies our ability to benefit the issues and people with whom we connect. When photojournalism loses its sense of mission, it can descend into adventurism or opportunism and, at worst, a continuation of historic forms of exploitation. It is incumbent on photojournalists to make their work an effective medium for change. With this in mind, we should use the Internet to reenergize the field with its new possibilities.

Historically, photojournalism has resided somewhere between reportage, the delivery of information, and individual interpretation. Its effectiveness relies on a strong public platform and powerful modes of distribution. For decades its capacity has been linked to mass media, particularly print, because of its potential to reach large audiences in a credible manner.

From the 1920's into the late 1960's print-based photojournalism strongly influenced public opinion. But even as remarkable photojournalism was going on during the Vietnam War, another visual medium, television, began to exert a more powerful impact on public awareness and conscience. It could reach far greater audiences and do so far more rapidly than print. The financial resources of television exceeded most print outlets.

Today the Internet—with its larger reach, more rapid delivery, cheaper cost, and interactivity—challenges both print and broadcast media. It is decentralized, open, inclusive and versatile. It has disrupted everything, including how photojournalists are paid. It is forcing photojournalists

to find new outlets to present their work. Today, however, unlike 30 years ago when serious picture magazines started to fail, the Internet offers more opportunities and platforms for photojournalism.

On the other hand, it is the very democratic nature of the Internet that poses a serious challenge to photojournalism. Without any accepted vetting of online information and pictures, it can be time-consuming and difficult to determine what can be trusted or how to read the information one finds. With amateur and ill-informed opinion as easily arrived at as more serious and responsible information, the idea of credibility is being uprooted. This situation presents real difficulties for photojournalism because so much of its power has been connected to the credibility—and influence—of its source of distribution.

My media experiences offer me many vantage points from which to evaluate the effectiveness of media distribution. I've worked professionally with newspapers, television, photojournalism, independent documentary photography, and now the museum and gallery world. One of my biggest lessons has been in learning the benefits and limitations of different methods of distribution. Concerned photography requires a method of distribution that imbues it with power. Generally, it's the ingenuity and commitment of the individual photographer that makes it work.

During the first four years of my professional life, I reported for a newspaper in St. Petersburg, Florida and then moved to New York to be an associate producer for one of the great experiments in television, the

Public Broadcast Laboratory (PBL), the predecessor to PBS, created to offer an informed alternative to commercial television. For the first time public television went national in prime time covering news and cultural events. For three years, some of the best and brightest from both television and the print media produced extensive news essays on the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, the farm workers movement, electoral politics, and drug laws. Content and visual imagery were both taken seriously. It was innovative, exciting and it made a difference because influential people watched it.

In the early 1970's, I began to freelance as a reporter-writer and photographer, doing work for Newsweek and The New York Times in Central and Eastern Europe, along with feature stories for magazines like Smithsonian. Returning to the U.S. with the aim of rediscovering my own country at its roots, I embarked on a long documentary photography and oral history project on political and cultural frontiers in Texas with my partner Frederick Baldwin. After finishing a book based on that project, I turned back to my longtime concern with war and its effects.

## Agent Orange: As Journalism

By 1980, combat in Vietnam had ended, but veterans were battling the long-term effects of that war. Their physical and mental problems were largely being ignored. They were often the object of belittlement and scorn and blamed for their disabilities. It was then that I began to look into Agent Orange—what it was, how it had been used in Vietnam, and what

were its traceable long-term effects. There was the start of a lawsuit and veterans' groups were fighting to gain public recognition for the issues of veterans' health and the impact on their children. The media, as a whole, paid little attention.

My long-term immersion in the issue of Agent Orange and the realities of Vietnam veterans' post-war experience took me from dioxin to the building of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. After doing some early photographs, I was fortunate to find a *Life* magazine editor who had been in Vietnam and was interested in the project. *Life*, though a shadow of its former self, was still open to publishing social documentary work. For a year and a half I had the magazine's support to travel around the country visiting veterans, veterans' families, activists, VA hospitals, and medical researchers. I had the best situation that photojournalism could offer at a time when an important magazine was still publishing such stories.

I knew that Vietnamese civilians and veterans and Australian and South Korean veterans also suffered the same effects as U.S. veterans. The response of their governments was the same—ignore it, blame the victims, cover up the problem. I tried to convince *Life* to publish Philip Jones Griffiths's work on Agent Orange in Vietnam alongside my U.S. work. I thought that the story of Agent Orange, its use, its history and the aftermath of its spraying revealed such a flagrant misuse of power that the subject needed to be exposed in its totality. The issue of chemical warfare was not the only important aspect of this story; it was also the issue of governments sending people to war and then deliberately failing to care for them when they returned, wounded and damaged.

*Life* would not publish the photographs showing the damage in Vietnam and to Vietnamese civilians. My work on its pages, however, was recognized with a major World Press Award, Leica's Oskar Barnack award, and other prizes. After appearing in the pages of *Life*, my photographs were widely circulated as the story reverberated throughout

the journalistic world.

In the end, however, the recognition my photographs received changed very little for the veterans. They were still suffering.

### **Agent Orange: As Visual Instigator**

So I stepped away from my role as photographer/reporter to find other platforms for my work. I joined forces with veterans' groups to develop political organizing strategies that could reach people in power and bring about tangible reforms for veterans. Using these photographs in political arenas, we generated public hearings in the Texas Legislature and later with Congressional committees on Capitol Hill that resulted in state and federal mandates to improve medical treatment for veterans and official recognition of disabilities related to Agent Orange exposure. These mandates created a benchmark for evaluating treatment of veterans from the first Gulf War and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The legislation also helped set a precedent for recognition of post-traumatic stress disorder as a legitimate disability.

I also put together a portable exhibition with the photography of Griffiths, Mike Goldwater and Goro Nakamura in Vietnam alongside my Agent Orange photographs. The exhibit went to hospitals, medical schools, and state legislatures. We gave the exhibit to veterans' groups who have been touring it for more than 25 years.

I learned much from the Agent Orange experience, but perhaps the most valuable lesson was having to confront the limitations of photojournalism. Even in the best of times, even when highly recognized within the field itself, our images are only tools, not an end in themselves. To practice photojournalism in a way that brings meaning and change requires photographers to think past the boundaries of this profession.

My Agent Orange work and other assignments drove home the limitations of mass media and the print medium in the 1980's and 1990's. I

wasn't alone among photojournalists in realizing this. It pushed me in another direction, cofounding, with Fred Baldwin, an international platform and showcase for issue-based and creative photography. Based in Houston, Texas, FotoFest is a platform for art and ideas. Its purpose is to create and expand opportunities for talented photographers from around the world to present and distribute their work, enabling them to find new outlets and push the field toward further possibilities.

Other photojournalists have moved in other directions as they seek similar goals. There is Pedro Meyer with ZoneZero and James Nachtwey and others with VII Photo Agency. [See article by Stephen Mayes, VII's director, on page 58.] Photographers like Susan Meiselas have worked with activist citizen groups while others such as Heather McClintock and Donna De Cesare have aligned with nongovernmental organizations. [See De Cesare's article on page 34.]

Another development is the work of journalist entrepreneurs who are experimenting with multimedia presentations and developing channels to distribute their work online. This is happening at VII and, in a different way, with MediaStorm, whose Web-based platforms are having a significant impact. [See conversation with Brian Storm on page 10.]

Photojournalism is at a new crossroads. The challenge is how to build credible online platforms that reach important audiences and take photojournalism beyond itself. Photojournalism has to build a strong public presence, a constituency of public concern. It needs to better promote its sense of mission and change. These are the challenges of photojournalism today. ■

*Wendy Watriss is a photographer, curator, journalist, writer, and cofounder and artistic director of FotoFest, an international photographic arts and education organization based in Houston, Texas.*

## Agent Orange: Pressing the Government to Take Responsibility

*Even when you aren't sick, you're afraid. Afraid you're going to get sick, or that your children will be born sick. You live with this fear all the time.*

—Al Marcotte, Vietnam veteran

Thousands of men, their wives, and children still live with this same fear in the United States, in Australia, in South Korea, and in Southeast Asia. It's the fear of having children born with birth defects, fear of developing cancer, partial paralysis, symptoms of premature aging, severe skin rashes, impaired circulation of blood and oxygen, and deterioration of the immune and neurological systems. [For another photojournalist's contemporary project on Agent Orange, see box by Justin Mott on page 37.]

For many Vietnam War veterans and their families in the U.S. and elsewhere, this fear is a reality.

As a photojournalist, I became involved with veterans and their battle to find answers about Agent Orange. When I saw that getting my pictures about their situation published in prestigious magazines was not enough

to make a difference in their lives, I took the photographs into the political arena. With veterans' groups, we used the visual images as testimony before state and federal officials to finally get action.

Although the cause of these symptoms may never be totally defined, the nature of the veterans' illnesses and the way they develop are closely related to the well-documented effects of toxic chemical poisoning. Factory workers, agricultural laborers, and civilians exposed to dioxin have experienced similar problems. Dioxin was a byproduct present in the tons of chemical defoliants, such as Agent Orange, used by the U.S. military in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia from the mid-1960's to the early 1970's. But no special precautions were taken to protect U.S. infantrymen who came in contact with the chemical.

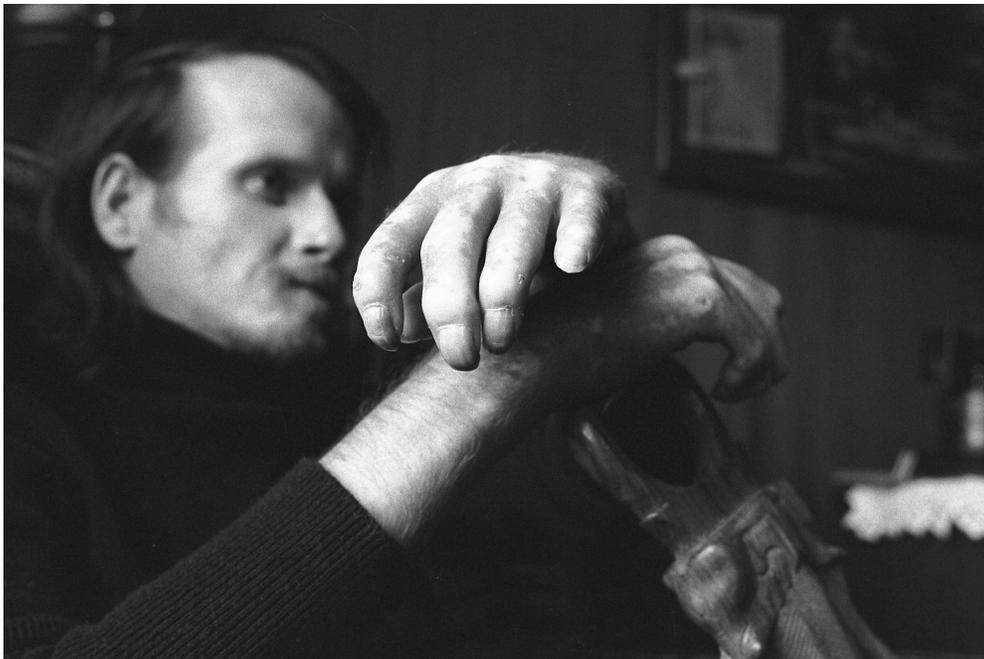
For U.S. veterans who began to voice their fears in the late 1970's, it has been a lonely and tragic struggle. For years, government agencies, many scientists, doctors and politicians dismissed their claims. The burden of

proof was placed on them and their families. The 1984 \$180 million class action U.S. court settlement with the chemical companies that produced Agent Orange gave the appearance of justice. In reality, it served to hide real evidence of responsibility and protect the U.S. government and U.S. military from further liability. The division of money from the settlement has barely covered the medical care and research needed for the thousands of veterans and their families who were part of the lawsuit.

Today many of the Vietnam veterans still endure health and psychological problems related to the chemicals used by the U.S. in Vietnam. Many are organizing again—engaging with a new generation of U.S. veterans to fight for the long-term medical and psychological care that they need for health problems related to the first Gulf War in the early 1990's and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. ■

—Wendy Watriss

📷 To view a slideshow, go to [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org).



In 1981 Vietnam War veteran Jim Roxby, 35, of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, had medical problems attributed to Agent Orange exposure. He died in the late 1980's. Photo by Wendy Watriss.

## In Pursuing a Personal Project, Global Dimensions Emerge

‘As photojournalists casting about for creative and meaningful direction in the face of ... an industry shifting beneath our feet, we may be best served by following the threads of our own experience and then going deeper.’

BY KAEL ALFORD

At a certain point in my career as a photojournalist, it dawned on me that every long-term project I had undertaken had a personal, sometimes subconscious motivation followed by a lingering question I couldn't find answered in the news or elsewhere. Some photojournalists may label such callings “personal projects.” But like many freelancers, I have some say in which stories I cover. So in a sense it's all personal.

Traveling and photographing for about a decade, I moved every couple of years to a new place, mostly in the Balkans and the Middle East. I tried to follow up on relationships between the stories I covered and in retrospect it turned out that nearly every place I worked was at one time a part of the Ottoman Empire—like a political map of the late 17th century.

When I returned to live in New York after two years of covering the war in Iraq and its aftermath, I felt discouraged about the ability of the American people (myself included) to steer their own nation on a constructive course, both domestically and abroad. With a growing eyewitness inventory of the limitations and unequal appropriation of global resources, the degradation of the natural world, and the record



A boy dressed as the captain of the Titanic participates in the annual Children's Tableau in Montegut, Louisiana in 2008. *Photo by Kael Alford.*

number of conflicts around the globe, I had my doubts about humanity's chances as a whole to do the same. I suppose one could chalk up such foreboding and borderline antisocial feelings to a mild case of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Yet a nagging question remained, in the face of global turmoil: How could a single person contribute to public discourse in a meaningful way?

On a social and personal level, returning to New York, I felt isolated from most people around me. Many politically astute New Yorkers

seemed able to shop happily or enjoy a cocktail at their favorite watering hole from time to time while living productive lives and most didn't feel an overwhelming urge to go off and witness the next social movement in Iraq or Pakistan. I was preoccupied with events far from my daily life, which seemed inconsequential. OK, there you can add a stroke to the PTSD column.

So I began to search for a story that could help me return home, a story that would help me find a useful and slightly more suitable role here in the

## Finding Common Themes in Louisiana and Iraq



Seven-year-old Juliette Burnet stands on a levee that will do little to protect her house in Isle de Jean Charles, Louisiana from the storm surge of a hurricane. *Photo by Kael Alford.*

I recently presented a working version of my photography project about coastal Louisiana to a group of docents at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta along with a handful of photographs from Iraq. One woman asked: “Do you see any similarity between Iraq and the coast of Louisiana?” The question had occurred to me many times before—the most obvious similarity was the role that oil played in both, and it happens that Louisiana is among the states which have lost the most troops per capita to the war in Iraq.

Occasionally I’m reminded of a scene in Iraq’s endangered marshes where the Euphrates empties into the Persian Gulf, the site of another great oil port at a boundary of the former Ottoman Empire. There, like in Louisiana, people still hand-carve canoe-style boats from wood and stand on the floor of the vessels, using poles to navigate the marsh. ■  
—Kael Alford

 To view a slideshow, go to [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org).

U.S. without abandoning the issues I found so pressing throughout the world. I was surprised to find such a story in the wake of Hurricane Katrina—a event that occupied so much media attention that it seemed everything useful had already been said. The mantra coming from many experts regarding the devastation of New Orleans was that the protection of wetlands along the coast of Louisiana was critical, and that no levee, no matter how well constructed, was going to hold back the Gulf of Mexico. The erosion of coastal wetlands left New Orleans exposed to the sea and the crisis is a ticking time bomb that has largely escaped national awareness.

### Connecting With My Roots

My grandmother’s family came from the coast of Louisiana. She was descended from French immigrants who had intermarried with Native American residents well before the Louisiana Purchase. She and her brothers and sisters were raised speaking French. They were fishermen and shrimpers, though by the time I met them the family had turned to work in oil fields or elsewhere. Grandmother’s relatives had gained mythic status in family tales. The story was that our family—at least the Native Americans among us—had lost oil fortunes in dubious land deals with

the government. Relatives spoke of an ancestral Indian princess of uncertain tribal identification. Her family lived in remote houses on the edge of the marsh where they hunted for pelts and could live off the land.

I found the family myths were set at ground zero, Louisiana, where the land loss was on everyone’s mind. I also found traces of evidence that helped explain the family stories—confederations of Native American tribes still petitioning the Bureau of Indian Affairs for federal recognition after decades, depleted oil and gas fields on their native land, a few lingering French-speaking residents with my grandmother’s family name—consid-

ered a “white,” not a native, name—and residents who remembered my great-grandfather’s hunting camp in the location identified by my great-uncle John. He pointed to where he once trapped with his father, now an open lake, the land washed out to the Gulf. Dead oak trees stood like skeletons on spits of land surrounded by water, once broad bottomland forests. Healthy marshland absorbs storm flooding, every square mile acting like a giant sponge. As a result of erosion, stubborn and historically disenfranchised communities along the coast who’ve made a living fishing and hunting for generations are now left exposed to massive flooding and damage from storm surges during increasingly frequent hurricanes.

Most oil exploration has moved further offshore from Louisiana and any claims on oil revenues are probably long lost. What remains of the oil infrastructure on the coast of Louisiana is a destructive legacy—thousands of miles of deeply dredged canals along oil and gas pipelines and shipping routes that slash across delicate coastal wetlands leaving a vast checkerboard of marshes exposed to wave action and the movement of saltwater tides. Erosion washes a football field sized chunk of Louisiana land out to sea every halfhour. Many scientists say that these oil and gas industry canals are a primary cause of coastal erosion along with many other manmade factors.

### Documenting the Past

The photographs I’m making may outlive some coastal settlements if funding and legislation and massive projects to save the coastal wetlands do not come. I’m researching the families, the geography and tribal structures, and various proposed solutions for coastal restoration, which are often controversial and backed by opposing interests. I sometimes feel like I’m compiling a family album for the great-grandchildren of the people in my photographs, impressions of a ghost society for future generations.

I’ve funded much of the project out of pocket and I’ve been able to continue

the work thanks to a commission by the High Museum of Art in Atlanta. The longer I work on the story, the deeper my understanding of the underlying issues becomes—and the photography is changing too, as people share their history and concerns and invite me into their homes. I’ve made a short documentary film, I hope there will be a book, and once the commission is complete, an exhibition. My goal is to help raise awareness about the strange treasure washing out to sea on the coast of Louisiana, but once again there is a more personal element.

My grandmother passed away the year I returned to the United States and I didn’t get to ask her questions

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**Stories in foreign places  
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leave audiences without  
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the future.**

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about these communities that she perhaps knew as a child: what had changed on her later visits home? I’ve seen photographs of her sitting at a card table, with a full hand and a conspiratorial grin, together with long-lost relatives at John’s camp, a rough house on stilts, only reachable by boat, a vast expanse of green marsh and sky stretching to the horizon.

### A Global Community

Increasingly, as the technology to make quality digital images becomes more available and affordable, we’re seeing a wider variety of perspectives from around the globe. Local photographers—professionals and amateurs—are picturing their own communities. They’re using cameras, cell phones, and hand-held video cameras the size of cell phones. The images distributed through news outlets now come from a wider range of sources than ever before and editors, scholars and critics are taking note. So should we, as photographers.

In the future, in an age that will certainly be more image-saturated than our own, perhaps what will distinguish compelling visual storytelling will be a more intimate or knowledgeable point of view on an aspect of the world we thought we knew before we saw a different way of framing it. As photojournalists casting about for creative and meaningful direction in the face of shrinking budgets and an industry shifting beneath our feet, we may be best served by following the threads of our own experience and then going deeper. Stories in foreign places are more vital than ever and need to be brought home in a way that sheds light on the concerns of distant communities, but images made from crisis to crisis with no back story or follow-up leave audiences without reminders of the past and little guidance for the future.

What’s the advice beginning writers hear? Write about what you know. Perhaps the advice for photojournalists seeking direction in these uncertain times should be—start with what you know, then live amid and become an expert in what you photograph. ■

*Kael Alford, a 2009 Nieman Fellow, is a documentary photographer, photojournalist, writer and educator whose work has been published globally in magazines and is featured in the book “Unembedded: Four Independent Photojournalists on the War in Iraq.”*

# Newspaper Employee to Nonprofit Director: A Photojournalist's Journey

The idea behind Wéyo ‘was to capitalize on our collective years of journalism experience and turn our narrative storytelling abilities toward work with nonprofits.’

BY CHRISTOPHER TYREE

People say I'm an idealist, and I guess I am. Perhaps that is why I became a journalist two decades ago. And maybe it's part of the reason that in 2008 I left a great full-time job as a photojournalist at The Virginian-Pilot in Norfolk, Virginia, a newspaper with a well-established reputation for embracing narrative—and visual—storytelling, to head off in a new direction.

So why did I leave? My goal was to launch a media and design company with a clientele of nonprofits for whom I and other photographers would shoot pictures they needed to get their message out. It would be a different way of using photojournalism to tell vital stories about people and places in need of public awareness.

Of course, my start-up soon collided with the nation's debilitating recession. My poor timing was confounded by the reality that most nonprofits didn't have much of a budget for marketing, even in the best of times.

Was I stupid or passionate? Take your pick, but I've always believed that success will happen when passion and inspiration collide. With the launch of Wéyo, those ingredients are present in abundance.

Even in my newspaper work, I was drawn to stories that held out the possibility that awareness could bring about change. I especially liked those focused on inequities. Ideas for stories came to me in the course of street reporting or reflected my small town upbringing in rural western

Virginia. And after I saw how some of my published images influenced legislation or helped to find homes for those without or brought hope to those suffering with an illness, I was hooked. I knew this potential could be realized.

My desire to convey compelling images was what drove my work as a journalist. Yet as years went by I became less certain that working for a newspaper was the best way for me to do what was in my blood. Journalism seemed to be less about public service and raising awareness and more about giving readers the infotainment they craved. Over time it became clear that either my newspaper or me would have to change course.

## Wheels Start Turning

Then in 2004 I had lunch with a friend from National Geographic. We talked about how the magazine industry was changing and a lot of photojournalists were finding it difficult to get their pictures published at places where their work had been much in demand only a short time ago. Even though my newspaper still published my work, it seemed only a matter of time before these trends would hit closer to home.

In 2007 I met a kindred spirit, photojournalist Stephen Katz. He'd returned to the States from Nigeria after doing some pro bono work for Physicians for Peace, a nonprofit based in Norfolk, Virginia. His images were incredible, but what really caught my attention was how he had captured them. Turns out that he had talked his way inside of a mental hospital, if it could charitably be called that,



Dr. Benjamin Mach, one of the “Lost Boys” physicians, visits with a child during a weeklong clinic at Akobo Hospital in southeastern Sudan. *Photo © Wéyo.*

to photograph the inhumane ways patients were being treated. What he showed me was haunting; taken together, these pictures told a vitally important story. Yet he told me that no news organization was interested in publishing them.

It was hard for me to connect these

two thoughts. On one hand, I couldn't stop looking at his photographs; on the other, what Stephen was telling me meant that few others would ever see them. This realization led to me to explore in more depth whether this was happening to other photographers and if so, why and what could be

done to bring these images to public awareness.

Here's what I learned: There are hundreds of nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) doing remarkable work in troubled regions throughout the world to make better the lives of people who are mentally

## 'Lost Boys' Return to Sudan as Doctors



People wait to be seen by the "Lost Boys" doctors in Akobo, Sudan. Photo ©Wéyo.

As he stood beside a dirt airstrip in the remote village of Akobo in southeastern Sudan, Dr. Michael Tut Pur squinted into the scorching afternoon sun. An ancient DC-3 banked to land. Months of anticipation showed in his round dark face as the plane kicked up a cloud of red dust. The plane carried boxes of medical supplies—surgical instruments and vital antibiotics—that his hospital staff desperately needed. But the plane's passengers were its most precious cargo. Villagers had gathered to greet them.

As cows grazed on the runway, screaming children swarmed around the new arrivals. Dr. Tut Pur's infectious smile warmly greeted the nine men. It had been more than a year

since the 10 of them had been with each other, though their epic journey together seemed like it began a long, long time ago. Friends now, they were children then, so-called "Lost Boys" fleeing the southern region of Sudan on the heels of a civil war. They were among the thousands of frightened refugees who fled Sudan to escape the fighting between the Muslim-controlled government and Christian rebels in the south.

Now, more than two decades later, these 10 men—trained as doctors—were together in a part of the world desperately in need of their expertise. Samaritan's Purse Canada, First Presbyterian Church of Norfolk, Virginia, and the University of Calgary arranged for and funded this reunion. They

also supplied medical instructors and support staff as part of this weeklong homecoming trip. It was part of a continuing education program that had begun in Canada in 2005 after Dr. Tut Pur and his friends arrived there as immigrants from Cuba.

Stephen Katz and I, cofounders of Wéyo, a nonprofit that utilizes the power of narrative storytelling to help nonprofits and NGOs, were hired to document the remarkable journey so the story could be shared with supporters of the mission and potential funders.

Selected as being among the brightest of 600 children, these boys had been sent to Cuba and educated as doctors. As youngsters, they barely escaped their country's civil unrest by crossing the river near Akobo, across from Ethiopia. Now they had returned to the country of their birth as doctors. In treating those who had once fought against them, these young men were providing hope for peace and reconciliation in this still war-torn land. ■  
—Christopher Tyree

📷 To view a slideshow, go to [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org).

ill, homeless, disenfranchised or are dealing with a host of other all too familiar problems. Most of these nonprofits and NGOs don't have the people onboard who are able to bring to their outreach efforts and their Web sites a compelling visual display of their initiatives and efforts. Yet these are precisely the kind of images that Stephen and I have the skill and desire to shoot.

Creating a business connection between what we want to do and what organizations like these need seemed an obvious direction for us to head. In thinking about setting up such an enterprise, we knew that nonprofits, especially small ones, are perpetually short on financial resources and the money they raise is targeted at providing services. We found instances when writers and photographers donated words and visuals; even so, we quickly recognized the challenge that these small nonprofits confront in figuring out how to use visual material effectively to communicate the importance of their work.

So Stephen and I did what two idealistic photojournalists would do. We sat down for a sushi dinner and started to select the building blocks to construct what would be our new business. Its name is Wéyo. In Haitian Kréyol, Wéyo is "to see them." While unusual for a company name, its fit was perfect for us. We had gone to Haiti in early 2008 to produce pro bono a documentary video for Physicians for Peace, and it was there, in a steamy, pungent hospital room that our passion joined forces with our inspiration.

## Starting 'To See Them'

In Haiti, we'd found our name. Back in the United States, we founded our company. The idea was to capitalize on our collective years of journalism experience and turn our narrative storytelling abilities toward work with nonprofits. We envisioned that our photographs, videos and narrative text would be used to design Web sites and other marketing products as a way to bolster fundraising and attract

volunteers. As we got underway, we found ourselves in the company of other writers, designers and editors of amazing talent who, like us, were alarmed by the changes taking place in journalism. Some decided to join us at Wéyo, and together we formed the company's nucleus and designed a roundtable approach to our projects to make best use of our varied special talents.

By late 2008, we had our first contract working with a local children's hospice to produce content and develop a new Web site. Later that year we produced for a Web site, TreeofLives.org, a short segment that also aired on the Christian Broadcasting Network. Within a week our efforts to tell this visual story had garnered Tree of Lives more than \$15,000.

We also produced and published a story for Need magazine about a group of "Lost Boys" who had immigrated to Canada and now were returning home to the Sudan to work as physicians. Samaritan's Purse Canada, which supported these young men's education and journey home, used our video as a fundraising tool to aid these doctors. [See box on page 27.]

Even as our dream of doing this kind of work was materializing, we saw significant issues that we would need to overcome. Among them were these:

- In the editing process, we were at the mercy of our clients, who we knew from the start had a difficult time figuring out how best to tell their own stories. As a result, some of our projects lost their intensity as we were forced to edit out some of the power, heart and creativity that we felt strengthened the stories and believed would have motivated donors and volunteers.
- Historically, small and even mid-sized nonprofits have had very little experience in marketing. We discovered that in many cases we had to devote an equal amount of time learning about these organizations and teaching them how to tell their stories in emotionally powerful ways as we did producing the visual material.

So far Wéyo's operations have been sustained on the initial investments that Stephen and I contributed. Add to that our passion, many sleepless nights, and too-many-to-count volunteer hours from many of our team members, and the formula for what keeps us going emerges. Even with what we've been told is an attractive business plan, we can find few potential investors who are willing to take a risk on a start-up like ours that is working for cash-strapped nonprofits during these tough economic times. And banks will not consider lending us money until we've been in business for at least three years.

Despite our economic peril, we're doing precisely the work we set out to do—the work we feel we're trained to do and work that we believe matters, despite our meager profit. Still, we know it's time to take our company in a different direction—one that is increasingly familiar to our photojournalist colleagues as they find places for what they do in emerging pockets of nonprofit journalism, much of it happening on the Web.

Wéyo needs to become a nonprofit so that we can keep doing what we're doing. As a nonprofit, we will continue our same collaborations with other nonprofits and NGOs. Our goal is the same as when we ate that sushi dinner and discussed our vision for what would become Wéyo. Taking all we've learned as photojournalists, we are now finding new ways to harness the power of visual narratives in work with our nonprofit clients. Pairing these projects with a variety of digital platforms, we can bring stories of triumph and despair, stories about the challenges people face and the help they receive, to new audiences.

Without taking the chance we have with Wéyo, I'm convinced that a lot of these stories would remain untold. We intend to do what we can to tell them. ■

*Christopher Tyree is the president and CFO of Wéyo Inc.*

## The Impact of Images: First, They Must Be Seen

Through photographs transformed into comic images and other creative collaborations, the work of a photojournalist is connecting with new audiences in creative ways.

BY MARCUS BLEASDALE

In 2004, as war raged in the eastern Congo over access to gold deposits, I waded with my camera through dirt and mud in a goldmine in Mongbwalu. Here gold was being mined, then shipped through Uganda to traders in Europe and Asia. Payments for the Congo's gold enabled the purchase of more weapons and this prolonged the war that was terrorizing those living in this region with the brutality of rape and pillage.

Photographs I took on that trip were used in collaboration with Human Rights Watch to compile a report, "The Curse of Gold," which examined in depth the reasons for it and the consequences of its continuation. Since those financing the war—the gold merchants—lived on other continents and were dependent on the continuation of this trade for their wealth, it was difficult to connect the pieces and harder still to make what was happening on the ground matter to those whose actions could make a difference.

In our attempt to bring this story to the attention of these international gold traders, Human Rights Watch and I worked together to create an exhibit of my mining photographs in Geneva, Switzerland, where Metalor Technologies, one of the leading gold mining companies, has its corporate offices. We invited to the exhibit's opening night gold buyers and mining company executives as well as financiers, stockholders and journalists. Immediately after seeing this exhibit, Metalor Technologies halted its purchases of Congolese gold.

This experience convinced me that combining visual awareness with thorough research, like that done by Human Rights Watch, could create



Members of the Congolese Revolutionary Movement, in their stronghold of Zombe, have been accused by Human Rights Watch of using rape as a weapon of war. *Photo by Marcus Bleasdale.*

a powerful force for positive change. Clearly, this exhibit of my photographs opened minds and led to substantial changes in the company's business policies.

After this breakthrough was achieved, the war in the Congo migrated to other regions of the country as other minerals and metals grew in value. Conflict flared in the Kivu provinces over mining access to coltan—short for columbite-tantalite and used in cell phones and computer chips—and cassiterite, a heavy dark mineral that is the chief source of tin.

In my mind, the question arose: How could my work as a photojournalist be used to confront these problems with similar success? By now, it was apparent that trying to create awareness through having my photographs

published by a news organization was no longer viable in an industry struggling with its own set of problems. With circulation at publications of long-standing news organizations falling and Web sites—free to browse and enjoy—often tailoring content to attract particular audiences, budgets to support the work of those of us who take pictures in the midst of war and famine, natural disasters, and killing sprees are shrinking fast. With similar rapidity, places to publish our work are also disappearing. All of this is now forcing photojournalists like me to seek out alternative solutions for how to get our images in front of viewers, especially those whose awareness can likely spur action.

Challenging as they might be, these changes aren't paralyzing. In fact, they

can be invigorating. Markets evolve and practices change, and as they do it's up to us to look for opportunities.

Recently, in Europe I taught a group of young students. When I asked how many read a newspaper in print, two hands went up. "How many read your news online?" Every hand went up. We have to rethink our audiences because if we do not react to that show of hands we're going to lose this generation. They're game-centric and on Facebook and Twitter. My niece and nephew are 14 and 17, and when I am with them, I think a lot about how I can make them and their peers the next generation of concerned people willing to become engaged in finding

solutions. How do I reach them? How do I get them to understand that conflict is wrong?

People consume information—at least fragments of it—in much larger quantities than in the past. It's my job to present this younger generation with visual images they will understand and find engaging. If they remain uninterested, it isn't their fault. It's mine.

### Taking a Comic Approach

At about the time I was teaching these young students, I was collaborating with a comic artist, Paul O'Connell, on an article for Ctrl.Alt.Shift. Our partnership revolved around the idea

of us combining our various skills to create new ways of delivering messages. What this meant is that Paul took my photographs from places like the Congo and transformed them into a comic strip to tell the story to a different audience.

Comic readers are likely not to be your typical magazine reader. Our target was a different demographic and the results were outstanding. We reached the readers we set out to reach—heard back from them with positive praise—and were invited to exhibit our work in a leading London art gallery normally reserved for artists such as the British graffiti artist Banksy.

One step always seems to lead me to



In nine months gold miners excavated a pit in northeastern Congo in 2004. Most of these miners are combatants who control mineral-rich areas and profit from their exploitation.

Dealers buy stones in Mbuji-Mayi, Congo's diamond center, in 2005. Many dealers become pastors in order to use religious influence to convince their congregation to sell at beneficial prices.



*Photos by Marcus Bleasdale.*

the next so now I am thinking of ways to build more roads to this younger generation. I find myself thinking about whether it would make sense for a photojournalist to team up with a software gaming company to create a trailer for the next big movie. Maybe in this way gamers could become aware of the exploitation of natural resources—and the effect it has on the people who live in these areas of the world—that go into producing the devices they use to play these games.

Instead of thinking about reaching a readership of a few hundred thousand people with a few photographs and a story, the ambition builds to promote awareness among millions—and to do

so in a way that would even be fun for those doing the learning. That possibilities abound is what makes my work exciting again. We are in discussions with a large influential nongovernmental organization about a possible collaboration with Silicon Valley to connect with the people who play these electronic games.

Those who are the age of my niece and nephew aren't likely to ever buy a magazine or newspaper but if the work of photojournalists can be partnered with these new avenues of distribution, this generation will be

informed and engaged. That I can promise. ■

*Marcus Bleasdale won The Anthropographia Award for Photography and Human Rights for "The Rape of a Nation," which documents human rights abuses in the Democratic Republic of Congo.*



Comic artist Paul O'Connell transformed Marcus Bleasdale's photographs of exploitation in the Congo so that his message could reach a new audience.

# Photojournalists Reach Viewers in Different Ways

Using emerging funding strategies and finding fresh venues to display their work, photographers bring foreign news reporting to new audiences.

BY IASON ATHANASIADIS

In 2007 as I left Tehran after three tumultuous years of living there to become a Nieman Fellow, funding for photojournalism was collapsing. I was trying to understand how non-native English speakers could tell visual stories by accentuating the characters' own voices and the natural sounds of their surroundings. The word "multimedia" was being bandied about but assignments still seemed to be envisioned with a strict separation between articles and photography.

In a very short time, that church-and-state separation evaporated, as did news organizations' budgets. When I returned to work in 2008, I noticed that photographers were abandoning the profession. Staff photographers were out of work and editors increasingly relied on the abundant and cheap supply of man-on-the-street photographs. With foreign reporting, the news is even worse. In the past three years, I've set out for North Korea, Libya and Pakistan with editors willing only to "take a look at what you come back with."

In these tough times, there are glimmers of hope. Jon Sawyer, a veteran foreign correspondent, directs the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting in Washington, D.C., which is one of several Web-based, foundation-supported efforts that now offer financial assistance for foreign reporting. Journalists can apply for travel grants that enable them to produce the kind of foreign news reporting that many news organizations no longer support. In 2009, a multimedia Web site about living with HIV/AIDS in Jamaica whose work the Pulitzer Center sponsored through a grant, was awarded an Emmy and the Pulitzer Center itself, was recognized by the National Press Foundation with an award for Excel-

lence in Online Journalism.

By receiving grants from the Pulitzer Center, I was able to spend time in Turkey chronicling its rise as an emerging power, to report on the social turmoil that preceded Greece's economic decline, and to document the crisis in Iran sparked by the presidential elections. For a struggling freelancer, these grants—combined with my ability to share this reporting with online news outlets such as GlobalPost—give me a lifeline to continue my work as a photojournalist.

## New Visual Venues

There have been times in recent years when I have despaired of being able to earn my living doing photojournalism. Even though my student visa gave me the privilege of being able to travel in Iran's interior and I had the advantage of speaking Persian and Arabic and thus could gain access to insiders' stories with an outsider's fresh approach, assignments were not forthcoming. I faced similar circumstances when I was in places where news was happening and no news organization seemed interested in paying for photographs. I traveled in northern Afghanistan during the 2005 parliamentary elections and I was in Lebanon for the aftermath of the 2006 war with Israel. In 2007 I made an overland crossing from Iran into Iraq. Each of these reporting trips involved personal expense and considerable risk. At the peak of Iraq's pre-surge violence, I embedded with the U.S. Army in Baquba, a city echoing with mortars and suicide bombs. When I returned to Tehran, a comparable haven of harmony, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's wary new government was pressuring foreign

correspondents to leave by revoking the last accreditations that its more moderate predecessor had granted.

Feeling this pressure, I turned to art photography. At that time Tehran was buzzing with artists pushing the boundaries of what Iranian officials deemed permissible. Iranians love photography. Even more, they wanted to know how a foreigner living among them saw them in this time and place. In the three photography shows I did in my three years in Tehran, I was censored just once, not unpredictably at the state-run House of Artists where the director asked me to remove images that he judged could be interpreted as insulting the regime.

"If an Iranian photographer put these on show, no one would bat an eyelash," the director told me. The two pictures were of a bombed-out Iraqi tank with the words "Death to Israel" spray painted on it in Persian and an exhausted-looking salesman standing under two propaganda posters depicting ideologically vigorous "martyrs" from the Iran-Iraq War. "But when a foreigner presents them in an Iranian gallery, everyone starts to wonder what he's trying to say," he said.

Every day, I visited the gallery where I'd hear the views expressed by a wide cross section of society—from uptown North Tehranis, chador-wrapped university graduates, and soldiers who came from a nearby barracks either to look at the art or at the gallery's attractive female patrons. What they thought of how my photographs represented Iranian society fascinated me, as did their attempts to understand why I was in Iran.

By taking this new approach to my photography, I had the opportunity to get to know well an emerging generation of talented Iranian photographers,

## Pakistan: A Freelancer as Photographer

When I went to Pakistan in 2007, the country was embroiled in a huge constitutional crisis. In one day of violence in Karachi, 50 people were killed, but this chaotic situation was not yet seen as news, as it would be a few months later after a suicide bomber killed Benazir Bhutto and sparked international interest in this country. Even Pakistan's neighbor, Afghanistan, wasn't garnering many headlines in those days.

Pakistan's cities, however, were as chaotic then as now, and its countryside just as tribal and conservative. Violence was a daily staple of life there as workers went on strike and electricity stations were burned down out of frustration at not delivering more than a few hours of power daily. Islamists blew up shops selling music videos and "unseen hands" detonated bombs outside mosques. On one day Shi'ite parades were targeted; the next day, Sunni places of prayer would explode. Assassinations and kidnapping were commonplace as religious fanaticism intensified.

Almost none of this story made its way into the Western press. While policymakers examined exhaustively the tiniest hints of instability in Iran, disinterest greeted this daily evidence that Pakistan was on the point of collapse. As a freelance journalist, to be in Pakistan meant that I had to pay my own expenses, though my exceedingly hospitable host took care of my stay and part of my transport. While I had the freedom to travel, I did not speak Urdu and could not afford to hire a fixer, and this made my work as a journalist all but impossible to do. Aside from logistical issues, I was acutely aware that anything negative I wrote would reflect badly on my hosts.

So instead of reporting, I took photographs.

Leaving aside Afghanistan's ethereal high-altitude light and the Iranian plateau's deep earthly colors,



Sufis dance in the courtyard of a mosque in Lahore, Pakistan where a long-dead Persian mystic is venerated every week. *Photo by Iason Athanasiadis.*

Pakistan's packed slums and overpopulated villages offered extraordinary photographic possibilities. Karachi is a cataclysm of noise and movement. Marketplaces hum with the activity of an overripe fertility tipping toward decay. Crumbling Raj era buildings bulge with humanity as a smothering humidity settles like a blanket over a body tortured by heat. With the relief of dusk descending, thousands of multicolored lights cast pools of glare over corners and signs that went unnoticed in the daytime. Twisting Urdu tumbles into capitalized English as sturdy as the colonial buildings that loom over chaos like ghosts from a simpler, more sparsely populated past.

I visited mystical shrine towns and photographed ecstatic Sufi ceremonies. In Peshawar, I wrangled my way into the off-limits tribal areas and documented the faceless stores selling assault rifles and bootleg alcohol. In the border town of Chitral, next to Afghanistan, Pakistan's pagan Kalasha tribes celebrated the

spring solstice with dancing and wine drinking under the watchful stares of armed soldiers sent to protect them from rising tensions with their Muslim neighbors.

My visits to these regions of Pakistan happened during a transitional moment—before the war in Afghanistan spilled across the border, tensions heightened even more, and this region became the focus of international attention. News organizations weren't interested in these stories then, and they aren't even very interested now. Fortunately, photographs I'd taken of mystical Islam in Pakistan, Iran, Syria and Turkey were brought together in an exhibit, "Sufism: Mystical Ecumenism," (<http://payvand.com/news/09/feb/1024.html>) hosted by Harvard's Center for Government and International Studies. ■  
—Iason Athanasiadis

📷 To view a slideshow, go to [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org).

such as Getty Images' Majid Saeedi, United Press International's Mohammad Kheirkhah, and Yalda Moaiery. They'd come often to these galleries, proudly carrying their expensive cameras and lenses. As they shared their work with me, I could see that their photography exhibited the eye for detail that had won Iranian filmmakers numerous awards in foreign film festivals. Of course I had no idea then that in the summer of 2009 these photographers would capture extraordinary images of the post-election street unrest and send their images overseas. Several of them spent time in jail or were forced to flee the country as the authorities made criminal the act of photographing opposition crowds.

Once I was in the United States I did what I could to raise awareness about the facets of Iranian society

that American audiences aren't seeing through the news media. In Los Angeles, where one of Iran's largest diaspora communities resides, the Craft and Folk Art Museum helped me by creating an educational program about contemporary Iran that transcended the photographs I displayed as part of this project. In Washington, D.C., the Woodrow Wilson Center opened its doors to another photography show that focused on Iran's youth as a way to convey their unheard voices.

In my photographs, I have been able to portray the tensions and frustrations that had been brewing in Iran for years. When Iran's Ministry of Intelligence arrested me after I returned to Tehran as a photojournalist to report on June's post-election unrest, one of my prison interrogators pointed to my Washington, D.C. exhibit as an event

designed to pave the way for the soft overthrow of Iran. I took what he said as a backhanded compliment.

The enormous changes rattling our industry are forcing those of us who use visual media to find new approaches to telling stories. Whether our work finds its audiences on the walls of galleries and museums or on Web sites where foreign news is finding renewal, the challenge for us will be in finding the kind of support—financial and logistical—that we need to work in places where the risks to our personal safety can be considerable while the promise of publication diminishes. ■

*Iason Athanasiadis, a 2008 Nieman Fellow, is a freelance journalist, now based in Istanbul, Turkey.*

## Pushing Past Technology to Reach Enduring Issues

'I want my students to be engaged not just about making a product ... they'll submit to the College Photographer of the Year contest—but in thinking critically about the process and aesthetic choices.'

BY DONNA DE CESARE

**W**hen the challenges of teaching photojournalism in this age of accelerating change leave me unsettled, I seek inspiration in the story of an enigmatic teacher who has charmed me since childhood. Although I know this teacher only as an ephemeral figure in family reminiscences about my Italian grandfather, I am in equal measure curious about and deeply grateful to him.

As a boy, my grandfather Donato De Cesare never was able to attend formal school. He worked shining shoes on the streets of Rio de Janeiro. Papa had natural artistic talent. He amused himself between customers by drawing on the surface of the street with chalk. One morning an art teacher who had been admiring papa's handiwork for weeks approached with an offer of

classes in his studio. Papa was thrilled but my great-grandfather wouldn't hear of it. The teacher pleaded, offering his instruction without charge but to no avail. "Art is for people who don't have to work" was my great-grandfather's final retort.

Today some might say that photojournalism is for people who don't have to work. The crisis in our industry has resulted in layoffs and in a "voluntary" exodus among freelancers as many find that they can no longer sustain a living from reporting news. It is challenging to face a classroom of worried students confronting a job market that is shrinking even as it becomes more technologically demanding.

I've never viewed teaching as being constricted by notions of vocational or professional training, but that is also

a part of what we who teach photography in journalism programs do. The unpredictability of the present and the fast pace of change makes learning the history of photojournalism seem less relevant as a road map to many of my students. More commonly, many students now think that what they need most is more Photoshop or Final Cut Pro tech classes instead. And they face tremendous self-doubt. Contemplating a career as a photojournalist may take an even greater leap of faith than when I was their age.

And this is precisely where my grandfather's art teacher comes in. Although papa never formally studied art or made money as an artist, he continued to draw all his life. He cherished forever the gift of that teacher's interest and belief in his

talent. Although good teaching is a vastly more complicated business than validating student self-confidence, that art teacher broadened my grandfather's intellectual horizons and the way he saw both his role and the role of art in the world.

## Understanding Why

The stakes in the changes that photo-journalists are confronting are about much more than learning software or

choosing equipment, which is where so much of the conversation among photographers takes place. As Fred Ritchin so compellingly points out in his book "After Photography," a paradigm shift has brought significant new ethical challenges as well as new relational possibilities among narrative elements and between photographer and protagonist or photographer and audience. [See Ritchin's article on page 6.]

While how we finance and sustain

our work is not a trivial question, I'd argue that this challenge is in many ways a healthy continuation of the dilemma photographers have always faced.

Perhaps this is why on the first day of each class, I show students a documentary film about one-time Life magazine photographer Hansel Mieth. Many have never heard of Mieth, despite the fact that for many years along with Margaret Bourke-White, she was one of only two female

## 'Destiny's Children': A Legacy of War and Gangs



Carlos Perez, who grew up in Guatemala amid poverty, left the environment of gangs and graduated from an art school in Vienna, Austria where he now lives. *Photo by Donna De Cesare.*

The recent launch of the Web site "Destiny's Children" ends one phase of a two-decade project on youth gangs while it begins another. I began working on "Destiny's Children" in 2003, in collaboration with Fred Ritchin and graphic artist and Web designer Zohar Nir-Amitin at PixelPress. Our goal: to employ the visual histories of war's aftermath that my photographs convey in ways that unsettle and inspire viewers. In

using photographs I had taken of gang members, I hope to connect minds and hearts with activism.

In the beginning one of our challenges was to create a bilingual project that would work on slow modems in Latin America as well as the new broadband connections beginning to replace dial-up Internet service in New York City and across the United States. Ritchin's PixelPress solved that problem but

the demands of my teaching and new assignments conspired against my ability to advance the project.

When I was ready to resume, much had changed, not only in the digital landscape but also in the gang world. I traveled back to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras this past summer to update my reporting and to take more photographs for the Web project. I needed to do this to place the stories I had followed over a decade—including the tragedy that befell Edgar Bolaños and the triumph that Carlos Perez wrought from adversity—in a historical context and to provide an overview of current efforts to engage with the social and policy issues the stories raise. A former student, Jose Castillo, helped adapt the original design into Flash and WordPress, and he worked with me to find ways to make it accessible for different audiences.

In the next phase I will be partnering with regional and community-based organizations in the United States and Central America to develop educational and activist strategies that will open the Web site to participation by young people. ■  
—Donna De Cesare

*Learn more about the project at [www.destinyschildren.org](http://www.destinyschildren.org).*

staff photographers. Mieth's humor, her passionate commitment, and her authenticity and courage come through in filmmaker Nancy Schiesari's portrayal and interviews. Many of my students are unfamiliar with the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings but after watching "Hansel Mieth: Vagabond Photographer" they leave with a deepened context for understanding the ethical challenges and consequences that some journalists have faced in protecting their sources.

Choosing exemplary work from the canon of photojournalism to illustrate concepts, as well as modeling through my own creative work and engagement, forms one pillar of my teaching. The other is giving students opportunities for practice that open the way to their own discovery process.

If all we do is teach them to adapt new tools and modified TV formulas to computers, we miss the point. I want my students to be engaged not just about making a product—the three-minute video or audio slideshow they'll submit to the College Photographer of the Year contest—but in thinking critically about the process and aesthetic choices. Even more urgent is the need to convey to them an understanding about why they are setting out to do this work and what else they can do with the skills they acquire.

## Four Stories

I use the evolution of my documentary work on gangs to model some of these points to my students. Nearly 20 years ago—when I began exploring the aftermath of war in the barrios of Los Angeles—I realized that gangs were filling a vacuum in the lives of immigrant youths from war-torn El Salvador and Guatemala. Over time and with the support of several different grants, I documented the spread of U.S. gangs to post-war Central America. These photographs garnered awards and I wrote about this project in the Fall 2006 issue of Nieman Reports in the story, "Documenting Migration's Revolving Door."

Over time, I became convinced that the core of the story's power resided in the unfolding life circumstances and choices of several of those gang members. I settled on four stories told through the experiences of individuals whose life circumstances and decisions highlight the critical issues of poverty, trauma, human rights, and criminal justice. And I created an online bilingual project, "Destiny's Children," to be the vehicle for my visual storytelling. [See box on page 35.] This project has been a long time in gestation, and that's had advantages for me. It's allowed my thinking to evolve and

enabled me to consider my role not only as a photographer but also as a historian and teacher whose aim is to remain relevant to and sensitive toward audiences in different cultural contexts. As I've worked on this project over time, it's filled me with excitement about new possibilities for connection and activism on the Web and in the barrios alike.

There is a pressing need to figure out new economic sustainability models for documentary photojournalism. But my students should feel encouraged. The paradigm shift we're experiencing means that all of us, simultaneously and together, are teachers and learners. And there is no finer classroom than the Web, which presents photojournalists with a multitude of ways to pursue purposeful collaborative work. Sometimes paths offered can seem daunting to head down. But as I discovered in my project, while the journey might be long, much is learned along the way and the destination can be both personally rewarding and broadly worthwhile. ■

*Donna De Cesare teaches photojournalism at the University of Texas at Austin. Her photo essay "Forming Connection, Finding Comfort" appeared in the Winter 2009 issue of Nieman Reports.*

## Taking Time to Rethink, Adjust and Move Forward

'Today, how we divide our time and do our work and get paid for it has virtually no connection to how things worked for those who started out a decade or two before us.'

By JUSTIN MOTT

**W**hen I left San Francisco State University's journalism department to move to Vietnam to begin working as a photojournalist, I carried with me a romantic notion of what my life would be. I envisioned myself as a full-time, scarf-wearing documentary photographer chasing

down news stories wherever they happened—and making a living doing so.

From almost the moment I hit the ground, my vision was transformed by reality. Soon I had the good fortune of attending a weeklong workshop in Cambodia led by Gary Knight, a cofounder of the VII Photo Agency.

That experience dramatically changed how I think about the work I want to do. Young and untested, I was by far the least experienced—and yes, I'd say the worst—photographer at this workshop. In the short time we had together, I neither developed my style nor figured out how to show emotion

## A Personal Project: Third-Generation Victims of Agent Orange



A child living in an orphanage near Hanoi, Vietnam is locked in a cage so he cannot wander off or harm other children. *Photo by Justin Mott/Redux.*

Severely disabled and abandoned at birth, 124 children live at the Ba Vi Orphanage and Elderly Home near Hanoi, Vietnam. They are believed to be third-generation victims of Agent Orange, a defoliant used by the U.S. military during the Vietnam War. [For another photojournalist's project on Agent Orange, see the box by Wendy Watriss on page 22.]

Nothing is known about these children's family histories and the center lacks the resources to conduct medical tests to prove such a link. To care for them, there is one doctor, two nurses, and six caretakers.

Funding from the national government provides just \$15 a month for each child. Eighty percent of them are mentally disabled. Most of the children who live here have no recreation, education or physical therapy; they spend the majority of their days in wooden chairs or in mass beds. Some children are prone to wandering off at night or harming the other children so they are locked in iron cages overnight and during afternoon naps. For the majority of these children, this is the only home they will ever know.

The Vietnam Association for Vic-

tims of Agent Orange is campaigning against American chemical companies that were involved in producing dioxin during the Vietnam War and seeking compensation for all victims. These children's lives were a story I believed needed to be told—and it's been gratifying to see the reach my photographs have had.

I funded this project on my own and posted my photographs on my Web site. From that beginning, the story has spread wide. Newsweek posted my photographs on its Web site along with audio I had from my visits to the orphanage. I donated pictures to several nongovernmental organizations working on issues involving Agent Orange and some of my photographs have been exhibited in various countries.

I've entered some of them in photography contests, which I have found is a good way to get word about stories to the broader journalism community. In one instance I received a fellowship in humanistic photography from Parsons the New School for Design and Photo District News. By using social media, I am in touch with photographers and reporters, and I find out that some of them are working on the same story as I am. Together we spread word to different audiences about what we are doing and why. ■  
—Justin Mott

📷 To view a slideshow, go to [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org).

in my images. What I did learn is that I needed to do both.

As a student at San Francisco State, I had explored the work of great photographers—but all of them worked in a different era in journalism. They were paid handsomely for weeks or months of work and flown all over the world

by publications in whose pages their pictures would appear. Even though some of our professors cautioned us that we'd be dealing with a changed and more competitive market, the true dimensions of what this meant were never made clear.

In 2007 when I leaped into pho-

tojournalism, I did so as a freelancer, just as most of my peers were doing. I decided to base myself in Vietnam, figuring that Southeast Asia would be a good place to launch my career. After settling in I experienced a harsh first year as the assignments arrived from time to time. Suffice it to say that my

entry into the profession was not at all as I imagined it would be.

After making a few trips back to New York City in 2008 and doing some workshops and self-promotion, work started to trickle in. I had quite a few assignments for The New York Times, and on some stories they sent me out of Vietnam. That year I traveled to Australia, China, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. The writers I worked with were on staff, many of them with decades of reporting experience, and they expressed surprise when I told them I was based in Vietnam. It was rare these days, they told me, for a photographer to be flown in on a story; typically they found someone based locally.

For a number of assignments, I shot stills and video on the same story which in some ways helped to justify the expense of bringing me there. And even though my workload increased, I had the sense that I was living at the tail end of the time we had studied about in graduate school—when photojournalists hopped from country to country, their journeys paid for by the publication that wanted their work. To call my feelings melancholy doesn't quite do them justice, but I did feel sad that I had worked hard to get these opportunities and to reach this goal, only to realize that it was about to vanish.

Sure enough, by the next year news organizations' budgets dried up; no longer was I traveling for the Times or for anyone else. I was still getting the occasional assignment but always closer to home, which for me is Hanoi, and the days were always capped to just a few. To complicate my situation, more and more photographers were entering the market. All of this led to my shrinking workload. I was barely working even though I was getting more assignments than a majority of my friends.

### **Versatility Is Key**

To survive meant changing how I was approaching my career. It was time to readjust my plans as a photographer and to market myself as a business. If

I wanted to shoot a six-month project, for example, then I would need to do it on my own time. And I would need to bankroll it myself. The odds of a long-term story project being paid for—or even being commissioned for publication—were slim. So I created a commercial photography and video company, Mott Visuals, specializing in hotels and resorts. This means that I do commercial shoots for hotels and resorts that use my images to attract customers. As I end the first year after the launch of my business, I couldn't be happier and my work is more fruitful than ever.

At the same time, I'm experiencing a comeback in journalism with the last four months being the busiest stretch I've ever had. I'm writing this piece from Cambodia where I am on a weeklong assignment for The New York Times. This on-again, off-again relationship is so different from what we heard about in school. Back then I had the sense that once you are in with a publication, you're in and you would get a steady influx of assignments. But that hasn't been my experience; with the Times, a lot of work in 2008 didn't do anything to ensure me steady work in 2009.

A lot of young photographers ask me about being represented by an agency. I sense that the impression many of them have is that a photo agency will act as an employer—and provide something resembling a steady income. While years ago that might have been the case, it's rare now. Many agencies have folded, others are struggling to adjust to new market demands, and while I enjoy being with my agency, Redux, I find that for the most part I've acted as my own agent.

These days the work comes from all kinds of different clients—journalistic and otherwise. This requires that I constantly remind people about me and where I'm based so this means hours are added to my workday as I update my commercial and editorial blogs. Then there are the trips to New York City to meet with editors, conference calls for commercial shoots, and e-mails to my agency along with Facebook and Twitter updates. I carve

out time to apply for grants and to enter my work in contests. I attend events hosted by nongovernmental organizations; often they are looking to pay photographers to produce images that they can use to get their messages out. And I plan exhibitions to showcase my photographs. Oh, yes, I can't forget the time I carve out to pursue personal photography projects—the stories that hold great meaning to me. In fact, as I remind myself, these projects were why I wanted to be a photojournalist way back when.

Versatility is the key. In the past two months I've shot for the German Red Cross, the United Nations, Forbes, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, three 5-star resorts, Microsoft, the World Health Organization, and the Smithsonian. I shot a wedding and I have been involved with a commissioned book project about Chabad communities in Beijing and Shanghai. I'm also working on my own book along with shooting a few personal projects. Two of those assignments came from my agency; the rest came from connections I've made through the years. Oh yes, I've also shot a few video assignments and I'm heading back to Vietnam tomorrow to shoot another one. Along the way I founded a collective group with four documentary photographers called Razon. Similar collectives are popping up everywhere as a great way for those of us working on our own to motivate one another and market each other's photographs.

Today, how we divide our time and do our work and get paid for it has virtually no connection to how things worked for those who started out a decade or two before us. Only our mission remains the same and perhaps our contentment with the opportunity our cameras give us to transmit visual journalism about what's happening in our world. While I'm still searching to find the right balance of assignments and meaningful personal projects, it's been an awesome ride so far. ■

*Justin Mott is a freelance photojournalist based in Hanoi, Vietnam.*

# Carving New Pathways With Photojournalism Students

‘I ask myself what I should be teaching my students. How can I prepare them so they can find good jobs? Figuring this out is my daily challenge.’

BY JOSH MELTZER

In August 2008, I had a year to step away from the scene at American newspapers. After receiving a year-long Fulbright grant, I left my job as a photographer and multimedia storyteller at The Roanoke (Va.) Times and headed to Guadalajara, Mexico. Once there, I dove into a project about migration within Mexico and worked as a teacher with Listen to My Pictures, a nonprofit organization that enables children whose lives involve daily struggle to tell their stories through photography.

Just about this time, I started thinking about and searching for places

I’d want to work—and would be able to find a job—when I returned home the next August. The Roanoke Times was packed with talented and highly driven coworkers, but I felt it was time for me to move away from newspaper work and use my multimedia skills in another medium, maybe radio. I was thinking about teaching, too.

As things worked out, I’m now in my first year of teaching photojournalism and multimedia storytelling at Western Kentucky University. While I am thrilled to have this opportunity, the responsibility of how best to prepare my students for the realities of today’s

marketplace for photojournalism keeps me awake at night. I ask myself what I should be teaching my students. How can I prepare them so they can find good jobs? Figuring this out is my daily challenge.

For decades, Western Kentucky University’s journalism department has prepared its students to be able to walk into newsrooms of any size and caliber and perform well. That pathway no longer leads to many jobs so it’s our job to carve out viable ones. I tell my students constantly that now is a great time to be a budding visual storyteller, even though nothing about

## The Untold Story of Mexican Migration



Antonio Hernandez carries his daughter Angela to her baptism ceremony through a broken fence on land outside of Guadalajara, Mexico where they have been living rent free in partial exchange for making bricks. *Photo by Josh Meltzer.*

My Fulbright project in Mexico centered on migration within the country. It perhaps has had a larger impact on Mexicans than the better publicized story of immigration to the U.S. Just as America rapidly became urbanized in the early 20th century, Mexicans are moving from rural regions to large Mexican cities at increasing rates. Though much of what the cities offer—electricity, running water and education—is good, families often discover that moving to urban areas can be difficult and dangerous, especially for children. ■  
—Josh Meltzer

📷 To view a slideshow, go to [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org).

it will be easy nor will the career path be well trod. The word for them to keep in mind is “entrepreneur,” since they’re going to have to blaze the trail.

There are, however, two things they can count on. The Internet is a highly visual place, becoming more so each day, and those who travel to Web sites love to see and hear a good story told well through powerful pictures. Look at the coverage of the earthquake in Haiti. Newspapers like the Los Angeles Times and The Boston Globe (in its Big Picture: News Stories in Photographs page) used their Web sites to display extensive galleries of excruciatingly powerful images. TV and radio stations published still images, too, which turned out to be among their strongest content.

Of course I pass on to my students valuable lessons I learned during my nine years in the Times’s newsroom—adjusted a bit to meet changing circumstances. Here are a few:

- **Collaborate.** You can’t do it all on your own. Make friends along the way and across the aisle and find ways to partner with them. Value those who know more than you do and figure out creative ways to work together.
- **Have no fear.** It’s a hard pill for some to swallow, but accept the fact that every few months—sometimes every few weeks—some new technological tool comes out. Figure out which ones you’ll need to use and learn how. Don’t feel you need to master every one, but it’s good to at least learn what emerging tools can do.
- **Keep ethics in mind.** Regardless of what tool you use, keep in mind the ethical dimensions and principles that go into telling a great story. While visual and multimedia storytelling is what we do, slick design absent a great story will not hold viewers’ attention. Use tools at the right time and for the right reasons.

Aside from teaching about tools, I offer advice about temperament as I encourage my students to approach their work as caring, responsible and curious visual journalists. The next

step is to give them experiences to test their technical and temperamental capacities. This requires that we set up situations in which they collaborate with others.

## Streams of Knowledge and Experience

In our attempt to do this, several colleagues and I are planning to team-teach courses with faculty from other disciplines, such as information technology and business. Now that publications and news organizations are hiring fewer photojournalists, our graduates will need to rely on different kinds of business partnerships. Although blogging and social networks offer easy ways to distribute images, producing high-quality multimedia packages of content—including interactive maps, visualized data, video and user interactivity—can be quite challenging for photojournalists working on their own. The skills and tasks and time to do this require photojournalists to collaborate with online specialists.

I offer as an example my former colleague at the Times, Tracy Boyer, a multimedia producer who publishes the blog, Innovative Interactivity. She left the newspaper to pursue a master’s degree in interactive science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, was recently accepted into its MBA program, and now is on the university’s dual degree track. She’s doing this because she needs this combination of knowledge to launch a sustainable multimedia business.

I also encourage many of my students to tap into other commercial markets. Several of them already shoot weddings, which is an approach that helps many photojournalists supplement their work or replace their newspaper jobs.

Others are exploring ways to tap into profitable partnerships with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—connecting their abilities as visual storytellers with the desire of these organizations to build support for what they do by telling their story.

I’ve been working with Christopher Tyree and Stephen Katz, cofounders

of Wéyo who direct Truth With a Camera, a workshop where photojournalists learn how to document the work of NGOs internationally. [Tyree’s article about Wéyo is on page 26.] The workshop is based on two core principles that I want my students to know about:

- **Adapt through learning.** Since it now looks as though their careers have the potential for a rapid succession of experiences, adaptation is critical. Doing so requires finding places like Truth With a Camera to continue their education.
- **Step outside traditional boundaries.** Workshops such as this expose photojournalists to moneymaking possibilities outside the traditional boundaries of journalism. In working with NGOs, for example, they can engage with causes they feel passionate about and advocate for support through their storytelling.

## Finding Partners

While at The Roanoke Times, I felt most successful when I collaborated—in what I’d call a “full partnership”—with a writer as we brought print as well as visual and multimedia stories to readers. I formed such a relationship with Beth Macy, who reported on child and family issues. Like me, she has a boundless curiosity and brings that to her beat. She also had the confidence of editors who enlisted her—and me—to work on long-term projects. Working alongside Boyer and Seth Gitner, who is now an assistant professor at Syracuse University, also taught me new ways to tell stories using video, audio, data visualization, and mapping. These relationships—I remind my students—are the keys that unlock possibilities.

While I was in Mexico, I befriended several photographers, mostly older men, who have worked in the city plazas in Guadalajara for nearly 30 years with their Polaroid cameras, taking photos of tourists for \$3 a picture. During the 1980’s, they’d often take 100 to 200 portraits a day. Today, each averages about three photos a

day. A few of them now carry digital cameras along with four-by-six-inch digital printers and a car battery to power their printer. Most continue to operate as they did in 1981. They told me that they despise point-and-shoot digital cameras and abhor cell phones with built-in cameras.

Their business model doesn't work today. Back then few Mexicans owned cameras. Today they are bitter and frustrated because no one needs their service anymore. Wandering through the plazas, they ask "Una foto?" thousands of times a day—with little response. Their failure to adapt coupled with their unwillingness to reeducate themselves or collaborate with others has rendered their service obsolete.

For photojournalists, the ubiquity of digital cameras poses a threat to

our careers. The Internet is filled with images. Everyone is a photographer and, for that matter, a videographer, too. For us to find a place for our work—and have it recognized for its value—amid the onslaught of images requires that we educate ourselves, experiment and develop a business model to support high-quality storytelling. To do this, we'll need to be equal parts proactive and adaptive—characteristics that haven't been our strongest attributes in the past.

To be teaching a new generation at this transitional time is a great place to be. Not only can I pass on to them our foundational principles and lessons from the field, but I can educate them about the digital tools, techniques and temperament they'll need in the years ahead. ■

*Josh Meltzer teaches photojournalism and multimedia at Western Kentucky University. His work can be found at [www.joshmeltzer.com](http://www.joshmeltzer.com). Photographs of and by 18 teenagers in Mexico whom Josh taught are at [www.joshmeltzer.com/ltmp/ltmp.html](http://www.joshmeltzer.com/ltmp/ltmp.html).*

*Beth Macy, a 2010 Nieman Fellow, wrote "The end of the line for the Lone Ranger? A how-to guide for narrative collaboration," about her work with Meltzer on a 10-part series called "The Age of Uncertainty," for Nieman Storyboard. It can be read at <http://tinyurl.com/yj96j24>.*

[To read about another partnership between photographer and writer, see articles on pages 43 and 45.]

## Preparing the Next Generation of Photojournalists

Exposure, a photojournalism, documentary studies, and human rights program, 'prepares students for immersive experiences and guides them in their efforts to document through photography what they observe.'

BY SHERMAN TEICHMAN

**A**t Tufts University's Institute for Global Leadership (IGL), students are exposed to the ambiguities and complexities of the world. We encourage them to challenge assumptions and expand their understanding of how historical, cultural and ideological forces affect individuals and nations. And we help them to pursue careers in which they can act on what they've learned.

Such learning often involves absorbing the work of photojournalists whose images bear witness to events and actions for which there are no decisive answers or solutions that will prevent a reoccurrence. During the IGL's 25 years, our students have been exposed to photojournalists' images of terrorism, violence and genocide. Their pictures have told us about government corruption and

poverty; they've shown us the faces of greed and of fear and opened our eyes wider to what inequality, deprivation and environmental degradation really look like.

Photographs remind us to look at what too often we wish to ignore or deny or simply forget. But these responses are too often accompanied by cynicism and the paralytic excuse of "inevitability." Our students come to understand that as global citizens of an increasingly interdependent world, we can ill afford this attitude.

In fall 2003, our connection with photojournalism became much more real for students when James Nachtwey, a cofounder of VII Photo Agency, inspired them to create Exposure. This became the IGL's photojournalism, documentary studies, and human rights program. "I have a strong respect

for the institute's decades of effort at understanding conflict, its causes and consequences, of the unflinching way it looks at famine, war, ethnic cleansing, and complex humanitarian emergencies," he wrote in a letter, explaining his reasons for collaborating with us.

Adhering to the IGL's nonpolemical pedagogy, Exposure prepares students for immersive experiences and guides them in their efforts to document through photography what they observe. One student photo essay focused on the destruction of Islamic culture in Bosnia used to prosecute accused war criminal Slobodan Milosevic at The Hague; another focused on the environmental crisis facing the island nation of Kiribati. Students have investigated the impact of Colombian death squads and the consequences of crude oil capitalism in Azerbaijan.

## Taking Stock of the “Area Boys” in Lagos, Nigeria



“Area Boys” (though there are a few females) is a term for youths and young adults in Lagos, Nigeria who engage in acts of violence and coercion. *Photo by Samuel James.*

Samuel James, the winner of Exposure’s first Alexandra Boulat Award, will continue his photographic work on the lives of the “Area Boys,” youth gangs in the slums of Lagos, Nigeria. The award, named in honor of a cofounder of VII Photo Agency, car-

ries a \$2,500 stipend to promote the creation of documentary work with a social purpose.

James, a senior at Tufts University and a participant in the university’s Institute for Global Leadership’s Exposure program, has worked with

the Social and Economic Rights Action Center in Nigeria. His research article, “Urbicide: Lagos and the Crisis of the Megacity,” appeared in the IGL publication, *Dis-course*. Accompanying his words were his images in “Water Get No Enemy: A Photo Essay from Lagos, Nigeria.”

James explains that the amorphous and contentious term “Area Boys” is used to describe gangs of unemployed young men who control small areas of Lagos, Nigeria. As these gangs proliferate, with a population now estimated in the hundreds of thousands, they often morph into ethnic militias, vigilantes, mercenaries, trade unions, and political

parties—groups that generally seek political spoils through various means of violence and coercion. ■

📷 To view a slideshow, go to [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org).

They covered the first democratic election in Kyrgyzstan and the challenges that pastoralists confront in the Karamojong Cluster of Africa.

After graduating from Tufts, some of Exposure’s alumni now work as photojournalists. One of them provided the first images that *The New York Times* published on Darfur and covered military offensives in Iraq and the insurgency in the oil rich Niger Delta. Another captured the aftermath of Benazir Bhutto’s assassination in Pakistan and sent home images from the battle between Islamic militants in the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp and the Lebanese Army.

In January, the IGL named the

winner of its first Alexandra Boulat Award, created in memory of one of VII’s cofounders, on the same evening that the VII Photo Agency’s “Questions Without Answers” exhibition opened at the university’s art gallery. The award recipient, Samuel James, was an early member of the Exposure program at IGL. [See accompanying box.]

In his letter from 2004, Nachtwey observed that our Exposure endeavor “will help us all to understand photography as a valuable tool that can help us learn how to make sense of the violence, the destruction, the chaos of this world.” Emphasizing the enduring value of the program, he wrote, “Most importantly, it can help

to create a public awareness integral to the process of change.”

With the mentoring of photojournalists, the support of benefactors, and the structure that Exposure provides, our emerging photojournalists are heading in the direction that Nachtwey envisioned several years ago. ■

*Sherman Teichman is the founding director of the Institute for Global Leadership at Tufts University. He was instrumental in bringing to the university VII Photo Agency’s exhibit, “Questions Without Answers,” which will also be published as a book by Phaidon.*

## Partnership of Photojournalist and Writer

‘With our close collaboration, I felt for the first time as a photographer that I was working with a writer who really wanted to hear what I thought about the story.’

BY MELISSA LYTTLE

It wasn't long after I started as a photographer at the St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times that I knew I wanted to work with Lane DeGregory. We didn't know each other; in fact, we'd never met; I was assigned to the Tampa bureau, she worked in the main newsroom in St. Pete. Still I felt as though I knew her from reading her, especially one Sunday morning when she described putting her dog, Dakota, down. Tears fell into my cereal bowl as I read her words. Lane always had a special way of revealing the essence of someone's character by catching subtle details that told so much. I wanted to bring the same power and depth to my visual storytelling.

Soon, I had my chance. I was paired

with Lane to tell the story of Lillie, a 14-year-old in foster care, who was pregnant and in need of a family. For about a month we worked as a team on Lillie's story. When I photographed a moment unfolding, Lane took notes about the dialogue and recorded sensory observations like how things smelled or sounds she heard. So as not to interrupt what was happening, she jotted down questions to ask later. We talked constantly about themes; at times we'd try to boil the story down to just one word. We shared notes about nuances that we picked up in our subjects. With our close collaboration, I felt for the first time as a photographer that I was working with a writer who really wanted to

hear what I thought about the story.

We quickly figured out that our approaches to telling stories were strikingly similar. Each of us brought to our work the sensitivity and empathy required in telling someone else's story. We both recognized that it was critical to build relationships of trust—with each other and with our subjects. Sharing these attributes contributed to the depth of work that we achieved in a short time. We weren't surprised to find out how well our words and pictures complemented each other. This experience became an entry to what has become an enduring and extraordinary partnership.

### Dani's Story

These dimensions of our reporting evidently came through in the story the Times published. When Carolyn Eastman, director of communications for the Children's Board of Hillsborough County, Florida, who had brought Lillie to Lane's attention, learned of another girl's horrendous situation, she got in touch with Lane. As they spoke, Eastman let it be known that if they went ahead with telling Danielle's story, I had to be the photographer. She had observed how we handled ourselves with Lillie and this led her to trust that in our hands Danielle's life circumstances would not be sensationalized.

Danielle's mother had left her alone in a room the size of a closet for the first seven years of her life. When discovered, she was emaciated and covered in bug bites and had a swollen diaper leaking down her legs.



In the blink of an eye, Dani, in the arms of her father, can switch from happily building sand castles to running around and throwing a violent fit and her parents need to calm her down. *Photo by Melissa Lyttle/St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times.*

## Finding an Extraordinary Moment During an Ordinary Ride

On the half-hour drive south to horse therapy, Dani, 9, stares out the window while her brother Willie, 10, tries to provoke a giggle by tickling her. Willie was accustomed to living as an only child, with his four older brothers already out of the house, but his selflessness and closeness in age to Dani has led them to develop a unique brother-sister bond.

I loved watching the relationship between Dani and her new brother Willie develop and strengthen as we got deeper into their story. While we were in the car that



Dani and Willie are developing a unique sister and brother bond. *Photo by Melissa Lyttle/St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times.*

when the kids looked west, toward that sunset, the light washed over them and lit up their faces. I love that on the surface this photo may look like a typical brother-sister relationship, with one antagonizing the other in the backseat of a car on a long drive. In reality, it's anything but. For me, Willie's touch, their smiles, and the light emanating from both of them imbued a simple gesture with a deeper meaning. ■  
—Melissa Lyttle

afternoon, I noticed how low the light was getting in the sky and how

📷 To view a slideshow, go to [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org).

Not surprisingly she had no ability to socialize or respond to stimulation, nor had she learned to speak, walk or feed herself. Diagnosed with “environmental autism,” Danielle was a feral child.

After Danielle spent a year in hospitals and nursing homes, Bernie and Diane Lierow of Fort Myers Beach adopted her. They call her Dani. Eastman arranged for us to meet the Lierows. She explained that they were uneasy about drawing media attention but also believed that by telling their story other people would be encouraged to adopt special-needs kids.

Eastman and Gareth White, Dani's caseworker, rode with us on our initial three-hour drive to the Lierows' home and gave us important background information. Once we arrived, they relayed their trust in us to the family as we sat with the Lierows in their living room. Lane spent a lot of time that day talking with Dani's adoptive parents, at times pressing them for difficult details as she tried to figure out what the story was. They let me hang out with Dani in her room, which gave me the chance to observe her

movements, watch for subtle moments, and most importantly, give her the opportunity to grow more comfortable with my presence.

Because we had worked together on Lillie's story, from the start of this one Lane and I relied on each other in ways that had become instinctive. I relayed quotes or dialogue to her and she described scenes and situations to me so each of us knew what to look for and ask about during our subsequent visits. In all, we made five visits to the Lierows' home, and during our six-hour roundtrip drives, we debriefed, going over what we had seen, heard and felt. We talked about emerging themes and figured out what elements we needed to tell the story. These road trips became a combination of a therapy office visit and journalism think tank.

### Multimedia Storytelling

After we reported the story for a few months, our editors asked for two things. They wanted us to collect material for an online multimedia presentation and to find Dani's biologi-

cal mom and interview her.

It was 2008, and multimedia was in its infancy at our newspaper. It now became our job—one we tackled together—to figure out how best to fit in the demands of collecting audio and video on top of the words and photographs we had thought would be our only way of telling this story. Fortunately, our reporting had been thorough and the bond of trust we had established with Dani and her parents was strong. So we made a concise list of questions to ask for the audio part of the multimedia package. With a rough edit of my photographs, I had a good idea of the ambient sounds we wanted to use with these images. Though we didn't call it a storyboard, that essentially is what we created. Then we set out to collect the missing audio and video. This approach made the editing process a lot less daunting.

Locating Dani's biological mom required a lot of on-the-ground reporting. Lane and I began with the police report and ended up, after several dead-ends, with us approaching a doublewide trailer in the middle of nowhere. As we tried to talk with

neighbors of Dani's mom, they seemed visibly scared of her, as though they feared retribution. Before we went to the trailer where Dani's mom lived, Lane called her editor to tell him where we were and ask him to call the police if he didn't hear from us in an hour.

We parked and approached the door, terrified of what we might find on the other side. I climbed up the steps and knocked. A woman answered. Lane introduced us and told her we were doing a story on her daughter Danielle and wanted to know if she wanted to talk. "My daughter ... have you seen her?" she said. We told her we had, that we had talked to other people about her daughter, and how we wanted to hear her side of the story. She invited us in. As we sat at her dining room table and talked, I shot pictures as she became emotional. She gave us court documents, which provided us with incredible amounts of information that we would have never had access to since the case was handled in the juvenile division and was therefore a closed file.

While she and Lane talked, I sifted through the court transcripts and paperwork, which read like a

screenplay. What we learned on that day opened a window that allowed us to dig deeper than we thought possible, and together we did.

As our reporting drew to a close, Lane sent me drafts of what she was writing. We talked about structure and decided together on scenes to include in what would one day be published as "The Girl in the Window." On our way back from interviews, Lane would read me quotes; this helped her to decide which ones she was likely to use. Even though my photo editors at the paper are excellent, Lane's feedback on my pictures proved to be invaluable; she understood the nuances of the story and the complexity of the issues we were trying to convey. In turn, I gave her prints that she used as visual clues for her writing; she hung dozens of them around her desk to help set the mood and revive memories. As I wrote my captions, Lane was at my side, providing descriptive nuggets and reminding me of quotes that didn't make the story but fit perfectly with the picture.

With too many stories, photojournalism is treated as an afterthought and handled with a service mentality. Assignments arrive from the

newsroom—"Go take a picture of this person doing that"—and the photo department fills the order. At the Times, photographers have opportunities to engage with what the story is—from a visual perspective—and are given creative freedom and time to do their work well. Still, we usually work independently of the writer.

Having worked with Lane, I find it impossible to imagine a writer and photographer approaching a story as emotionally challenging and as complex as this one on her own. During our five-month reporting partnership on "The Girl in the Window," we bonded as friends, and with our shared commitment and passion for storytelling we pushed each other to become better journalists. ■

*Melissa Lyttle is a photographer at the St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times. Her Web site is [www.melissalyttle.com](http://www.melissalyttle.com). "The Girl in the Window" won a first place award for Best Published Picture Story in the 2009 Best of Photojournalism contest sponsored by the National Press Photographers Association.*

## Our Emotional Journey—Traveled Together

'Journalism, at its best, is collaboration. No single reporter can ask every question. No photographer can capture every scene.'

BY LANE DEGREGORY

**T**here's this little girl, the woman at the Children's Board of Hillsborough County, Florida, told me. Police found her in a filthy room the size of a closet, covered with feces and bug bites, unable to talk or eat solid foods. She had never been held, never felt the sun on her pale face.

"It's the saddest story I've ever heard," my source said. "With a happier ending than anyone could have hoped for."

She wanted me to write the story.

She had convinced the girl's adoptive parents to share their saga. She only had one request: "I want Melissa to take the pictures."

Some photographers are phenomenal artists. Others are extraordinary documentarians. Melissa Lyttle, my colleague at the St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times, is both. Her pictures are awash in light and imagery. They zoom in, capturing the most intimate moments, then soar above to provide sweeping context. They hold you, they move you.

They tell stories.

Besides having the eye of an artist and dogged devotion of a documentarian, Melissa is above all an incredible journalist. She doesn't just take pictures. She asks questions, explores issues and emotions, tracks down background and expert opinions and makes her subjects feel comfortable enough to open their homes and their souls to her. Melissa writes with her eyes. In her scenes, she sees stories: characters and complications, terror

and hope, resolution.

If my source at the Children's Board had not asked for Melissa to take the photos for this story, I would have requested her myself. I knew Melissa's work, her ethics and integrity, and especially her empathy would make her the perfect person to partner with for this project.

Reporting this story was an emotional journey, and without Melissa to talk with, I would have had a hard time bearing the anger and humility on my own—much less figuring out how to process and channel it. For example:

We both fell in love with Willie. Willie was 10, growing up as an only child, when his parents brought Dani home to adopt her. While other kids would have been jealous or hostile, Willie adored his new sister. We watched them play, watched him tickle her, and try to coax her to talk.

Melissa spent hours playing with Willie while I watched Dani and interviewed her parents. Playing with Erector sets and Legos, video games and super heroes, she sat on the floor beside him and made him feel as important as his needy sister. One night, as they were putting away the toys, Melissa asked Willie, "Can I see your room?"

"I don't really have a room," Willie answered, his eyes dropping to the floor. "My room is Dani's now. She needs it more than me."

When Melissa told me this, we knew we had to hang out until bedtime. This perfect family, these selfless parents, had asked their young son to sleep in the laundry room so their newly adopted daughter could be upstairs near them.

The scene that evening, when Willie went downstairs with a flashlight so he wouldn't be scared going to sleep—then climbed back up and curled on the living room couch—is one of the most powerful in the story. It shows how blind the parents' love was for their new daughter and how much their son was willing to sacrifice for



When Dani lived with her mother, her bedroom had only a small window. Now, in her new home, her father's lift gives her a larger view. *Photo by Melissa Lyttle/St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times.*

his new little sister.

If Melissa hadn't been building Legos with Willie, we probably never would have known that he slept on the sofa almost every night, clutching a stuffed dog.

### Traveling Together

Road trips were essential. On our monthly trips to and from Dani's house, Melissa and I had six hours in the car together. We talked about questions we had about the story, approaches to interviewing different people we needed to talk with, scenes we wanted to witness. During the long drive back, we debriefed about the horrors we had learned—and the incredible love and support we had seen—and shared our worries about Dani and her new family.

With the help of a researcher at the Times, Melissa found Dani's birth mother. I don't think I would have been brave enough to meet her on my own. Here was a woman—from her mug shot a tall, large woman—who had so severely neglected her own daughter that she had irreparably damaged her. Who had told police she didn't do anything wrong.

What would she do to two female journalists who showed up on her doorstep?

"I think I should back the car in," Melissa said. "In case we have to make a quick getaway."

Melissa knocked. A frowzy woman in a housecoat and boxer shorts opened the door. I told her who we were, why we were there. Amazingly, she invited us inside. Melissa went in last, so the woman couldn't lock the door behind us.

After we had finished reporting, when we thought we were ready to start writing and editing photos, our editors asked us, "So what do you have for the Web?"

In 21 years of working for daily newspapers, I had never done a multimedia presentation. I don't even know how to get photos from my phone onto my Facebook page. But Melissa is totally tech-savvy. We didn't want to bring another video photographer or audio expert into our project. It didn't feel fair to do that to Dani or her family. So I asked questions and held the microphone. And Melissa did everything else. She shot video, recorded audio, spliced together slides and stills and music. She got help editing the final project, but did 90 percent of the work on her own.

Though I had been skeptical at the beginning—why did we need multimedia anyway?—after seeing Melissa's footage I realized that there was no way I could describe Dani's actions—her twirling and staggering, screeching and meltdowns—that would be half as effective as watching what Melissa had captured on film.

We talked about the story every step of the way. What scenes were the most powerful—and why? What themes were emerging? Where was it going to start? Where would the story end?

I thought it should begin when the world first became aware of Danielle, as she was known then. Neighbors had told us that the mother had lived in that house for years but they had never known a child lived there. Until one day when a face appeared in the cracked, dirty window. One neighbor thought it was a ghost. Another believed it was an angel.

Melissa, of course, didn't have a photo of Dani's face in that grimy

window. But she had a beautiful photo of Dani just before bedtime. Her new dad was lifting her to the window in her pink bedroom, so she could watch the sunset. It was the only photo Melissa had in which Dani is truly smiling.

“I was thinking that might be the closing image,” Melissa said. “It’s sweet and I like the light, and it sort of sums everything up, him holding her up before he tucks her into bed.”

Those window images became our bookends—my beginning, her end.

Journalism, at its best, is collaboration. No single reporter can ask every question. No photographer can capture

every scene. Alone, we can never fully absorb or vet or understand what we’re experiencing—at least not enough to have the authority to boil it down succinctly and share it with the world.

We need someone else who has been there, who has witnessed and wondered with us, who can help sort it out enough to explain it and validate our interpretation.

Someone to help us. Someone to push us.

Melissa watches and waits and listens. She is unobtrusive but aggressive when she needs to be. She embraces her subjects from every angle and feels

their sorrow as deeply as their joy.

Every time someone asks me about “The Girl in the Window,” they ask how I was able to report this story and process all the emotions it evoked. I tell them, “There’s this photographer ... an artist with a writer’s eye ...” ■

*Lane DeGregory is a feature writer with the St. Petersburg Times in Florida. For “The Girl in the Window,” she was awarded the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing. Her feature writing was recognized with the 2009 Batten Medal from the American Society of News Editors.*

## The Camera—It’s Only the Starting Point to Change

‘So how does a global news organization such as The Associated Press get this technology working for us? In short, how do we train our photojournalists to use it?’

BY SANTIAGO LYON

Photojournalism is a remarkable mix of visual creativity and pictorial journalism—and, of course, technology. From the earliest efforts at permanent photography in the 1820’s, major developments in technology have shaped—and then reshaped—the ways in which photojournalists tell stories.

Relatively portable Speed Graphic cameras with their large and noisy flashbulbs allowed press photographers to document breaking news and work outside the studio. With the advent of 35mm cameras in the 1930’s, photographers could make images so quietly and quickly that they became “flies on the wall.” Advances in film sensitivity and “fast” lenses followed soon after and this meant that photographers could do their work in very low light and with no flash. Soon motor drives allowed multiple frames to be captured in sequence. Reliable autofocus began to appear for professional use around 1990—and was perfected a decade or so later—and negative scanners enabled film to be digitized and sent

via modem across phone lines and finally via the Internet.

In the mid-1990’s, digital photography emerged. Since then improvements in resolution have brought us to the point at which major magazines now rely exclusively on digital images with no real deterioration in quality from what they achieved with film.

By the end of 2008 what photojournalists could do with a single camera took a quantum leap forward with the emergence of an easy-to-carry profes-

sional grade DSLR camera capable of shooting HD video. Now they can shoot video in high definition and gather audio with the same camera they use to shoot stills. And this changes everything. Photojournalists who not so long ago were limited to the powerful but mute still image can now explore an expansive range of storytelling possibilities. With the sound and movement of video, they are able to transport viewers into stories using these additional sensory lures. And video, well shot and edited, can convey context and emotion that are not always possible in the still image.

Yet the power and significance of still images remain in this transition to the multimedia presentation of stories. In this new form of storytelling, the element that often makes them work well is the skillful integration of—and sometimes the preponderance of—still images. They are effectively used either as the means of shaping the narrative arc or as visual punctuation marks. Given the visual expectations of today’s



The Canon EOS 5D Mark II DSLR can take still images and high-definition video.

multimedia audiences, the hybrid camera is putting precisely the right tool in photojournalists' hands—providing the perfect intersection of technology and sensibility.

## Adding the How

So how does a global news organization such as The Associated Press (AP) get this technology working for us? In short, how do we train our photojournalists to use it?

It starts with a willingness to make a significant investment in the purchase of these new cameras. We spend \$2,500-\$4,000 per camera, depending on the model. Then we set up suitable in-house training to familiarize our photojournalists with the camera and some techniques to get them started. Our main objectives can be summarized as these: how to shoot video, how to edit video, and how to compress and deliver the stories to our clients.

Retraining photographers to shoot video can be more challenging than one imagines at first glance. New for them, for example, is the thought that now must go into sequencing and determining the length of the shot. We also teach them the importance of gathering different types of video so they will have the visual building blocks they'll undoubtedly wish they had once they reach the editing process.

Despite their amazing capacity, these new cameras are small and inconspicuous—the same size as professional SLR cameras already on the market. This, we are finding, works to the advantage of photojournalists since they are already trained to get close to their subjects in an effort to become invisible. What we've discovered is that the subjects of these video efforts are relaxed and frank. The intimacy of the single camera—and the sensibilities that seem to come to those who use it—has prepared photojournalists well. They are able to garner better results than when subjects are confronted by a three-person crew with a large video camera.

Since many of our photographers have not done a lot of in-depth inter-

views with their subjects (often they only elicit information needed to put their subjects at ease or for captions), we devote time to teaching them how to ask questions to elicit fuller responses that just “yes” or “no.”

Learning how to edit is hugely important and highly difficult. The key to successful editing starts before the editing process even begins. A large part of our training focuses on helping our photographers know the story they want to tell. This can require a whole new way of thinking—something they must have for reasons as simple as this: For every story they intend to tell, they will often be the one who must figure out and shoot what will become the video's opening and ending shots. We also teach about the value of cutaways as we explain—and demonstrate—how they are used to link elements of the story together.

Sound is vital—spoken and natural. So like radio journalists, for whom this skill resides at the top of their to-do list, our photojournalists will now be expected to give some thought to this element of their storytelling.

Compared to all of this learning about how they'll think about and do their jobs in the field, the technical requirements are easy to teach. Compressing video and delivering it to the newsroom require technical calculations to ensure a good balance between image quality and ease of transmission. And as they did with their photos, they send video via File Transfer Protocol.

## Experiencing the What

We've trained upward of 50 photographers and they're now on assignment throughout the world. Usually their day job is to shoot stills and to shoot video when and where they can, but occasionally we ask them to concentrate exclusively on video.

When they shoot video—and create multimedia stories—for The AP, generally we use what they produce in three ways:

- As B-roll for inclusion in our broadcast television products where

it will be mixed with other video from a variety of sources.

- As broadcast-style pieces for the Internet, usually one minute to one and a half minutes in length with an off-camera narrative voice. Still images are often included as visual punctuation in these stories.
- As long-form, protagonist-narrated stories, relying on natural sound when there is not a narrator's voice. Destined for the Web, these video essays sometimes work for broadcast use as well and they incorporate a lot of still images.

The video essays are the most time-consuming photographer-generated genre to produce but often can be the most effective. Because they escape the TV conventions of the narrator telling you what you are looking at, they represent a fresh approach to news coverage and literally transport the viewer into the story. Stories by two of our photographers, Julie Jacobson and Evan Vucci, illustrate how this happens. [On the following pages, read about their multimedia work.]

This new type of camera—and on-the-road editing software—is a significant game changer that will allow already excellent visual journalists to do their jobs even more effectively on select stories. It does not signify the end of still photography; this will remain a powerful medium. Rather it gives us the capacity to enhance and deepen viewers' understanding of the stories that we report on visually.

At a time when we are saturated with images—and when captions can easily be separated from the images they once accompanied, with the resulting confusion, it's reassuring to be able to use emerging technology to provide visual context. To know that we are doing this in innovative ways reminds us of the opportunity we have been given to create new paths to telling the stories that people have always wanted to be told. ■

*Santiago Lyon, a 2004 Nieman Fellow, is the director of photography at The Associated Press.*

## Crossing the Line: From Still to Video—to Both at the Same Time

By Julie Jacobson

“Video” was once a four-letter word to me. I’m a photographer, and the line in the sand was distinct: The still image was sacred to me, and I would never cross to the other side. But in 2005 I realized the industry was changing, and if I was to remain viable as a visual journalist, I had to become familiar with this apparently favored format of the future. With video training at The Associated Press (AP) and a Platypus Workshop, I discovered how much I enjoy being able to choose which format would best serve the story I was telling.

The line in the sand suddenly softened.

Since picking up a video camera three years ago for The AP, I have been fortunate enough to choose to shoot just video or just stills, but never both at the same time. But when I traveled to Afghanistan last summer, the story I was doing on opium addiction compelled me to attempt using both. Last year’s introduction of the Canon EOS 5D Mark II DSLR with HD video capabilities gave me some hope of success. Yet the idea of using frame grabs from the video was not a good option; I find them unreliable, especially in low-light conditions.

In Afghanistan, the process of storytelling became daunting. As any photographer knows, shooting stills and video simultaneously—and doing it well—is next to impossible. Whether attempting stills and video with one hybrid camera or with two separate cameras, the layers needed to capture the story are placed or pieced together differently. In a still photo, I am looking for the decisive moment, a suspended moment in time layered with the right light, composition and other contributing factors to tell the story in one frame. With video, one shoots these pieces separately as a sequence of actions and adds audio to carry the viewer from a beginning to an end. For a



An opium addict in Afghanistan offers a pipe to his grandson after having an early morning smoke. Photo by Julie Jacobson/The Associated Press.

still photo there is no beginning or end. It’s timeless. I may wait several minutes or hours for all the necessary elements to come together into one photo. When shooting video, I need those same minutes or hours to shoot multiple “images” or clips to string together into the same story.

So when trying to attempt both at the same time, I will compromise the quality of one or the other medium because I’m concentrating my efforts differently. If I stay and wait for the decisive moment for a single frame, then I end up neglecting to collect all the necessary clips for video. If I’m running around collecting clips for video, then I risk missing that specific moment for a strong still photo.

While I have yet to discover an ideal way to shoot stills and video simultaneously, this experience convinced me that with this camera it is possible to do it to a good degree of satisfaction. Of course, some stories are easier to execute in this way than others. Going through this trial by fire in Afghanistan I adopted these guidelines:

- Some moments should be captured in photographs only. With those,

be true to your photography and don’t worry about video.

- Remain as true to your photography while capturing video imagery. Make good “pictures” in your video.
- Some moments and events clearly call for video. But it isn’t possible to be everywhere and to get everything, so don’t try.
- When shooting stills and video, anticipate moments carefully. If they’re not there or time doesn’t permit, then make sure to be complete in shooting only one or both will suffer.

Now I approach more stories with the intent of using both stills and video. The line in the sand has almost vanished, and I find myself a more complete journalist. ■

*Julie Jacobson is a photographer with The Associated Press. Her video about opium addiction in Afghanistan is at <http://apphotocontests.ap.org/video/%20Opium%20Addiction2.mov>.*

📷 To view a slideshow, go to [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org).

## Gift of Training + Shift in Newsroom Thinking = Multimedia Storytelling



U.S. Army soldiers celebrate their return from Iraq last year at a bar in Killeen, Texas.  
*Photo by Evan Vucci/The Associated Press.*

### By Evan Vucci

The idea of photojournalists on assignment sending photos home now feels quaint. Instead we pitch story ideas, shoot stills and video, edit what we gather, and think about ways that our images can be used to tell stories across different platforms to reach different audiences. Success comes to those who actively engage with others in their newsrooms and embrace emerging technology in ways that enhance their storytelling abilities.

No surefire formula for doing this yet exists, and this means possibilities are limitless. Even for those of us employed by news organizations, embracing the entrepreneurial spirit is vital.

“Killer Blue: Baptized by Fire,” a multimedia project I worked on at The Associated Press (AP), blends video, audio and still photography in the service of telling in depth a poignant and powerful story. Those who come to this story hear the voices of soldiers from Blue Platoon who were among the last to serve a 15-month combat mission in Iraq when they returned home in 2009.

Meshing photographs and video with these soldiers’ recollections and the raw expression of their feelings enabled us to dig deeply inside of this platoon’s life in Iraq and at home.

I worked for about a year with a team at The AP to produce this package. Our efforts began with photo shoots and then we gathered video, audio and more photographs. We produced a 22-minute documentary, created a gallery of still images, and told the story in words. After we published it, a number of newspapers picked up our print/photo package and brought it to their audiences in print and online. News organizations such as MSNBC featured the documentary on their Web sites.

Publication of this project—online and in print—marked the first time at The AP that a small group of photographers had planned, shot and produced a piece of “visual impact” journalism created for multiple platforms. This happened because people there saw the possibilities existing at the intersection of digital technology and visual storytelling and set out to give photojournalists

(and others) the necessary training. But aside from technical training, The AP recognized the importance of reengaging its photographers in the newsroom’s flow. Newsroom leaders encouraged editorial staff, no matter what medium they most often worked in, to conceptualize stories with photographic, video and audio possibilities in mind.

Training in how to move what photojournalists do across all of the news organization’s platforms is critical. Now that we’ve been given this gift of technical know-how, it’s up to us to prove that the finest era of photojournalism lies ahead, awaiting our ingenuity and skill. ■

*Evan Vucci is a photographer with The Associated Press. Watch The AP documentary “Killer Blue: Baptized by Fire” at [http://hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/wdc/killer\\_blue](http://hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/wdc/killer_blue).*

📷 *To view a slideshow, go to [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org).*

# Being a Photojournalist Doesn't Equal Job Security

After taking a buyout, a longtime newspaper photographer thinks about her future direction in an industry where multimedia now rules and technological know-how is essential.

BY NURI VALLBONA

It's been 18 months since I took the buyout. I scribbled my signature at the bottom of the page and erased a job that I had loved for 15 years. Then I stood at the crossroads and asked myself "What the heck am I going to do now?"

I was among the lucky ones. I wanted to leave, so when word got out that a buyout was being offered, I raced to The Miami Herald. I wanted to be the first in line to take it. Nine months of sampling life as a single parent while my husband, Kelly, worked on his PhD in Texas was enough for me. It was time for us to be a family again.

With newspapers laying off journalists and freelance prospects slim, I knew my 30-year career as a photojournalist was threatened. During my last two years at the Herald, I'd watched my colleagues slowly being trained to shoot and edit video. By the time I left, my turn for training had not come up; this meant I was starting fresh with limited multimedia skills and many questions.

Should I invest in video and audio equipment with few newspapers hiring? And who would I find to teach me how to shoot? I've never been one of those you-can't-teach-an-old-dog-new-tricks kind of employee, but I am a slow learner. Acquiring new technological skills required a lot of patience. Kelly joked that I was "technologically impaired." How was I going to learn video without the help of the multimedia gurus at my former mother ship? The answer was closer to me than I could have imagined.

## Children Lead the Way

A few months later my 12-year-old son, Vicente, picked up my point-and-

shoot digital camera. He borrowed it so often that I finally surrendered it to him. Soon he was darting in and out of our apartment and snatching first my tripod and then my Macbook Pro. "I'm shooting video, mom!" he yelled at me one day as he raced out the door.

My camera shot video? I never knew that. I'd hated that camera and was only too happy to let him have it.

It wasn't long before I noticed Vicente was not only shooting videos but editing them, too. He and his pal Changhun would hover for hours over my Mac, and then presto—there would be a video with music, graphics and, at times, Flash animation. The boys formed a production company that they named The Daring Cheese Productions. Sometimes they composed musical scores for their epics using Garage Band, a computer program I never knew I owned. They were little tycoons making mini-movies and posting them on YouTube.

"Where did you learn how to do all of this?" I asked him.

"YouTube," he said. You can learn just about anything by watching a YouTube video—"How to knit left handed," "How to build a potato cannon," and "How to swing a golf club like Tiger Woods."

The mom in me was impressed and proud. At the same time, the photojournalist inside of me was feeling pretty depressed. With all the years I'd spent in visual media, how was it that 12-year-old children mastered new technology by just looking at it, while we adults struggled with it for months before we kind of, sort of, got it.

I felt like a staggering brontosaurus in an approaching Ice Age. As I shared my feelings with Kelly, he volunteered

to help. "I'll teach you how to shoot and edit," he said. During Kelly's TV news days, he'd occasionally shot and edited video.

"Later," I'd say half-enthused. "Another day."

I'm not sure why I resisted his generous offer, but a part of me was thinking "For what? Nobody's hiring!" Besides, I feared that if I invested time and energy into learning video, I would feel obligated to pursue it. I wanted to do something different. But what? Maybe I should consult YouTube.

## Figuring Out Where I'm Going

After all those years as a photojournalist, I began to realize that it wasn't the photography I now missed the most. It was the reporting. Even though video is a great way to tell a story, it's not the tool I want to use now. There is another factor in play: You can't shoot video from your desk or living room and I no longer want to be pulled away from my kids.

Becoming a multimedia journalist isn't going to work for me, as a parent, or even as a photojournalist. I hear my 52-year-old knees creak and groan every time I crouch down to get a better angle for a shot. I don't have the same stamina I once had and adrenaline will only carry me so far on the big story. I've seen the future and it doesn't involve me lugging around heavy gear.

So I'm trying to reinvent myself while not pulling up my journalistic roots. I am still not sure what I'll end up doing in my second career but I'm grateful that all this technology provides me with new opportunities that enable me to report and still meet

the school bus.

After I took the Herald's buyout, we moved to Texas to join Kelly. On a weekend getaway to Galveston, Kelly had a front-row seat to the mom-and-technology show that Vicente had watched (with some measure of humor) in Florida. As seals leaped out of the water, my daughter, Katchelle, asked me to shoot video with my new camera. I looked at it and squinted, trying to find the video icon. She reached over and turned the dial to the proper setting. "Hurry mom," she said.

I turned the camera vertically to better frame the seal that was leaping high in the air. Kelly immediately burst out laughing. "Uh, Nuri, you can't shoot verticals in video. Video doesn't do vertical." I hastily rotated the camera and kept shooting.

Maybe it's better that I've abandoned that ambition.

Recently when I was driving home from Dallas, I saw flashing lights ahead. Accident! The next exit was a quarter of a mile ahead but brake lights came first and soon all three lanes of I-35 came to a dead stop. After 10 minutes I got out of my car, walked up to an 18-wheeler, stood on my tiptoes, and called out "Hey, mister truck driver!" I needed answers.

"Car fire," he said.

Traveling without an iPhone or any other way of getting online, I called home and asked Kelly to check out Web sites for any news. Nada.

"Try Twitter," I suggested. He found a tweet asking if anyone knew what was tying up southbound I-35.

Just then the left lane started

moving and I caught a glimpse of the smoldering car. I called Kelly and asked him if he would post a tweet. "I-35 shut down in Williamson north of Austin. Southbound Walburg exit blocked. Car fire, get in the left lane."

I drove on with a sense of satisfaction that comes with delivering a scoop to the public. Oh, the possibilities. ■

*Nuri Vallbona, a 2001 Nieman Fellow, was a staff photographer at The Miami Herald. She was one of 35 Hispanic photographers commissioned by actor Edward James Olmos to work on "Americanos," a book that celebrates Hispanic life in America. Her photo essays have appeared in the Winter 2000, Summer 2004, Winter 2005, and Fall 2006 issues of Nieman Reports.*

## Recognizing the Special Value of Still Photos in a Video World

When I started working on a documentary piece about teen violence for The Miami Herald, Arleen White, the mother of a murdered child, called me and asked me to attend a court hearing where her son's murderer was to take a plea bargain.

"He may be getting out," said a tearful White. The reporter and videographer were out of town working on other projects so the storytelling was left to me and my still camera.

The hearing turned out to be a very dramatic event with White condemning her son's killer and chastising the court system for failing her family. Then she fainted at the podium when her son's killer accepted a plea deal that would release him from prison. He had served only four and a half years.

Videographer Candace Barbot incorporated my still images into her video to complete the story. In doing this, she said, "I've come to understand that a still photo does something that video can never do and that is that it allows us to peer into the eyes and soul of the subject in a very different way. We can linger



Arleen White reacts after the judge accepted a plea of manslaughter in connection with the murder of her 15-year-old son. Photo by Nuri Vallbona/The Miami Herald.

more on it whereas video is always moving."

In addition to running in the print edition, the story and photos were posted online along with a slideshow and video. "It's all adding value whether it's a still image or a moving picture image. If they're

both powerful, then they both carry the story," said Barbot. ■  
—Nuri Vallbona

Watch the video about teen violence at [http://homepage.mac.com/candace.barbot/filechute/TeenViolence\\_NPPA.mov](http://homepage.mac.com/candace.barbot/filechute/TeenViolence_NPPA.mov).

## The Still Photograph: Embedding Images in Our Mind

With his large-scale images, Edward Burtynsky seeks to ‘bring viewers to that point where they begin to grapple with their own consciousness about being in that space.’

*The film “Manufactured Landscapes” tells the story of Edward Burtynsky’s large-scale photographic exploration of the materials and debris used in industrial endeavors. By following him to quarries, recycling yards, factories, mines and dams, the film shows how he used his camera to transform intrusions into the natural environment into forms of artistic expression. In 2009, “Edward Burtynsky: Oil,” his book and photo exhibit that was a decade in the making, offered visual documentation of how the extraction of oil and its use affects our landscape and our lives. In a 2007 interview with Treehugger.com, Burtynsky talked about the still photograph, its artistic expression, and how he uses the visual images he captures to draw people’s attention to environmental degradation. An edited excerpt from the interview follows:*

**I**n doing still photography, the same subject may look horrible at noon, but it could be magical at eight. So it’s an understanding about where to be, when, how to translate it, to see potential, even when I’m witnessing it at a point where there is no potential. To be able to look beyond. It’s sort of like going into an apartment, and it’s a real fixer-upper. You can see its potential, but most people walk out because they go, “That’s too much.”

I just begin to figure out, “What can I draw out of that to create a compelling image that brings us to that place?” So that we don’t avert our eyes, but we get drawn into that place. Once a person is drawn into the place of the content of these images, it forces that person into this kind of forbidden pleasure: “I’m enjoying being in there, but there’s something



This image of the SOCAR oil fields in Baku, Azerbaijan appears in the book “Edward Burtynsky: Oil.” Photo by Edward Burtynsky.

wrong here. Why am I enjoying this? I shouldn’t be. This isn’t good. This is a wasteland.” Or “this is a dump” or “a consequence of our badness,” or whatever. It’s an interesting thing to do—to bring viewers to that point where they begin to grapple with their own consciousness about being in that space.

Twenty-five years ago, when I started doing this, nobody was paying much attention. In the last five or 10 years the world has met up with some of the ideas I’ve been grappling with in my work. It isn’t like I hopped onto a wagon because everybody’s hopping on.

I’ve been traveling through the desert of wastelands for a long time trying to create this compendium and body of work that somehow is describing another aspect of it.

What is uplifting is that this work is now having an effect. People are beginning to understand and pick up where the environmental movement failed—with a sustainability movement that includes government and corporate practice, along with environmentalists and citizens. It kind of says, “We’re all in this.”

When I look in the history of photography, I find examples of this from

earlier times: Carleton E. Watkins and his photographs of the West led to the preservation of Yellowstone, and the national park system grew out of that. Ansel Adams added to that with his work in Yosemite and through the Sierra Club, expanding the preservation of natural worlds. And Lewis Hine in his photographs of child labor; his visual evidence of wrongdoing brought child labor laws into play.

Still images are used as the iconographic representations of issues we need to grapple with in our times. In our consciousness, they function differently than film does. Images lock on. If we think of the Vietnam War, there was TV coverage of it, but it's the still images—the girl running from the napalm, the photograph of the man being shot in the street. Four or five iconographic images define that war;

they are what speak to us about the problems with that war.

Still photographs allow that kind of fragment to become embedded into our memory. If we think of our own lives, photographs work that way too. Try to remember yourself at five and you might have some vague memories. But if somebody took a photograph of you at five, then you probably can even remember the clothes that you were wearing and the house and the layout and the kind of tile floors and your favorite food when you were five. That photograph allows you to do that. Without it, it would be very hard to get back to that place in your mind.

So photographs become part of our history and part of our way of remembering what has passed by. They are interesting and powerful tools to remind us where we come from, the things we do and values we uphold.

They embed a lot of these things within them, and that is part of why I like photographs. They hold that potential.

Now with digital media a lot of people in the art world are moving into the staged image; Photoshop creates the image. It remains to be seen how the general public will embrace this new period of photography in which they can't rely on the photograph to actually be a place in the world. Again, it depends on who the viewer is; there's a complex connection between viewing images and their relationship to truth. ■

*To read Burtynsky's complete interview go to [www.treehugger.com/files/2007/06/ed\\_burtynsky\\_an.php](http://www.treehugger.com/files/2007/06/ed_burtynsky_an.php).*

 *To view a slideshow, go to [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org).*

## A New Focus: Adjusting to Viewers' Increasing Sophistication About Images

In an age when visual literacy is common, photojournalists may need to bring fresh sensibilities to their work.

BY JÖRG M. COLBERG

**A**fter more than 50 years of photojournalism—using mostly black and white images, sometimes blurry, sometimes crooked—it is time to realize that this visual tool has become blunt. Perhaps this is why those who judge news photography awards say things like “it feels like we're seeing the same picture again and again.”

Last year Stephen Mayes, a judge during much of the last decade for the World Press Photo awards, observed that most of the more than 400,000 images he had seen in the annual contest during the past decade “reflect a form of photojournalism that is now

more romantic than functional.” His overwhelming impression, he went on to say, is “that photojournalism—as a format for interpreting the world—is trying to be relevant by copying itself rather than by observing the world.” [An archive of World Press Photo winners is at [www.archive.worldpressphoto.org](http://www.archive.worldpressphoto.org) and Mayes's article is on page 58.]

At a time when many photojournalists are remaking their lives to fit their work into changing business models, it is difficult to raise the topic of how much their visual language also needs to change. Yet, to my mind—as a critic and curator who deals mostly

with fine art photography—these two challenges are intertwined. Success will probably not happen in one unless progress is made in the other. No longer can photojournalists afford to rely on clichés, exemplified by predictable poses of weeping mothers and of starving children staring off into the distance, of soldiers cradling their fallen companions, or the countless others each of us can bring to mind. It is important to realize that each of these stories is still in need of telling, but the hoped-for connection between journalist and viewer is not likely to happen anymore in conventional ways.

In fine art photography, the pace

of adaptation to a world dominated by images has been quicker, with boundaries being tested and expanded through ubiquitous experimentation. While I am under no illusion that fine art photography can be—or should be—a constructive model for photojournalism, its practitioners have firmly grasped the notion that those who view their work do so with heightened levels of visual literacy. Fashion photographers, for example, borrow from imagery outside of their realm. In doing so they often provoke attention—and garner their share of criticism—as they go for the taboo; some have gone so far as to stage waterboarding. Yet pushing at the edge, as they do, would not work if viewers were not already familiar with such images and with their embedded meta-narratives.

In our time the boundaries between the fine arts and photojournalism (or documentary photography) have become fuzzy. Increased visual literacy accounts for some of this, as fine art book publishers along with fine art museum and gallery directors seek out the work of photojournalists, such as those who've been in the war zones of Iraq and Afghanistan, to bring their images to new audiences—or maybe to an audience not being reached by newspapers any longer. And a younger generation of photojournalists, including photographers such as Mikhael Subotzky, Peter van Agtmael, Jonathan Torgovnik, and Jonas Bendixsen, are using an imagery that does not look all that different from the work being produced by fine art photographers.

Added to all of this is the explosion in the number of images being sent and shared, tagged and touted. Clearly the Web is revolutionizing visual communication. Anyone with a mobile phone or computer has access to every kind of image imaginable. All



With imagery resembling fine art photography, Jonathan Torgovnik portrays a Rwandan family, in which one daughter was conceived through rape. *Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik ©.*

of this demands new skills as people struggle to quickly absorb a deluge of images. Similarly, digital media require us to reassess the manipulative power of imagery, whether it's being used to sell us something or provoke us to act.

With the viewer's cultivation of a suspicious eye and digital media tools that make it easier to manipulate images comes an increasing number of questions. Sometimes the manipulation of an image is clearly unethical; other instances merely underscore the realization that what images represent for us today is not the same as it was 50 years ago.

In effect, the problem of image manipulation is not the central one, given that photographs have always been manipulated: Strictly speaking, making choices about how to take a photograph is a manipulation—as are various commonly accepted post-processing steps (adjusting contrasts, cropping, etc.). The real problem is that at a time when viewers are able to read images quickly and astutely, they are dealing with media whose credibility has eroded considerably.

When trust in those who deliver news diminishes and knowledge about what can be done with photographs spreads—thanks to computers and digital cameras—the expectation that photos have been manipulated increases. Given these circumstances, viewers have plenty of reasons to question the photojournalism that they find in newspapers, magazines and on the Web.

Additionally, as front-line photojournalism reaches viewers, what seems familiar will simply be overlooked or ignored while what is unpredictable—what does not make an obvious attempt to seduce us—will leap out to catch the eye and engage the mind. As viewers find images using an old formula to try to provoke

an emotional response, their impulse is to block the attempt and move on. Unless photojournalists find fresh ways to convey what they are seeing, their work won't reach audiences.

This is where the intersection with changing business models happens. With fewer mainstream media publications able (or willing) to support the efforts of photojournalists, new ways to fund such work must be created. It would be disastrous to view this as only a business or aesthetic problem. What photojournalists do is critical in our democracy, which after all relies on an informed citizenry. Photojournalists have to adapt their visual sensibilities to the literacy level of their audience and they ignore this necessity at their peril. For our democracy, their failure to adjust will have a profound impact on our collective peril. ■

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# The Fluidity of the Frame and Caption

When keywords become invisible captions and cameras increasingly do what darkrooms once did, how photojournalists approach their job changes.

BY VENKAT SRINIVASAN

Consider a familiar frame: Robert Frank's "Trolley—New Orleans" photograph, which is also on the cover of the most recent edition of his book, "The Americans." In this 1955 photograph a row of passengers sit in a trolley car on Bourbon Street—a white man, white woman, two white children, a black man, and a black woman. With its frame, it is, at once, a representation of the politics of sex and race at that time.

Many things make a photograph memorable—frame, caption, context and light, to name a few. But how is a photograph's meaning derived, especially with the easy availability of tools to tweak each of those factors? This is the story of photography, technology and the aesthetics of an image in a digital age.

Captions have long been used in photojournalism to point to or break news of the event, whether it's a political uprising or war, football game, or a celebrity's wedding. Captions provide context to make sense of the visual observation. That's been the rule: A photograph must carry with it a detailed caption, even if its words do nothing more than plainly describe what the photograph shows. But a captionless or sparsely captioned photograph, removed from the original context and formed from a set of observations, comments on society—a kind of meta-news.

In his detailed analysis on his New York Times blog, Errol Morris writes that "a captionless photograph, stripped of all context, is virtually meaningless." But, as Susan Sontag observed, the caption can also be the director of emotion, most easily exploited during wars as propaganda. She described one such instance in her

2003 book, "Regarding the Pain of Others," in a reference to the Balkan war in the early 1990's. "[The] same photographs of children killed in the shelling of a village were passed around at both Serb and Croat propaganda briefings," she noted.

With captions, photographs are tied to the details of the news story. With sparse captions like "Trolley—New Orleans," a photograph can speak to larger realities and draw connections—in the mind of each viewer—across time and events. Henri Cartier-Bresson felt that "to take photographs means to recognize—simultaneously and within a fraction of a second—both the fact itself and the rigorous organization of visually perceived forms that give it meaning. It is putting one's head, one's eye, and one's heart on the same axis."

The photograph he took in 1952 of Michel Gabriel on Rue Mouffetard in Paris—of a boy smiling and looking away as he walks around the corner—exemplifies this idea. Photography, he also observed, is "a way of shouting, of freeing oneself, not of proving or asserting one's own originality. It is a way of life." Cartier-Bresson spoke of prowling the streets with his camera, ready to trap life. In this photograph, a boy, perhaps 10 years old, his hair disheveled and a loosened belt around his shorts, cradling two bottles of wine (we think) portrays life with an air of triumph, glee and freedom.

Robert Capa once photographed a blond-haired kid, perhaps eight years old, sitting atop a tank in Paris just after the city's liberation in August 1944. Dressed in a small jacket and shorts, the boy sits assured, staring down at the camera from the corner of his eye, his right palm on his shin like an heir to the throne and his mouth

giving a hint of scorn and a smile. His left index finger probes his nose.

In her 1977 book, "On Photography," Sontag wrote, "After the event has ended, the picture will still exist, conferring on the event a kind of immortality (and importance) it would never otherwise have enjoyed." Her words could just as well apply to these two images.

## Images Without Words

Today, another kind of captionless photograph abounds. The reasons are understandable: a pressing need for attention-grabbing art and not enough money to hire a photojournalist or commission fresh art.

On stock photography Web sites such as iStockphoto.com, keywords navigate the search for images. Such marketplaces give rise to photojournalism's new caption—the keyword. Take the photograph of a blank yellow street sign along an empty highway. Instead of a single caption, it's accompanied by about 50 keywords, including "blank," "loneliness" and "empty." This photo accompanied an October 2009 New York Times story by Benedict Carey about research that illustrates how absurd details and nonsense can help the brain look for patterns. This image replaced the illustrative art that would likely have been used in a previous era.

Stock images are free agents, frames without anchors. The same image can be used for multiple stories, each with a potentially different message. If a story advocates offshore drilling, a photo of an oil rig indicates hope. Switch to global warming and the identical photograph signals fear. A frame with tags finds multiple homes and varied contexts and, what the photographer

found in creating the image isn't necessarily part of any of them.

Yet the frame provides a way of seeing and defining. In an Emirates Airlines TV spot that played in India in the late 1990's, the screen would freeze as a finger—acting as a frame—drew rectangles around items like a limousine waiting for its passenger. Their message: We take care of the details involved in traveling. Framing for a photographer can be a delicate, even accidental art. The camera sees what one wishes it to see, even with filters, darkrooms and software. As a 1976 Minolta advertisement proclaimed, "When you are the camera and the camera is you."

## Cameras Everywhere

Photography stands out among art forms for being both instantaneous and accessible. What is routine to a subject can often be new to the photographer, and therefore to the viewer. In the late 19th century, photography was the privilege of a few; today, images are produced by an astonishing array of instruments: the security camera at the bank, the iPhone in the hands of a teenager at a rock concert, the pinhole camera in a collector's home, the photojournalist's Canon EOS 5D Mark II DSLR transmitting home raw photographs of a dying soldier.

A camera is as much a part of an American household as the radio was in the 1940's. In 2009 the Nobel committee recognized its proliferation when it gave the Nobel Prize in Physics to three scientists who researched the conversion of light to electric signals, investigated fiber optics, and invented semiconductor sensors, all of which are part of digital photography.

In composing a shot, photographers decide what material to leave out and what to include. Editing by selection, using composition or photo selection as deciders, or by correction, using software and darkroom techniques, are two sides of the "truth" game.

Photography technology is on the verge of further blurring the lines between photographing and post-

processing. In August 2009 Stanford University scientists announced the development of the Frankencamera, described as the first open source camera through which users one day will be able to perform many Photoshop-like functions. The Stanford team, led by computer science professor Mark Levoy, is conducting research that could make possible the stitching together of multiple images within the camera. The fixed full frame could become a moving target.

Another moving target is lighting. Today the brightness and exposure of a digital photograph can be post-processed on a computer using widely available software. High-dynamic-range photographs—those that show a large range of lighting in a single image—are now composed of multiple images at different exposures. With their research on fine-tuning brightness and contrast while photographing, Levoy and his students are questioning the need for such post-processing.

The Frankencamera aspires to become the palm-sized memory card plus darkroom. And when that happens, the meaning of the frame, the photographer, and the editor will be redefined.

## Revisiting Frank's 'Trolley'

Consider Frank's frame of the trolley again. Consider also the words commonly used to describe the act of photography: shoot, take, click, capture, trap, snap, make, film, photograph, document and record. Frank's photograph wasn't tied to a news story nor was it descriptively captioned or labeled with keywords (trolley, New Orleans, Bourbon Street, 1955, discrimination, race, gender, black, white). It isn't what Frank called "those god-damned stories with a beginning and an end." By a confluence of frame and context, this photograph continues to resonate.

While this photograph isn't news, as journalists understand it, it's news that matters in other ways, serving as a document of record gleaned from observation and experience. "There is one thing the photograph

must contain, the humanity of the moment," Frank said in a 1961 issue of *Aperture* magazine. "Realism is not enough—there has to be vision, and the two together can make a good photograph. It is difficult to describe this thin line where matter ends and mind begins."

To photograph is also to meditate on the frame long after it is gone. In years past, National Geographic would dedicate a page to a photograph that its editors picked out from a bunch taken by photographers on their assignments. It would be a picture that they thought didn't fit with the article, but shouldn't be missed. In December 2003, they chose one by Pablo Corral Vega. The article about Argentine tango was the story of a reprieve and melancholic respite for a passionate but economically ravaged nation.

The photograph shows a dimly lit ballroom with a lone couple in the dance arena. Carlos Gavito, a tango virtuoso, stands with his hands on his side, leaning slightly toward his partner, Mariana Dragone. His nose brushes past her right cheek, as she smudges her face on his. She tilts her body as far as it would take her leaning on him, a measure of balance and trust. Her hands sway back in abandon and their eyes are shut. The editor observed that the image had a quiet intensity.

Time and again some forms of photojournalism stretch to capture an idea more than the truth. It's part vanity and part, the essence of photojournalism. "This is the world," such photographs seem to say. "This is the story." ■

*Venkat Srinivasan is a freelance journalist and amateur photographer who is working on a photo essay exploring how the flag is used in the United States. His photographs—with keywords—can be found through [www.lightstalkers.org/venkat-srinivasan](http://www.lightstalkers.org/venkat-srinivasan).*

## What Crisis?

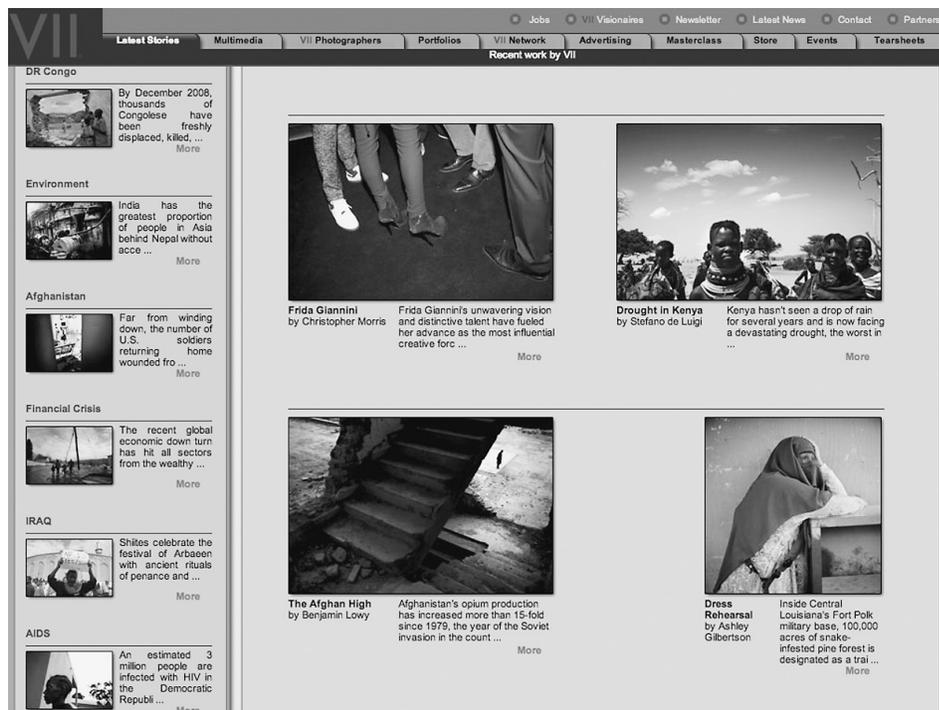
‘It’s not about finding new ways to do old things, but time to radically rethink our business models by redefining our products, our partners, and our clients.’

BY STEPHEN MAYES

There is talk about a crisis in journalism, which generally takes the form of angst-ridden journalists, editors and news folk in general asking, “How do we maintain the commercial status quo without which journalism as we know it will be gone?” The question is sincere and extends beyond the fear of losing jobs; there is a genuine concern that the investigative and informative roles of the news media will be lost with a high cost to the civic health of our society.

Interestingly, it’s not a question that I have heard asked by many consumers of news who are finding all the information they want in the online environment—and more. For those of us in journalism, we’re asking it way too late, since a crisis of news communication has been with us for many years, if not decades. From where I sit—as director of VII Photo Agency, a small agency founded in 2001 by leading photojournalists—this digital shakedown offers an opportunity to correct some of the deep problems that have bedeviled the business of print journalism—and gone unchallenged—for too long.

“We don’t know who discovered water, but we know it wasn’t the fish,” said Marshall McLuhan, and so it is with the media. Those who have been totally immersed in news for so long are among the last to discover the true attributes of our medium and it’s taking a major shock to force a reluctant review of what it is we think we’re doing. Far from a crisis, I see this as a major opportunity to redefine journalism with clarity and force as we move into the new millennium. New horizons are opening and rather



VII uses its Web site to display photographers’ stories at a time when the photo agency is “transitioning from being a mere supplier to being a producer and increasingly acting as its own publisher.”

than look backward in fear we should be looking forward with excitement.

At this point, most discussion accepts that the Internet expands the opportunities for distribution but frets that there is no commercial model to support it. Talk turns to advertising revenues and hope resides on pay walls or subscriptions to restore the balance of readers paying market value for the information they consume. This is, however, a misguided discussion because it overlooks the many fundamental changes in the economics of publishing that have demolished the old structures so completely that

we need to think in different terms about our product, its value, and how to monetize it.

The digital revolution is a paradigm shift, not so different from the invention of the printing press, which took exclusive hand-drawn parchments and made the information infinitely available. So it is in the 21st century that the finite resources of print distribution have been ripped apart in favor of the infinite distribution of the Web. It’s missing the point to anguish about the market value of scribes; instead we should be questioning the nature of information and its relationship to

## Too Many Similar Images, Too Much Left Unexplored

*In May 2009, Stephen Mayes spoke at the World Press Photo awards ceremony in Amsterdam. He had served as secretary of the jury for the awards from 2004 to 2009, and his observations about photo judging led to much discussion among photo-journalists. Here are some excerpts:*

The overwhelming impression from the vast volume of images is that photojournalism (as a format for interpreting the world) is trying to be relevant by copying itself rather than by observing the world. Nowhere is this more obvious than at World Press Photo where every year the winners stimulate a slew of copyists (in style and content). It's easy to understand why when we consider that the last 20 years has seen an explosion in the numbers of professional photojournalists and a collapse

of the traditional markets. As more photographers compete for less page space, a lot of work ends up in competitions as the only outlet—and as the largest, World Press Photo gets more than its fair share.

Every year, the jury is astonished by the repetition of subjects and the lack of variety in the coverage. From the infinity of human experience the list of subjects covered by the entrants would fill a single page, and (excluding sports as a specialist area) could be reduced even to three lines:

- The dispossessed and the powerless
- The exotic
- Anywhere but home (the American election would be one of the exceptions to this rule).

This is the general view, the blurred impression of 470,214 images and of

course there are many exceptions. But meanwhile hospitals and the sick (and especially mental hospitals), the afflicted, the poor, the injured are photographed way in excess of their actual numbers. And I have a feeling that there are as many photographers as drug users in Kabul's Russian House. As one juror said this year, "Ninety percent of the pictures are about 10 percent of the world."

Overrepresented: commercial sex, suffering black folk, Muslim women in veils, same sex couples kissing, holding hands.

Underrepresented: middle class, affluent drug users, real sex, personal sex, black culture and expanded vision of black life outside Africa. ■

*Listen to his entire talk at <http://lensculture.com/stephen-mayes.html>.*

those who consume it. We can take comfort in the historical precedent that more money has been made from print than was made from scribing, and so it will be with the Internet.

Once we understand the nature of our product in the digital environment, opportunities will open up as never before.

### A Happy Goodbye

I have long had a problem with the old-style editorial market that has consistently underpaid its suppliers, overcharged its advertisers, and given short shrift to its consumers with its restricted content agenda and formulaic presentation styles. I don't miss the coercive practices and the hours of argument over rights-grabbing contracts offset by derisory day rates and nonexistent expenses. Goodbye to all that.

Gone is our former dependence on the powerful elite who controlled the

vast infrastructure of print production and distribution. The artificial economy of supply and demand not only kept fees unrealistically low but also restricted the information available to readers. Ideological and economic powers maintained a stranglehold on what was considered news and only those who bought into this agenda of controlled information were allowed access to the channels of communication. And all too often the credential for entry into this exclusive club was the endless rehashing of tired stories, lazy worldviews, and haughty perspectives.

Now is the time for reinvention.

With the newly emerging Internet tools and increasingly diverse and sophisticated online audiences the opportunities are multiplying as we seek to harness our skills to serve a richer communication mission and to generate more revenue. It's a moment of great optimism and opportunity for those with ambition and imagination to go beyond what we have known

before. While I share the pain being felt by the many individuals and small organizations that are struggling, I don't have the same sympathy for the organizations that have treated photo suppliers with disdain for so many years. And for those individuals and small organizations that find themselves out in the cold, if we think we have something to offer now is the time to prove it.

For the first time in many years, being small is an asset. We keep hearing that the tested revenue models no longer work for publishers, and that's true. The bigger you are, the greater your infrastructure and the more you have to sustain while at the same time your ability to adapt is limited. Fixed costs of staff, property and production are overwhelming and legacy contracts are stifling. Investors demand that the big grow bigger at a time when maybe there's greater profit in smaller operations. At a time when flexibility, adaptability and experimentation are

the cornerstones of our business, the smaller we are the bigger our opportunities.

Now is the time to think different.

Consider the monkey trap in which a delicious nut is placed at the bottom of a jar waiting for a hungry monkey to grab it. But the monkey's clenched fist wrapped around the nut is trapped by the neck of the jar. And here we are, focused on short-term solutions to yesterday's problems, fixated on the things that used to feed us, desperately trapped by our need to eat as we hang on to a tried and tested formula for survival. And so we starve.

Let go. Move on. All the things that we think will sustain us are killing us. And yet our work still has value, and maybe even greater value in the new environment than in the old. It's not about finding new ways to do old things, but time to radically rethink our business models by redefining our products, our partners, and our clients. We come from a world that was relatively simple where our product was easily defined—image licenses in various forms—and our relationship to clients was clearly understood as a humble supplier, financed in the largest part by one simple model of advertising-funded publishing.

## Redefining What We Do

Fundamental to change is the redefinition of our product. Historically, intellectual property of all kinds has been sold in units to those who consume it or more often to intermediaries who have profited from packaging and distributing it. Those units have been fees for days worked or licenses measured per use of existing material. Today we are experiencing the pain of oversupply in a saturated market—there is just too much information out there and adding another photograph to the ocean of content doesn't increase value, it further dilutes it.

Yet the value of intelligent photojournalism is still with us. Rather than

struggle to survive on the diminishing prices of licensed units, I have recalibrated my mind to a new way of thinking. I no longer see VII as a traditional photo agency that supplies images in response to someone else's demand but rather as a powerhouse of integrity and believability; those attributes are what I see as our true product and our value.

In a world where so much information is of uncertain origin or is otherwise unbelievable, believability

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**Let go. Move on. All the things that we think will sustain us are killing us. And yet our work still has value, and maybe even greater value in the new environment than in the old.**

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becomes a highly valuable asset. It's true that not everyone cares where their information comes from and many search merely to affirm their existing beliefs, but there are enough people in this big wide world who do care to make this a desirable product with real commercial value. And in redefining the product and the value system I find that there is already a market with cash to spend on something they want to believe in.

Just as it's necessary to redefine our product, it is also important to redefine our relationship to the marketplace when it is no longer relevant to think of us being in a simplistic two-way relationship as suppliers to clients.

One of the exciting aspects of business in the 21st century is the more complex mix of components with expanded opportunities for distribution and funding. Instead of clients I look for partners, often more than one. Instead of fees, I look for shared investment with open-ended (and hopefully extended) returns. Most importantly, in a world that is awash with too much information and too

many images, I am moving away from licensing images with ever-diminishing fees. Instead, I am starting to monetize other attributes.

For VII Photo, our most valuable asset is integrity—the credibility of the photojournalists who own the agency, for which I find a growing list of interested partners. Certainly the magazines are still in the mix, but now they are seen more as print distribution partners than as exclusive clients, with additional distribution through TV and online partners. And this arrangement is often cofunded by another party and supported separately by technology partners. The lineup shifts for each project, and as each new partner comes on board the opportunities to do interesting work and to generate income multiply.

Now is the time when VII is transitioning from being a mere supplier to being a producer and increasingly acting as its own publisher.

Fixating on the money photojournalists can generate from old-style transactions is a losing cause. It steals from us the energy that we can use getting busy reinventing the very nature of the product that we are handling. As we do this, the process will allow new values to emerge and a new economy to grow. It is a huge challenge and a fantastic opportunity which embraces all areas of professional journalism as well as citizen journalism, blogging, tweeting and instant, infinite distribution. Some of the key words and concepts that demand interrogation as we act include information, editing, curation, integrity, believability, distribution, journalist, reader and indeed news.

How each of us meets these challenges becomes personal. We can no longer hide behind the failings of the top-down institutions that have controlled information. Now, the future rests in our hands. ■

*Stephen Mayes is director of VII Photo Agency.*

# Music Lessons Inform Photojournalism's Future

'The record business died as the digital music business was born. Photojournalism finds itself at a similar juncture now.'

BY IAN GINSBERG

**P**hotojournalism finds itself in a cauldron of change. Keep moving must be our mantra, for to stand still in this business today is to die.

I worked in the music business for a decade—at Sony Music, its Columbia and Epic record labels, and as an artist manager with such clients as Lenny Kravitz—before joining the business side of VII Photo Agency last September. As the music industry underwent a major upheaval, executives tried to hang on to the old business model, managing to alienate customers, artists and distributors all at once. Some in the industry realized that they either had to adapt to the digital business environment or die.

Record company executives realized too late that they had been in the plastics business all along, producing the containers in which music had been sold: 45s, LPs, cassette tapes, CDs. Their product was actually little more than packaging and promotion. Now music didn't need their packaging—or their promotion. Art existed as art. Record labels were no longer the only game in town. Competition for what they packaged arose everywhere—from concert promoters like Live Nation to artists who no longer wanted to or needed to cede control of their work to anyone. The record business died as the digital music business was born.

Photojournalism finds itself at a similar juncture now. That's why I'm at VII—to bring to the table what I learned from the music industry's transition as we figure out how to meet the challenges—and seize the opportunities—of a rapidly changing environment. Here are a few hints I've already passed along:

- Grab opportunities to develop relationships with consumers.

- Embrace the business-to-consumer model.
- Interact with consumers. Ask them what they think and want.
- Give it to them.

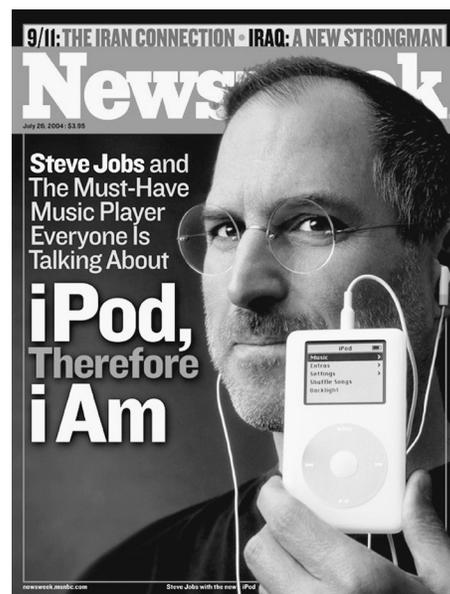
Photojournalism has plenty it can learn from the music industry's mistakes:

- Don't sue your consumers.
- Don't ignore what they're telling you.
- Don't underestimate their power and influence.
- Don't try to force an unwanted product down their throats.
- Don't lose sight of the value of people who care so much about your content that they spend energy finding it for free and sharing it with their friends.
- And don't wait too long!

## The Value of Partnership

So what happens next to photojournalism? There is no panacea, only an amalgam of opportunities.

At VII, when a project idea surfaces—whether from one of our photographers, someone on staff, or a potential partner or former client—our wheels start turning. Our first thought is not necessarily about which magazine will publish the photographs; instead we are more likely to seek out partners, possibly a nongovernmental organization, maybe a corporation. We think about a range of media where the story might be told—from Web sites to TV. Connections from my music industry days come in handy when we decide to reach out to theater companies, video game developers, and music entrepreneurs. Most gratifying has been the positive reception we're



Apple's iPod, shown on this July 26, 2004 Newsweek cover, helped to transition music sales to an online marketplace.

finding to collaborative ideas that don't have much of a track record.

The take-away lesson for me is this: There is a market; it's just not the same store.

Print publications are unlikely to disappear, given the devotion of those who enjoy the sensory experience—the feel of flipping a page, the smell and sound, or just the act of buying a magazine at the corner newsstand or hearing the thud of the morning newspaper as it arrives in their driveway. They will pay for this experience and advertisers will pay to market to them. Print publications have been our clients for a very long time and they will continue to be so.

It's also likely that we will be working with newspaper and magazine publishers in new ways. For example, VII is collaborating with a Danish company, Revolt Communications, to develop a proprietary technology called VII

Player. Once up and running, this player will enable our photojournalists to be publishers in their own right and work as true business partners with those who distribute their work. The VII Player will bring our agency revenue from affiliate deals and advertising.

Once VII's photographers create multimedia content—and this player will offer them easy-to-use editing tools while they are on assignment—our business partners will work on distributing it to customers. And when customers then click on these images, they'll be taken to other related content and products, such as books and prints, which are sold by VII. With this player—which is really “a site within a site” offering connections to the business world—VII can explore ways of establishing corporate sponsorships and affiliate marketing packages as well as selling advertising space.

## Marketing Visual Media

For photojournalists to do what they do—often in faraway places, for long stretches of time, and with an abun-

dance of danger—they need financial support. Yet the digital marketplace doesn't lend itself to this. Digital consumers expect and want to get news and information, including visual storytelling, for free. Is building pay walls a viable business strategy? The debate rages on. On places like YouTube and Facebook people (estimated at 400 million) are building their own distribution networks and becoming their own network executives. People publish photographs and direct traffic to them.

With what's already happening online, the pieces may be in place to create an early adopters program in which incentives and rewards are offered to users who share professional content.

Marketers are constantly looking for new ways to deliver messages and create brand awareness. In his keynote address at ad:tech in November, Sir Martin Sorrell, CEO of WPP, one of the world's largest communication services and advertising companies, spoke about the blurring of lines between editorial and advertising. Given that

it's advertisers who pay for pages to exist in newspapers and magazines, is it more of a conflict if photojournalists work with them directly? It could be if images get used in deceptive ways, for example, or are cropped in ways that don't consider the photographer's perspective and intent. But when the photographer is made a genuine partner, the likelihood of this lessens.

Key to our success will be remembering that our business is journalism—the stories and the photographs (accompanied now by audio and video) we produce—and not the newspapers and magazines in which much of our work once appeared. It's time to think creatively and deeply—perhaps together as an industry, more likely on our own—about ways to foster innovation, continue what is worth keeping, and marry the two in fresh forms on new platforms. Along the way we hope we find business strategies to support our ambitions. ■

*Ian Ginsberg is the director of projects and partnerships at VII Photo Agency.*

## Demotix: Inventing a New Marketplace

Photographers—amateur and professional—send their images to this Web site and split the fee if they are sold for publication.

BY TURI MUNTHE

**D**emotix would not exist in a different time or place. We're digital, ultra 2.0, collective, collaborative and our purpose derives from forces, economic and otherwise, that are revolutionizing the news media and photojournalism in particular.

We launched in January 2009 with the aim to become The Associated Press (AP) of freelancers—only bigger, quicker, deeper, broader, more local and more global, and a lot more democratic. Our name derives from the Greek words demos (people) and demotic (of the people). Demotix is a

place where anybody from anywhere can share their stories with people throughout the world—and with the global mainstream media.

Our idea was simple: to create a virtuous circle providing a refuge for free speech, a safe harbor for correspondents, whomever and wherever they might be, and, in turn, give them access to the eyes, ears and purse strings of news organizations where editors are willing to pay for the stories they have to tell.

As economic pressures bear down on traditional news organizations—and

the global reach of their newsgathering capacity diminishes—our network of 3,000 regular contributors (12,000 in all from 173 countries) are on the ground when news happens. It's the very opposite of “parachute journalism.” Instead of having a correspondent arrive from outside to tell the story, Demotix's correspondents report from the inside, from home.

### 'Street Journalism'

After we launched, people attacked us for cheapening journalism. By enabling

anyone to contribute stories, they claimed that we devalued work done by professionals. And they suggested that our newsgathering model—relying on locals to tell local stories—must mean we are abandoning objectivity.

At their core, the arguments against Demotix boiled down to this: By sending their work to Demotix, “street journalists” threatened the status quo and were destroying value in the industry.

Simply put, while the status quo no longer exists, quality still does, and only quality sells. Of our regular contributors, the vast majority are professionals or semi-professionals. We are lucky to have some exceptionally talented amateurs too, but they are only amateurs because they do not support themselves exclusively from their photographic work. We can only license images to the media if they’re as good as the work of the existing wires. More often, the quality has to be better if we’re going to win against the all-you-eat subscription services of Getty, Reuters and AP. We’ve had some extremely successful amateur photography on Demotix—such as the image of Henry Louis “Skip” Gates, Jr., who directs the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University, taken on the day he was arrested at his own home—but that’s not photojournalism, that’s an eyewitness account.

We describe what we do not as “citizen journalism” but as “street journalism” because the news on Demotix is an expression of the concerns of our contributors, of what they think is news. It’s neither top-down nor bottom-up, it’s flat: equal and collaborative. And collaboration is precisely the piece we feel we add: it’s our selling point. By bringing photojournalists, and (soon) video-journalists and reporters together, we not only help them make money with one-off sales, but we also pull them into a collective photo wire-feed that is expanding its reach to media outlets throughout the world.

There is strength in numbers. Picture editors will license a Demotix photographer’s pictures of the Nairobi riots today because they’ve come to



This photograph of unrest in Tehran was published last June on the front page of *The New York Times* and credited to *tehranreporter* via Demotix. *Photo courtesy of Demotix.*

us in the past to license someone else’s feature on the Panjshir Gorge in Afghanistan or a different photographer’s breaking news images from Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Together, we become a global news source—far more than the sum of our parts.

### Doing Business

Our model is simple. We split evenly with the photographer the fee we make from a license, whether it’s \$1,000 for a Page One photograph in *The New York Times* or a \$20 Web-only fee. We license via File Transfer Protocol to all the major newspapers in the United Kingdom, to a few papers in the United States (*The Wall Street Journal* and *New York Post*, for example), and elsewhere.

Each day we send word about our photographs via e-mail to more than 200 news outlets around the world. We maintain digital subscription deals with a host of online-only news sites and we license digital picture galleries from Canada to Bangladesh. We’re building a newsgathering service for NGOs and the mainstream media. Even in our infancy—and despite the dominance of the established news and image oligopoly—hundreds who’ve

brought their photographs to our site have made money; some have made thousands, while for others Demotix simply provides a healthy supplement.

We can envision a time when the staff of Web sites, newspapers and broadcasts will include only editors. Until recently, the news industry looked much like the Hollywood studios of the 1930’s where everyone from actors to set designers worked for the company. No more. Twitter is breaking news. Daylife is packaging it. Demotix is sourcing it. Google is parsing it, and countless others will emerge to fill specific jobs. What the people at *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* do now is prioritize.

Demotix wants to stay at the coalface, gathering breaking news and shipping it around the world to the packagers (online, broadcast or print) and developing an unparalleled network of local photojournalists and reporters who in telling their stories create a truly global, ultralocal 24/7 digital wire service. ■

*Turi Munthe is CEO of Demotix located online at [www.demotix.com](http://www.demotix.com). His e-mail address is [tm@demotix.com](mailto:tm@demotix.com).*

## Documentary Photography

The impact that photographs can have is illuminated in a look back at iconic images.

*Glenn Ruga, the director of SocialDocumentary.net, spoke about photography during a conference examining the coverage of trauma held at the Nieman Foundation for Journalism in February 2009. In explaining how his Web site is used by photojournalists today, he traveled back in time to offer an abbreviated history of documentary photography and how its practitioners used imagery to inform people about events they couldn't see for themselves. He spoke, too, about the impact their photography had in inspiring change. Edited excerpts from his talk follow, alongside photographs he used to illustrate his points:*



A dead Confederate soldier in Petersburg, Virginia in 1865. Photo by Mathew Brady/  
Courtesy of Library of Congress.

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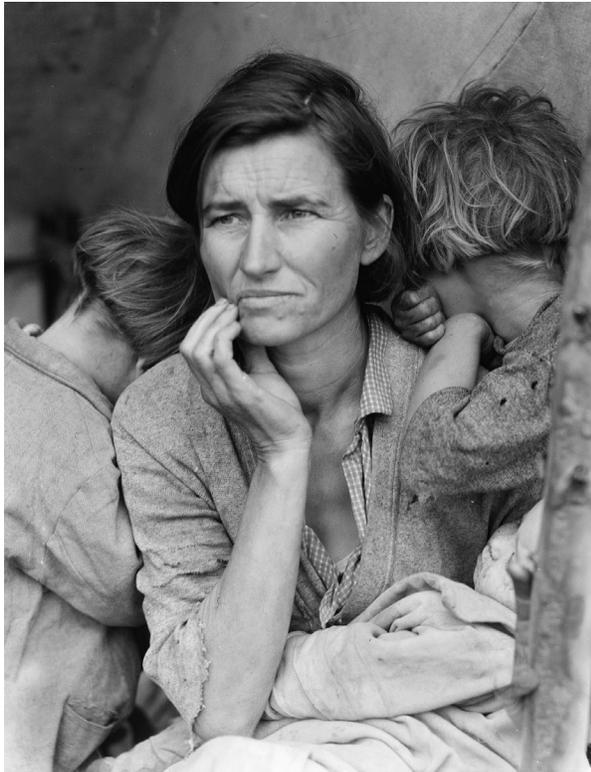
In this early photograph of the Civil War by Mathew Brady we see a very horrific event in the history of wars and of this country, and it's Brady who has brought the horrors of this war to the consciousness of the world. Even back then, though, Brady and his assistants would rearrange subjects on the battlefield to create a more powerful representation of what was going on. At the time the American public was not very interested in looking at these images. Not until much later, into the 20th century, was the American public willing to look at them.



Addie Card, 12, a spinner at a cotton mill in North Pownal, Vermont in 1910.  
*Photo by Lewis Hine/Courtesy of Library of Congress.*

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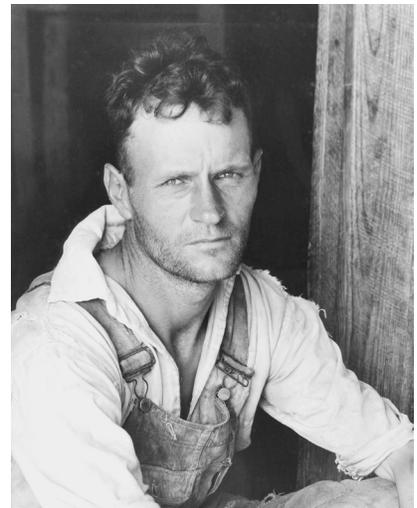
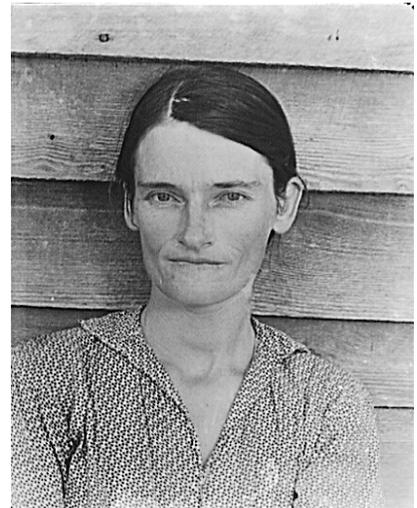
Moving on in the history of photography, we have Lewis Hine, a very influential photographer who documented the plight of child labor at the beginning of the 20th century, mostly in New York. It's his work that really changed a lot of laws related to child labor. Not only was he a fantastic photographer, he used this work in a very deliberate way. Hired by the National Child Labor Committee, he created a portfolio and sent it to lawmakers in New York to influence policy on child labor. Eventually laws were passed almost directly due to his photographs.



A mother of seven children in Nipomo, California in 1936. Photo by Dorothea Lange/Courtesy of Library of Congress.

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During the Great Depression, Walker Evans, another great American photographer, was associated with the Farm Security Administration (FSA). His images of sharecroppers in Alabama were ones he took while he was working with writer James Agee, with whom he did the book "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men." It is one of the great American documentary books about this time. Dorothea Lange's well-known photographs of families who were fleeing the Dust Bowl during the Depression was also part of the FSA effort to document what was happening in the United States.



Allie Mae Burroughs, top, wife of cotton sharecropper Floyd Burroughs, above, of Hale County, Alabama. Photos by Walker Evans/Courtesy of Library of Congress.



The Amar Jyoti Rehabilitation and Research Center in New Delhi accommodates 540 children. In 2002, more than 80 percent of all new polio cases worldwide occurred in India. © Sebastião Salgado/ Amazonas - Contact Press Images from the book "End of Polio" (Bulfinch, 2003).

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Now we have photographers such as Sebastião Salgado documenting polio throughout the world. He uses his work very deliberately to effect policy change by making sure people in power see it.

These examples just skim the surface of the rich history of documentary photography and its uses. In the world of human rights, there are perpetrators and survivors, there are journalists who inform us about these violations, researchers who give us data and analysis, advocates who work for policy change to prevent violations and support the victims. There are artists, filmmakers and writers who document and help us understand the abusers and the abused; there are lawyers, judges and lawmakers who provide the legal context. And there are photographers who document the abuses, honor the victims, and tell their stories of abuse, survival and justice. ■

📷 To view a slideshow, go to [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org).

## Documentary Photographers Have Their Say in Words and Pictures

SocialDocumentary.net (SDN) was founded on the belief that documentary photographers can play a valuable role in raising awareness about complex global issues.

Often a photographer will spend years on the ground immersed in the culture, geography and politics of a situation. The photographer's work might be purchased by a

newspaper, magazine or Web site to illustrate an article, but almost invariably the photo is used to illustrate a point conceived by the buyer of the image and the photographer has little or no control over the writing and editing.

Our Web site was conceived to honor the integrity of the photographic image and the insights of

photographers from around the world. SDN charges a nominal fee to photographers who create online exhibits, accompanied by their own words. Visitors include photo editors, curators, researchers, students, and the general public interested in photography and global issues. ■  
—Glenn Ruga



A heroin addict is being injected by his friend on a roadside in Pakistan in the early morning. Photo by Yusuke Harada from "Behind the War on Terror" on SocialDocumentary.net.

## What Changed Journalism—Forever—Were Engineers

‘Like the other engineer that has succeeded in killing journalism’s economic model—Craigslist’s Craig Newmark—Google’s founders have nothing against journalists, newspapers or our search for truth, justice and the American way.’

BY JOEL KAPLAN

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### Googled: The End of the World as We Know It

Ken Auletta

Penguin Press. 384 Pages.

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For the last several years when I spoke to my former newsroom colleagues as they periodically survived a layoff, a reinvention with fewer resources, or the ever-popular unpaid furlough, I was constantly asked two questions:

- How do I get a job at a journalism school? (Answer: “Learn how to teach ‘writing for public relations.’”)
- Isn’t this all Google’s fault? (Answer: “Absolutely. Where were all the publishers and bean counters during the late 1990’s when the newspaper and television industries were awash with so much money they were buying interests in all sorts of fun entities like AOL and CareerBuilder? Couldn’t they see Google coming?”)

Certainly it is easy to play Monday morning quarterback as so many news organizations are imploding, the economic model of journalism has deteriorated, and Google stock continues to soar. In fact, I have spent the past few years commiserating with fellow academics and students that Google is something that should have been invented in a journalism school.

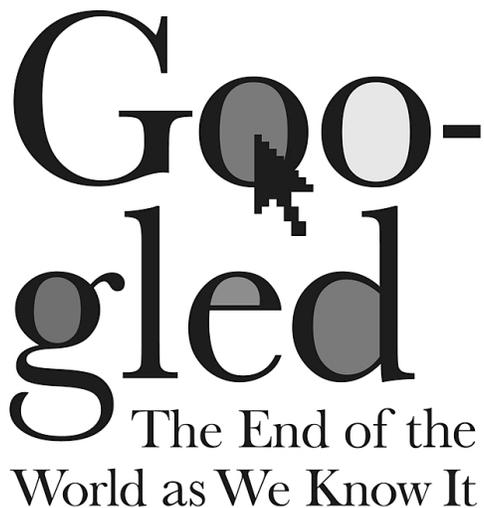
As journalism and communications schools have attempted to come to grips with this new media and multiplatform world, the industry for the first time is really looking to these schools to figure out what went wrong, how to fix it, and how to lead the way to a prosperous new beginning. The S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University, like most communications schools, has brought in futurists to help

us figure out where our professions are going and the skills our students will need. We are revamping our curriculum and trying all sorts of experimentation with online media. The general conclusion is that journalism schools should be more inventive, more entrepreneurial, and more creative in coming up with the next big thing—something like Google. With all the millions of dollars being spent by foundations from Carnegie to Knight to reinvent journalism, why didn’t journalism schools invent Google or come up with the idea for the next Google?

Yet reading Ken Auletta’s new book, “Googled: The End of the World as We Know It,” has convinced me that journalism schools could never have invented Google. Publishers and news executives could never have foreseen the power and spread of Google. Why? It’s because Google is the product of engineers. Brilliant engineers.

### Engineers and Journalism

For as long as I’ve been a journalist and a journalism educator the mantra has always been that journalists need a good liberal arts education to be successful. Even those of our students who wanted to major in journalism were told to become dual majors with something—anything—in



Googled  
The End of the  
World as We Know It

Ken  
Auletta

arts and sciences. We recommended majors from political science to economics, from sociology to art history. Why? Because a journalist needs to know *what* to write about as much as he or she needs to know *how* to write.

Who knew that we should have been telling them to dual major in engineering? Yet what is clear from Auletta's well-researched book is that Google's inspiration, motivation and success stems from its engineering culture.

Even now Google's founders—Larry Page and Sergey Brin—could care less about news judgment, journalism values, or historical context. What they care about is information and content that would be of value to the consumer. To them, as Auletta writes, "Google was a digital Switzerland, a 'neutral' search engine that favored no content company and no advertisers. Their search results were 'objective,' based on secret algorithms and no one could bribe his way to the top of a search."

Like the other engineer that has succeeded in killing journalism's economic model—Craigslist's Craig Newmark—Google's founders have nothing against journalists, newspapers or our search for truth, justice and the American way. Here's how Auletta compares the approach of the two:

Like Google's founders, Newmark was an engineer who devised a really cool free service. Drowning newspapers was not Newmark's intent; creating a more efficient system for consumers was, as it was Google's. Newmark likens the digital revolution to 'a tsunami, which when you're in the ocean is only a foot high but when it hits shore it's bigger.' Vastly bigger.

While numerous newspaper and magazine articles and several books have been written about Google and how it has become the dominant search engine and media company in the world, Auletta received unprecedented access to the company and its culture and he has produced an easy read that provides insight and understanding

into how the company has revolutionized our industry. Auletta conducted more than 150 interviews with Google executives, including its two founders and CEO Eric Schmidt, who sat for 11 interviews.

The impression one gets from reading this book is that Brin and Page are truly heroic figures. They might not know much about journalism, but they understand ethics:

Page and Brin had definite ideas and were not easily swayed. They 'thought it was sleazy,' [Professor Rajeev] Motwani said, to allow Web sites to pay to appear near the top of searches, as other search engines permitted. ... To build user trust they wanted ... to serve users by getting them off the Google site as quickly as possible and on to their destination.

In fact, the dominant creed throughout the organization was the slogan "Don't be evil."

### **Google, China and Censorship**

But Google did have one Achilles' heel: China. Here's what Auletta writes about what happened when China blocked some politically sensitive Web searches:

Google's maneuverings and deals may have made it unpopular with various media companies, but these did not tarnish Google's image with the public. What happened in China did. In 2002, a Chinese-language version of Google search was launched, and then Google News in 2004. As user traffic mushroomed, the Chinese government found some of the news politically objectionable. China didn't want users to be able to search news about 'free Tibet' or for photos of Tiananmen Square protests. At first, Google refused to engage in any self-censorship. Often, the Chinese government banned Google searches. Senior Google executives believed they

had to make a choice between denying Chinese citizens *some* political searches and denying them *all* searches. Google decided to comply with Chinese laws, stripped its news results of offending material and eventually, in 2006, created a separate search Web site, Google.cn, on which it would offer politically sanitized searches in China.

This decision was particularly troublesome for Brin, who had escaped from Russia with his family as a child and understood the dangers of a totalitarian government. That is why it was no surprise that earlier this year Google announced that it planned to stop censoring news and information going into China. If the Chinese government objected and kicked Google out, so be it.

Much of the book is an insightful rehash of the history of newspapers over the past decade, the mistakes they made, and the advantage Google took from those mistakes. Google is still considered something of the devil in mainstream news organizations, but this book makes clear that it is long past the time to stop fighting and join Google.

Just recently a Google executive said the company would be happy to work with newspapers if they wanted to institute pay walls for their content. Google could continue to summarize the articles in a sentence or two and link to the site where the pay wall would take effect.

My advice to mainstream news organizations that want to join and become content partners with Google is to hire Al Gore, a senior adviser to Google. The former vice president is an alumnus of The (Nashville) Tennessean. And while he has from time to time been the victim of the news media, I know of no other politician who understands and values the importance of the news media to our democracy. He has Google's ear and I believe he would make for an honest broker between the world of journalism and the world of Google. That conversation should start right

now, before it's too late.

Here at Newhouse we are hiring professors who understand the intricacies of algorithms, search patterns, social media, and new media business plans. These new faculty members are

not only teaching our students, they are teaching the rest of the faculty. So my advice to former colleagues who want to know how to get a job at a journalism school is to go get an engineering degree. ■

*Joel Kaplan, a 1985 Nieman Fellow, is associate dean for professional graduate studies at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University.*

## A Journalist Joins the Nigerian Government—If Only for A While

'I wanted my freedom back—the freedom to be able to tell truth to power.'

BY SUNDAY DARE

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### It's Our Turn to Eat: The Story of a Kenyan Whistle-Blower

Michela Wrong  
Harper. 368 Pages.

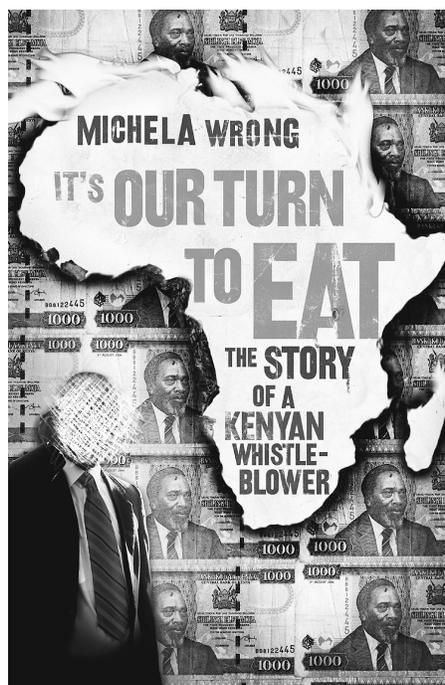
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The job was meant to last a year, but it ended after seven months. From my work as an editor with Voice of America, based in Washington, D.C., I returned to my native country, Nigeria, and entered its fractious political terrain as a senior special aide to a cabinet minister.

It was in January 2009 that I received an unexpected phone call while I was traveling in Nigeria on business. The caller from Abuja was a national figure, known and respected for her commitment to public service. The signal she sent to me indicated that all seemed positive and possible so when she invited me to a meeting, I went. We talked about the challenges facing the nation and we focused on the need to have individuals who were committed to working together to move Nigeria forward. She asked me to join her as senior aide in her quest to make the government more transparent.

After a short wrenching time of prayer and consultations, I accepted, even though this meant leaving my job at Voice of America.

After spending nearly 20 years as



an independent journalist, I knew that what we were talking about would require a significant transition. Through the years I'd dealt with threats posed by various government officials regarding my reporting in Nigeria. [See box on page 72.] To now have this opportunity to work as part of a democratic government was one I felt I could not pass up. Similarly, I felt it was time for me to move to the other side and force the hand of change. When I made this decision, I had no doubt that the change I envi-

sioned was possible, in part because I was convinced by what this cabinet minister told me.

Somehow, I failed to realize the extent of all that still remained broken. I never saw that I would have to deal with a political system that is steeped in corruption, ineptitude and indifference to the plight of the millions it was designed to serve and protect. Those who now held power worked, as past dictatorships had, only to serve the needs and protect the interests of the few in privileged political positions.

Perhaps it was my patriotic longing that pushed me to embrace the promise, even as I looked past the realities. Like many other Nigerians, I wanted to play a part in bringing about democratic changes. Unfortunately after taking this job I soon realized that, due to a lack of political will and of coordination among all levels of government, there was no process for change.

Political inertia resided at the top levels of government. I was surrounded by people who were resigned to the way things were being done. For many with whom I spoke, change was a distant dream. For them, life had become a daily battle of how best to bend the system to one's advantage. Within three months of being on the job in Abuja, reality collided with expectation. I began to feel a sense of things closing

## When Journalists Were Targets

Sunday Dare wrote a book, “Guerilla Journalism: Dispatches from the Underground,” about his experiences working as an independent journalist in Nigeria when that country was ruled by a military dictatorship.

In an excerpt that was published as part of “Journalists: On the Subject of Courage,” the Summer 2006 issue of Nieman Reports, Dare chronicled

a harrowing experience during his tenure at The News, an independent magazine in Nigeria. He set the stage: “This Gestapo-like raid on The News and Tempo magazines occurred sometime in April 1998 when a military dictatorship under the regime of General Sani Abacha was in its most brutal stage. The journalists at The News, Tempo and

Tell publications were singled out for attacks, harassment, arrest, unlawful detention, and elimination. This was the height of the Abacha paranoia and journalists were game.” ■

*To read a more extensive excerpt, search for “Terror Unleashed” in the Summer 2006 issue at [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org).*

in as frustration combined with anger at a system that was already being prepared for slaughter.

From my desk in the Ministry of Information and Communications, I could see the government’s inner workings. I able to keep close tabs on the various federal ministries and I interacted with a number of senior government officials charged with important assignments. I sat in several meetings where policy directions, especially within our ministry, were decided. I saw at close range how the government dealt with important national issues. And I observed how government officials communicated with people, something they did more as a favor than a responsibility.

A general lack of urgency was pervasive in all that government did, and in the process this—plus inefficiency—crippled any possibility of change. What was most alarming to me was the fact that the institutions set up by the government—many of which are money guzzlers—only served a few powerful people, their families, and cronies, to the detriment of the larger population. After spending nearly nine years living and working in the United States, I was taken aback by the lethargy I found within Nigeria’s government.

### Echoes of Corruption

My experience reminded me of the book, “It’s Our Turn to Eat: The Story of a Kenyan Whistle-Blower.”

It is a detailed narrative about John Githongo, a journalist and activist who joined Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki’s government in 2003 as anticorruption czar. Githongo quit when he could no longer tolerate the corruption and deadly ways of his tribesmen.

Githongo’s experience—portrayed so well in the book—provides insight into what is happening in other African countries, such as Nigeria. Those in power in Kenya turned the government into their tribal or personal property with a thirst to seek out and destroy any person who dared to stand in their way. And the endemic corruption, about which Githongo obtained firsthand information, gave him a clear sign of a state in decay.

No one with a conscience and progressive beliefs can remain within a government that is in the vice-grip of power mongers and dictators in civilian garb. The exposé in the book, written by a friend of Githongo’s, is a valuable contribution to the literature about the circumstances that halt positive development and change in so much of Africa today. The book is powerful as it details the sheer audacity of the actions taken. There are people in Africa who could turn things around, but they aren’t in power.

Newspapers in Nigeria are dominated by negative news—about what fails to work, about missed deadlines for the delivery of a government service, about hardships that Nigerians endure, and about disasters caused by neglect or tribal warfare. People have lost hope

that government can perform.

I witnessed the full extent of their distrust—tinged with disgust—when my ministry launched a rebranding campaign with the goal of correcting people’s perception of the country. Mostly with their silence, the people signaled their powerful rejection of this attempt to gloss over reality with a veneer of pretty words. Yet as I traveled with the minister and senior officials preaching the rebranding gospel to people throughout the country, what we heard most often was the following refrain: It is the leaders who should first be rebranded from their corrupt and callous ways. Fix the power supply, the bad roads, and unemployment and deal with the lack of security and educational and health infrastructure before government officials come out with a redemptive sermon.

But the case for a top to bottom rebranding of government continued apace. Nigerians were told they should still play a part in this effort while praying that the government will change its ways. With their usual progressive posture, the news media sided with the people to demand that the government heal itself first. After we devoted months to the rebranding campaign, our effort suffered two disastrous train wrecks; the first was the government’s handling of the Halliburton bribery scandal; the second was the shameful and near criminal handling of the Ekiti State elections.

From my position within the government I wrote a few opinion pieces in

support of the good thinking behind the rebranding that were published in Nigerian newspapers. Even as I wrote these articles, I did not spare those in government. And some point soon after that, I realized there were irreconcilable differences between what I've fought for as a journalist for nearly two decades and what was happening in the government.

Here I was working for a government I didn't respect. In August 2009, I turned in my resignation letter. I wanted my freedom back—the freedom

to be able to tell truth to power. Most importantly, I was no longer willing to lend my professional skills and intellectual training to a government without traction and focus.

When I quit on principle, I became jobless, but at least I had my freedom. In an upcoming book that I am writing—with the title “Inside and Out: A Journalist's Walk Through the Corridors of Corruption”—I will offer a detailed narrative about my experience in government. In its pages, I will paint a realistic portrait of where Nigeria is

headed if the same characters continue to lead us. ■

*Sunday Dare, a 2001 Nieman Fellow, served as senior special assistant to Nigeria's Minister of Information and Communications. He is the founder and editor of the online news site newsbreaksnow.com and publisher of News Digest International magazine. [For more on that venture, see the box on page 89.]*

## Digital Stories Are Being Chosen and Consumed à la Dim Sum

In the absence of a front page—or even a home page, will readers confront a crisis of context? Or will convenience and a self-confidence in judgment triumph?

BY MICHELE WELDON

**A**t a traditional Cantonese dim sum restaurant, waiters and waitresses wheel past each table continuously, their carts laden with small plates of delicacies. Choose whatever seafood, vegetarian, chicken, beef, pork or rice delicacies you desire. Sample char *siu bao*, *dan ta*, or *har gow* at whim. There is no way to predict what will come out of the kitchen when; the meal has no beginning, middle, end, preferential order, minimum or limit. Your impulses, appetite, time constraints and budget determine your satiety. Some claim it isn't even a meal; it is just tea.

This à la carte approach echoes digital journalism's menu today—and likely will in the future. One consequence is a potential crisis of context. Not only has the relevance of the printed front page evaporated—a transformation that has taken decades—but the home pages of online news sites have also lost their meaning in the era of Web searches along with Twitter links. Now each story exists in a vacuum without the architecture of editorial news judgment to suggest its relationship to other events and narratives.

The story stands alone, each one the big story of the day, the journalistic gems scooped up and linked to on blogs and aggregator sites from FeedReader to the United Kingdom's Fingertips. Even their domain names reflect a tasting menu of choices.

With content bites migrating in a customized flow for the consumer, what do we lose—if anything—in core journalistic principles when a story no longer has a home? Without a front page or home page that reflects an editor's triage of news judgment, do stories sacrifice their logical placement in the larger schema? Or is this merely the natural progression of the democratization of news—moving beyond open sourcing to open paging?

### Key Word as Context

What is worth examining in all of this moves us beyond the pay wall argument and the frustrating attempts to monetize online content (though some would point out that you pay per item at a dim sum brunch). It lands us smack in the middle of a discussion of whether these revolutionary changes in

how stories are delivered and consumed affect the tenets of journalism as we have known them, regardless of what business model is employed.

In Steve Krug's book “Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability,” his seventh chapter is entitled “The first step in recovery is admitting that the Home page is beyond your control.” In it, he writes, “The one thing you can't afford to lose in the shuffle—and the one thing that most often gets lost—is conveying the big picture.”

Yet with the digital trend of viewing an individual story as a commodity, the big picture is being lost as it is pirated away by aggregators such as Yahoo! News or MSNBC, news feeds such as NewsGator, or ideological and issue sites such as Alternet.org or Cyberjournalist.net. Kidnapped from its digital home base, the story now travels the Web based on its own value; neither its umbrella media brand nor the journalist's byline bears significance. Like it or not, we have reached the age of keyword-chasing journalism.

Such à la carte journalism is exem-

# It's Not the Assignment: It's the Lessons That Come From It

My students' assignment seemed straightforward: take a front page of a newspaper and translate it into a Web site's home page using InDesign. In a week focused on visual storytelling, this was our third exercise.

Here is one lesson I learned in watching them do this: The package of print content that appears under an umbrella brand with stories complementing each other in approach, gravitas and subject is no longer relevant when the Web site design is involved. For many of my students, stories exist in isolation.

Some of my students certainly created a fresh digital approach that could draw in a few more eyeballs. But others didn't have a clue about what stories they'd put where or why. They plopped this there and that here, and in the end they left out most of what had been on the front page. It was as if they were putting together a jigsaw puzzle in the dark. Most concentrated on one story as their focal point—without any discernible sense of connectedness or cohesiveness.

Perhaps my notion of news as a mix of stories has no grandfather clause. Today students think of stories as separate entities of information to be clicked to and through until they have clicked enough. From one story they move to the next one, not even heading to the next Web site or blog or even to their favorites list.

## Visual Design: Old and New

In week seven of an 11-week required course, Reporting & Writing the News (designed for freshmen who are journalism majors and potential journalism school transfer students), we—the seven lab instructors and I—focus on the basics of visual design for print and the Web. As lead instructor, coordinator and creator of the assignments for the dual courses of Reporting &

Writing and its required follow-up, Multimedia Storytelling, I attempt to lay the foundation for the journalism basics of what they will need to know and can master over the next few years and beyond.

Following an overview lecture by my colleague, assistant professor Susan Mango Curtis, a visual design expert

melt into, bob around, or surround the text.

This part they get. It is the next part in the triptych that didn't seem to work so well for them—or us. After a walk-through with our technical staff in the basics of InDesign, students were instructed to do the following:

Create a Web page from an existing newspaper print page that you find on newseum.org. Before you begin, read the stories and study the content. Then you will want to sketch out a storyboard for the Web page so you can have an idea for the final product before you start working. Take some risks and try some new approaches. Keep some of the content the same, but adjust the look to a Web site from a printed page. Do not just reproduce the printed page in a horizontal format.

In my lab of 16 students, more than half took one of the stories on the front page and refashioned it to become the central—or organizing feature—of the Web page. If there was a story on a candy manufacturer, the Web page looked like a home page for a candy retailer.

When I saw these results, I sensed at first that I had failed to incorporate caveats on how stories can accompany other stories and share visual space without risk of attention annihilation. After a bit more time passed, I realized that the assignment had failed because I didn't understand that many of my students simply don't see news presentation in the ways that I do. And I realized then that perhaps in this assignment they were teaching me something about the future of digital media and the notion that each story is its own whole.

Seems to me this is the start of an entirely different and deeper conversation. And it is one I welcome. ■  
—Michele Weldon



Weldon asks her students at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism to remake a newspaper's front page. (Original on left, redesign right.)

and creative life force, students dissect a front page of a newspaper and redesign it. Using the principles of news judgment, we ask them to literally take the paper apart—to rewrite headlines, find new photos, enlarge or shrink existing photos, eliminate stories, shift emphasis on stories, add cutouts and extras such as weather boxes or teasers, and even redesign the banner.

They do this using scissors, paper and glue. Having them use tactile elements in this two-hour lab assignment is intentional. Without the distraction or ease of a program such as InDesign, they work with the layout until it seems just right.

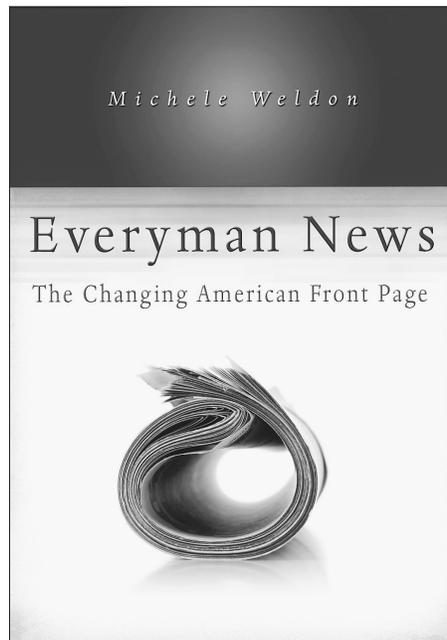
The second assignment, as homework, is to choose a single feature story online and make it an entire page of a print features section. Having this additional time, they find great photos, illustrations or refashion headlines to

plified by the unveiling in December of Google Labs Living Stories, which was launched in cooperation with The New York Times and The Washington Post. Billed as “a more dynamic way of reading news,” the project takes content from these news organizations and unifies coverage on a single page with a consistent URL. It is adopting the unbranded story idea with the slug or headline generating clicks, not the originating media site or even the byline. Google summarizes the story and adds updates to the top, regardless of journalist, newspaper or media site—meaning that a third-party aggregator revises the narrative from how it was originally told.

Regardless of the complicity Google achieved with Times and Post editors, it is this manner of content takeover that at least one media giant considers hostile. Late last year Rupert Murdoch, CEO of News Corp., said he intended to block Google from aggregating its content, particularly The Wall Street Journal’s, for free. In response, Nicholas Carr of the blog Rough Type wrote: “Newspapers are struggling, but they remain, by far, the world’s dominant producers of hard news. That gives them, as a group, a great deal of leverage over companies like Google who depend on a steady stream of good, fresh online content.”

But is such leverage real? Does it have sustainable power? This doesn’t seem likely at a time when popular citizen journalist sites such as allvoices.com promote Contributor Reports. And many observers contend that fighting this trend toward content cannibalization is futile; an attempt to cut off aggregators, interested bloggers, or sites from lassoing desired content is self-destructive in the world of the Web. Consumers—trained in the Web culture to believe that content should be free—will find news and narrative somewhere else. After all there exists a nearly infinite supply of mainstream journalists or amateur producers who are willing and able to provide such (substitute) storytelling.

In the fall 2009 edition of the Newspaper Research Journal, Hsiang Iris Chyi and Seth C. Lewis released



the findings of their study of 68 newspapers with a combined circulation of nearly 24 million readers. “Local newspapers sites—or newspaper sites of any kind—trailed behind Yahoo! News, MSNBC and, to a lesser extent, AOL News as a source for online news among local users,” Chyi and Lewis reported. They elaborated:

[The] success of Yahoo! News and others at capturing the largest share of news attention in local markets suggests something about their core advantage: the ability to be where their users are—placing headlines next to users’ e-mail and search results and otherwise creating a Web setting for incidental exposure to news content.

### Each Story on Its Own

For the last century the nature and delivery modes of journalism have been evolving. In recent years the pace of change has only accelerated, especially when it comes to content, sourcing, style and presentation of stories. As this happens, people’s appetite seems to shift away from a diet of largely hard news to a hunger for a quick sampling of all stories. And the explosion of storytelling across

the platforms of text and digital, print, audio, video and interactive has undoubtedly enriched and enhanced the information landscape.

Yet with each story considered on its own, the deliberate and studied story mix of a single media brand has become inconsequential. Stories mix with all other stories, arriving from anywhere and everywhere.

Do we as readers and as journalists need to be bound by the choices of front page and home page editors to tell us what stories are important? Do we need to depend on them to tell us what we want to read and watch? And why? And in what context? Are we incapable of making such news judgments for ourselves?

We can sample stories from an infinite supply of sources and come away fulfilled. We can make the connections and formulate the big picture of the world’s events and newsmakers by choosing individual offerings determined by our own rubric of interest levels. Or we can navel-gaze and become consumed with stories that value immediacy over impact. Each of us can be the creator of our own front page. We have our own Facebook pages with links, photos, comments and video of what we consider important. This becomes the front page of what we label news of the day. Is our social media our new front page?

Given how easy it is to be myopic about the world’s daily events, confusing our own self-importance with global consequence, it is up to us as media providers and users to ensure that our content exposure is broad enough and deep enough to develop an intelligent and reasonable understanding of the world. And one that does not make us hunger for something more. ■

*Michele Weldon is an assistant professor at Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism and the author of three books, including “Everyman News: The Changing American Front Page” published by University of Missouri Press.*

## Connecting What Happened Then With What Happens Now

‘To focus on Don Hollenbeck’s death is to miss the lessons of his life.’

BY STUART WATSON

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### **CBS’s Don Hollenbeck: An Honest Reporter in the Age of McCarthyism**

Loren Ghiglione

Columbia University Press.

352 Pages.

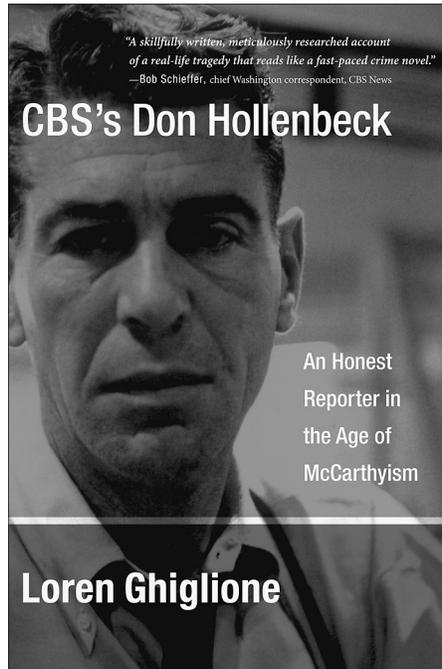
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Do any of the following questions strike a chord? When I am stretched so thin that I’m no longer producing quality journalism, do I quit? What are the alternatives? What medium should I use to ask challenging questions vital to our society? How do I respond when bullies and blowhards publicly berate me or go after my news organization for being too political or even subversive? If I see clear examples of entire news organizations that bend or ignore facts to fit a preconceived political agenda, do I speak up and call public attention to this bias? Or do I simply admit that I find the state of journalism quite depressing as I wonder whether continuing to practice it poses a threat to my health?

The life and tragic death of television journalist Don Hollenbeck, a CBS News commentator, reporter and press critic, might not provide us with answers to these core questions. But it opens a window for us to look at a valuable experience from journalism’s history, one that holds as much relevance today as it did when Hollenbeck committed suicide more than half a century ago.

Those who have seen “Good Night, and Good Luck” know that Hollenbeck appears in that film as a desperate character, besieged by red baiters and pleading for Edward R. Murrow to help him. But Murrow cannot or at least does not. Then Hollenbeck turns on the gas jets in his Manhattan apartment and kills himself.

In his superbly detailed biography



of Hollenbeck, Loren Ghiglione, the Richard A. Schwarzlose Professor of Media Ethics at Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism, rescues Hollenbeck from a somewhat obscure role in the dark days of black-listing, and offers clear messages for reporters today who are struggling to maintain solid values of journalism in a shifting world.

It’s always tempting to look for the “sermon in the suicide,” which is Joan Didion’s phrase and the title of Ghiglione’s last chapter. Plenty of Hollenbeck’s friends and colleagues were quick to blame his death on New York Journal-American columnist Jack O’Brian, a McCarthyite and red baiter who relentlessly bullied and badgered Hollenbeck. Ghiglione crafts a more accurate, less simplistic, and more nuanced picture, including the fact that Hollenbeck’s mother slit her own throat and that Hollenbeck abused alcohol and appeared to be severely

depressed. CBS did not fire Hollenbeck and others endured worse persecution. It appears that Hollenbeck’s personal and family history played a bigger role in his death. Yet to say this does not dismiss the role that the vicious climate perpetuated by McCarthyism may have played in Hollenbeck’s demise.

To focus on Don Hollenbeck’s death is to miss the lessons of his life. He was the original multimedia journalist. He began as a newspaperman in Lincoln, Nebraska. He transitioned to NBC and ABC radio and CBS radio and television as a correspondent who covered the landing of the Allies at Salerno, Italy. He was quick, even impetuous, in quitting job after job at The AP in San Francisco and for NBC in Europe at the end of World War II. His attitude was that he was good enough that he could always find work. And sure enough he did, moving from the newspapers to NBC and CBS. It’s ironic that this fine biography begins with the possessive—CBS’s Don Hollenbeck—since he was a journalist who worked for a wide variety of news organizations and was fiercely independent.

Hollenbeck pioneered press criticism on television with the program “CBS Views the Press.” There he regularly picked apart the pages of the most influential newspapers and chains by offering real criticism—not name-calling. Despite the explosion of broadcast and cable TV stations, no one does what Hollenbeck did on television. He responded to a relentless barrage of criticism with measured, fair, principled analysis. He called balls and strikes and tried, in at least one case, to sidestep a fistfight. It was an ugly time, but perhaps no uglier than ours. Commentator Ann Coulter picked a fight with 9/11 widows; Hollenbeck’s critics jeered at his suicide, which as

Ghiglione points out, was by no means the only one.

Hollenbeck cheered Murrow in his finest hour. He was the first voice heard after the well-known showdown between Murrow and Senator Joseph McCarthy, blurring his pride at the CBS network's finest hour. But less well-known is another impulsive ad-lib, when Hollenbeck got himself fired from ABC after quickly disassociating himself from a tawdry commercial introducing his program. It's hard to imagine any broadcast journalist

today—even Jon Stewart—sacrificing his cushy job to take on an advertiser so directly. It would be refreshing to see.

In the end it was all too much for Hollenbeck's brilliant mind and fractured psyche. He kept his job through the divisive loyalty oath debates at CBS only to have an on-air meltdown just days before he took his life. It's not unheard of that broadcasting actually attracts unstable personalities. Witness Jessica Savitch. But Hollenbeck produced such great work and his life and struggles left a legacy of so

many lessons that the greatest tragedy is that he has been reduced to a sad bit role in the Murrow-McCarthy debate. Ghiglione deserves the thanks of a new generation of journalists for resurrecting this strong and fascinating reporter. ■

*Stuart Watson, a 2008 Nieman Fellow, is an investigative journalist at WCNC-TV in Charlotte, North Carolina.*

## Are Newspapers Dying? The View of an Aspiring Journalist

'In The Republican's newsroom I experienced something of a disconnect between the old vanguard of journalists who filled the paper's top posts and younger staffers who were frustrated by the few opportunities they had for using multimedia.'

BY SAM BUTTERFIELD

**M**uch has been said over the last several years about the death of journalism. Even enduring optimists will concede that if print journalism is not in its dying days it is certainly in the midst of a reinvention. As a 19-year-old aspiring journalist, I interned at The (Springfield, Mass.) Republican last summer. As the son of longtime newspaper reporters and book authors, I had an opportunity to ponder the fate of print journalism from inside the newsroom. I left with mixed emotions.

Let me begin with a proposition: The market for clear and sharp writing about timely subjects will never disappear. However, its form at the point of delivery either is changing or has already changed, and this trend line seems irreversible. Those bemoaning the demise of print journalism are likely too late; newspapers, as we now know them, will not remain the way they are today for long.

From my view inside The Republican's newsroom—and reading I've done as a journalism student—it seems that editorial leaders at most U.S. daily papers are trailing the pace of technological change. Were they on

top of the change curve, they would recognize that the most efficient means of delivering news is no longer on paper. Journalists who have worked for decades in print might lament the fading relevance of newspapers, but to wax nostalgic has never fueled innovation. Nor is it a productive strategy for saving a threatened business model.

Being in The Republican newsroom revealed several critical issues. At least for the foreseeable future, local news doesn't seem in jeopardy. Most people who live in small communities are likely to be much more interested in finding out what affects their children and neighbors rather than what is happening halfway around the globe or even in Washington, D.C. Like conversations over the back fence, local news—delivered in newspapers even in medium-sized cities—will probably do fine.

Of course, this creates another dilemma for newspapers like The Republican that serve as the paper of record for their region. Publishing standard wire service coverage of national and international news will no longer satisfy readers looking for more complete information. Read-

ers who crave the depth provided by on-the-ground correspondents with news organizations like The New York Times are likely to head directly there on the Web. The question is whether the strength of their hometown paper's local coverage will retain them as loyal readers—in print or on the Web.

### Generational Divide

In The Republican's newsroom I experienced something of a disconnect between the old vanguard of journalists who filled the paper's top posts and younger staffers who were frustrated by the few opportunities they had for using multimedia. Nor did many understand—and they certainly didn't appreciate—the older employees' decision-making in organizing the news.

Editors there confronted the same predicaments every paper is facing: less space in the print edition, dwindling ad revenues, a shriveling staff, diminishing newsroom resources, faulty (and outdated) technology, and an aging readership in a city with a shrinking population. How they responded to these familiar trends was neither inno-

vative nor constructive. Editors asked reporters to constrict their coverage; they requested tighter writing, and then shaved copy even more. When they could have utilized the arsenal of multimedia tools to enhance stories' relevance and accessibility, they failed to do so.

One story I did typified this reticence. When Christopher Kennedy Lawford, son of "Rat Pack" actor Peter Lawford and Patricia Kennedy, was in the region to give a talk, I was sent to interview him for a story about drug addiction. He'd written a book about his struggles with drug abuse. Given 10 inches of space, I was asked to describe his family's history, write about his experiences in the throes of heroin addiction, tell his story of recovery and rehabilitation, and convey his book's message. If, instead, we'd pulled together a package for the Web in which we podcast his lecture (or provided a video of it) and I interviewed audience members for their reactions to his talk, we could have augmented what appeared in the newspaper. In my print story, I could have focused on a particular aspect of his talk. Instead, my editor demanded that my lede be shaved to 15 words; it went downhill from there.

This is not to say that The Republican isn't doing some multimedia reporting. It is, and with some measure of quality. But how this happens creates yet another rift in the staff—this one between its online staff and those

assigned to the print edition. It will be increasingly necessary to build bridges between the more technologically savvy employees on newspaper Web sites, most of whom are younger, and the senior members of the print edition. Editors at the newspaper need to do a better job of making decisions about print coverage that consider what parts of the story can better be told on the Web and then directing readers to the multimedia stories online.

Rather than fearing digital storytelling, top newsroom managers should be encouraging their staff to tap into its potential. My peers go to the Web to watch video stories and photo slideshows and I think people older than I am enjoy them, too. Sales of Amazon's Kindle and the upsurge in the e-reader market, not to mention the mobile possibilities, should be pushing newsrooms to make these changes. Multimedia storytelling, when done well, is intriguing; at its best, these productions possess an almost mystical quality, giving those who view them a window into narrative storytelling that text and photos, presented on their own, often don't provide.

Whatever methods are used in delivering the labor of journalists, solid reporting and realistic storytelling is far from dead. Right now it's being reborn in newsrooms where innovation and enterprise combine with technology and the fundamentals of journalism to tell stories in fresh ways. What once was processed through a

reporter's notebook and editor's pen before landing as words on paper is now conveyed through combinations of audio and video, photography and graphic display. Of course, quality matters, as do the decisions made about which multimedia tools best serve to tell a particular story or report on an event. Not every story needs to be told with every available digital tool.

Advance Publications, the Springfield Republican's parent company, is slashing budgets and reducing its print holdings from Michigan to Oregon to Massachusetts, a reflection of tough economic times and changing business models. In the brief time I was there, the newsroom lost 12 staffers and that wasn't the first round of staff cuts. Given these and other depletions in reporting staff, coverage of Springfield (not to mention state and national news) suffers, especially when editors focus too deeply on planning the paper's print edition without devoting similar attention to digital possibilities.

The valuable role The Republican's newsroom plays in this city should never be allowed to die. Gripping too firmly to what worked in the past is not the way to best ensure the future. ■

*Sam Butterfield, a sophomore at Hampshire College, is majoring in journalism and is an editor at The Daily Collegian, the student newspaper of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.*

## Moving Across the Border: Teaching Journalism in Hong Kong

'As a student from Shenzhen, an industrial city just across the border, said: "Once I've discovered all the resources out there, I don't want them taken away from me.'"

BY MICHAEL J. JORDAN

Just about the first thing my graduate students did when they arrived in Hong Kong was to create a Facebook account. They had come from mainland China so what might seem like an ordinary act of modern living

laid bare the disparities in the "one country, two systems" arrangement between these two parts of China. This newfound freedom to use Facebook also underscored the absence of free speech they experience back

home which limits their ability to surf the Internet. YouTube and Twitter are blocked from use, along with Facebook and passage to Web sites with information deemed critical of Chinese policy.

For the students I taught last fall in the international journalism program at Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU), the prospect of returning to a pre-Facebook era, as one young woman from China's north told me, would be "like being a human, then going back to being a primate."

If democracy is in China's future, then a driving force will surely be younger Chinese who have tasted such freedoms. Indeed, early on in my journalism classes I sensed that by cajoling my 22- to 26-year-old students toward what Western journalists naturally do—challenge authority, probe deeply to find out why a situation is the way it is, and enable readers to make better-informed decisions—I was in my own modest way training China's future democrats.

## Teaching in Hong Kong

When the offer came my way to teach journalism in Hong Kong, I could not refuse it. After working as a reporter, I've taught feature writing and international reporting during the past seven years at universities in New York City, then from my current perch in Central Europe, in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Word of this possibility reached me through a foreign-correspondence training program that I help lead every six months in Prague. During the past two Januaries, HKBU has sent a large student delegation to this program as part of department chairman Huang Yu's grand vision of how to broaden his students' horizons.

When Huang invited me for a semester, I seized the chance to learn about the world's emerging superpower. The farthest east I'd been was Uzbekistan, but since most of my students came from the mainland it was also their first time in Hong Kong. Given its status as a "Special Administrative Region" through a pact signed when Britain returned territorial control to China in 1997, my students need visas too. So when we met we shared a status as visitors.

From the start of class, their attentiveness, enthusiasm and even

their appreciation impressed me. One student upon learning that I'd only be at HKBU for one semester replied, "Then our time together is so precious." While currying favor for a good grade may partly explain her sentiment, I detected genuine gratitude by many of my students who recognized the academic freedom that was theirs to enjoy. This included such things as reading a history book barred from mainland students. A Chinese colleague told me that the lecture he enjoys giving most is when he shares with students what has been hidden from them during their youth. On the other hand, one student described to me the Chairman Mao statue in her parents' living room, then explained how unsettling it was to hear criticism of the Communist Party for the first time in her life.

We discussed the government-controlled journalism they had been taught to practice at their university in China. And we talked about the external pressures and the self-censorship they'd observed in newsrooms as interns or entry-level reporters, along with the red, cash-filled envelopes handed out to reporters at press conferences. We delved into a widespread perception they—and others in China—have that the Western media is uniquely, relentlessly critical of China.

I would find myself at times pondering their enthusiasm. In a nation with such a vast population—1.3 billion, with more than 170 cities of a million or more people—I tried to imagine what it must be like to distinguish oneself, especially in a profession like journalism. Because HKBU offers a one-year English-language program—at a cost of \$10,000—if nothing else, then at least the refined linguistic skills offered could provide a boost in the marketplace.

Typically I've taught undergraduates, and in those classes only a minority were gung-ho about becoming journalists. Sometimes it was tough to keep them fully engaged in the curriculum, and I'd find that the hard work of doing so sometimes led to feelings of burnout. At HKBU, I was delighted when most of my 69

students, spread across four classes, seemed eager to practice what I was teaching them.

The course was built around three main street assignments:

- Examining the contrast between how Hong Kong and the mainland viewed modern China's 60th anniversary
- Finding out how the tens of thousands of Filipina maids in Hong Kong responded to twin typhoons that slammed the Philippines
- Exploring an ethnic, immigrant or refugee community in Hong Kong.

Since my job was to teach them international reporting—without the travel—with this last semester-long assignment I hoped to simulate the experience by having them submerge themselves in one of Hong Kong's historic South Asian communities or find ways to tell the story of recent waves of Southeast Asian migrant workers.

As I read their work, I was touched by how the reporting affected some students. For example, one team's project spotlighted the religious freedom that Nepalese Christians find in Hong Kong, comparing it to the repression they experienced in their predominantly Hindu homeland. "We hurry to school in a metro crowded with Chinese, we shop in streets full of Chinese, we read or watch news on Chinese media, so we just don't see or care about the lives of those outside the mainstream," Crystal, one student from this reporting team, told me. The 26-year-old from Shanghai put it this way: "It's a really amazing feeling to push back the frontier of my comprehension of society." Inspired, Crystal spent the mid-year break trekking around Nepal.

Now that our time together has ended, I have no way of knowing how many of my students will stay in journalism or how many might seek a more lucrative career path. I'm also not sure how many of them will return to the mainland. Some might remain in Hong Kong. As a student from Shenzhen, an industrial city just across the border, said: "Once

I've discovered all the resources out there, I don't want them taken away from me."

For those who return, I wonder to what degree, if at all, they will try to apply the lessons I taught them. Which of them will find a job working for state-controlled media? At what point might they question how journalism is practiced there? Or will some of them attempt to practice journalism for independent publications or perhaps as bloggers?

One night, over a bubbling "hot pot" soup in a *dai pai dong*—a traditional Hong Kong open-air street restaurant—one student conceded that despite everything she'd learned here, she planned to return to her beloved coastal city and keep herself from being noticed. "If I were to blog about sensitive topics," she said, "I could be put in jail. And I wouldn't want to risk my life for that, or get my family into trouble." Who could blame her? ■

*Michael J. Jordan was a visiting scholar at Hong Kong Baptist University during the fall 2009 semester, teaching in the international journalism program. A foreign correspondent based in Slovakia, he has written a series of articles for journalism students who want to break into foreign reporting. They are among the Teaching Glimpses in Professor's Corner at [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org). He blogs at <http://jordanink.wordpress.com/>.*

## NIEMAN NOTES

# Reaching Out With Appreciation to Brave Colleagues In Afghanistan

Through the Lyons award and a teleconference with journalists in Kabul, the Niemans pay tribute to the work of Afghan reporters and hear about the difficulties they face.

BY JAMES REYNOLDS

The news from Afghanistan came toward the start of our Nieman class's deliberations about naming a recipient of the Louis M. Lyons Award for Conscience and Integrity in Journalism. On September 5, 2009, two journalists from The New York Times—Stephen Farrell from Britain and Sultan Munadi from Afghanistan—were kidnapped by the Taliban in northern Afghanistan. Four days later, British forces raided the compound in which the two men were being held. Farrell was rescued safely but Munadi was killed.

At the sound of approaching helicopters on the day of the raid, Farrell, Munadi and their captors ran out of the building. "[Munadi] carried straight on beyond the corner of the wall, bringing him out into the open," Farrell wrote in his account of the raid. "Wearing the same pale salwar kameez he had worn for four days he raised his hands and shouted, 'Journaliste,



James Reynolds, NF '10, moderates a teleconference between journalists in Afghanistan and the 2010 Nieman Fellows. Photo by Melissa Ludtke.

## Slain Sri Lankan Journalist Honored for His Commitment to a Free Press

The Nieman Class of 2010 presented two Louis Lyons awards in recognition of the many risks journalists working in conflict zones face on the job. In addition to honoring Afghan journalists, it recognized the late Sri Lankan editor Lasantha Wickrematunge “for daring to stand up, at the cost of his life, for freedom of the press and human rights.”



Lasantha  
Wickrematunge

Wickrematunge was brutally murdered in January 2009 after years of working to uncover government corruption and expose the atrocities committed during his country's protracted civil war. He founded the Sunday Leader in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in 1994 and had remained its editor in chief until his death.

The announcement by the Nieman Fellows states that Wickrematunge “embodied the principles of a free press in Sri Lanka. His newspapers exposed government corruption and excess. His articles and editorials laid bare the brutality of the 30-year civil war between the Sri Lankan government and the separatist Tamil Tigers in the north of the island. Lasantha and his presses had been attacked so many times that he drafted an editorial predicting his own murder.”

That editorial was discovered and published three days after he died from injuries he sustained in a premeditated attack that occurred while he was driving to work. In the piece, he wrote: “There is a calling yet above high office, fame, lucre and security. It is the call to conscience.” ■



Bob Giles, NF '66 and curator of the Nieman Foundation, with Sonali Samarasinghe Wickrematunge, NF '10, who accepted the Louis Lyons award on behalf of her late husband, Lasantha Wickrematunge. Giles is holding a copy of Wickrematunge's editorial “And Then They Came for Me.” In it he predicted that “When finally I am killed, it will be the government that kills me.” His murder remains unsolved. *Photo by Tsar Fedorsky.*

journaliste,’ even as he stepped out. It was accented, in exactly the same way he had used 1,000 times in four days talking to the Taliban ... There was a burst of gunfire and he went down immediately.”

In the aftermath of Munadi's death, journalists in Afghanistan spoke of their anger at what they saw as a clear double standard—the life of a foreign journalist was worth more than that of an Afghan journalist.

“There was a kind of proud [TV] coverage of Stephen being released,” Afghan journalist Barry Salaam told the BBC World Service, “but then there were subtitles reading that the interpreter was killed ... giving one life a big value and, that life that's been lost, you're simply downplaying it so that people don't know that he was an important person to us, to the journalist community.”

“You're not a Western [citizen], there's not a whole government, a whole nation behind you as a citizen whose life is important,” Salaam said in that interview, “and so we act and take all the risks individually.”

It struck our class that with the Lyons award we had a clear opportunity to address these points—to communicate to Afghan journalists our appreciation for their work and to assert that the lives of all journalists should be valued equally. The award, named for a past curator of the Nieman Foundation, honors displays of conscience and integrity in journalism.

In addition to paying tribute to our colleagues in Afghanistan, we also decided to honor the slain husband of one of our classmates. So we named two recipients, the journalists of Afghanistan and Lasantha Wickrematunge, the founder and editor in chief

of the Sunday Leader in Colombo, Sri Lanka. [See box above.]

After conducting research to determine the best recipient for the prize money in Afghanistan, we decided on the Frontline Club Fixers' Fund, which will provide direct financial support to the families of Afghan journalists killed on the job. The class matched the \$1,000 award money provided by the Nieman Foundation.

We also discussed ways in which we might engage with our colleagues in Kabul. We wanted to learn more about the challenges they face and other ways that we might help their cause. Martha Bebinger, NF '10, and Ibrahim Barzaq, NF '10, joined me in organizing a teleconference with Kabul. The Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School put us in touch with the Institute for War & Peace Reporting, which hosted

a gathering in Kabul of Afghan journalists for the teleconference. Ibrahim spoke daily at 5 a.m. to his contacts in Kabul to arrange the technical side of the event. (Our plans were rattled the day before the event when U.S. forces arrested our intended cameraman in Kabul. We improvised an alternative. The cameraman was later released.)

On the morning of November 16, we invited Nieman Fellows and staff to gather in the seminar room to take part in our Skype hookup with Kabul. (In my day job as a TV reporter, I've been involved in a few ambitious technical hookups—none was as nerve-racking as this.) Kevin Sites, NF '10, stood by with his video camera to record the exchange. Suddenly Kabul came up onto the screen. Twenty or so of us at the Lippmann House found ourselves looking at a similar number of colleagues gathered in a room in the Afghan capital.

For the next hour, we listened to our Afghan counterparts. Out of respect for their security, we have withheld their names.

"We Afghan journalists are facing a very critical situation, we are facing threats from the Taliban, from

warlords," one journalist told us.

"Can you explain to us exactly what that means?" asked Lisa Mullins, NF '10.

"There is no way for us to protect ourselves in Helmand when we face threats to begin with," the journalist replied, "We have recordings of phone calls from the Taliban who have threatened us with our lives."

"Can you give us some advice when it comes to working with Afghan journalists on the ground?" asked Monica Campbell, NF '10.

"All Afghan journalists are unhappy with the behavior of foreign journalists in Afghanistan," one of the journalists told us, "We have several cases that you know of. In these cases the Afghan journalist was killed, but the foreign journalist was released."

The hookup concluded with this thought from Kabul:

Thank you for remembering Afghan journalists and especially for granting this award to Afghan journalists this year. The world only hears about the sacrifices of Afghan journalists when they are killed. But there are many

others who can't live in their own homes—are forced to leave their homes to protect their lives and their only sin is their work.

At the Lyons dinner the next evening, we played an excerpt from this teleconference, to bring the concerns of the Afghan journalists to everyone in the room. Afghan journalist Abdul Waheed Wafa of The New York Times accepted the Lyons award on behalf of his colleagues and in honor of his slain friend, Sultan Munadi. In handing the award to Wafa, I spoke on behalf of the Nieman Class of 2010, noting that the Lyons award had never before gone to an Afghan journalist.

Since that night, two plaques have been added to those on the Lyons award wall at the Lippmann House. One honors Lasantha Wickrematunge. The other reads: "2010 - Journalists of Afghanistan - For their bravery in delivering the news from one of the most dangerous reporting environments in the world." ■

*James Reynolds, a 2010 Nieman Fellow, is a correspondent for BBC News.*

1959

**Evans Clinchy**, an educator and former newspaper arts critic, died on February 24th, 2009. He was 81 years old.

Clinchy, born in Somerville, New Jersey in 1927, graduated from Harvard in 1949 after serving in the military. He then began a career in newspapers as a drama, dance and music critic, and developed a passion for education during his Nieman year. He went on to work in a number of educational development programs, including as director of the Office of Program Development for the Boston school system.

Later in life, he started his own consulting firm, Educational Planning

Associates, and wrote several books on education, including "Transforming Public Education: A New Course for America's Future" and "New Schools, Old School Systems." At the time of his death, he was working on a book about applying Darwin's theory of evolution to the education system.

He is survived by his wife **Blythe**, three children, and four grandchildren.

1967

**Crispulo J. Icban** was named acting press secretary of the Philippines by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in January.

Icban had been editor in chief of the Manila Bulletin, the country's second-oldest surviving daily newspaper, since

2003. His newspaper career began in 1954 when he joined the Manila Times after graduating from the University of the Philippines. That paper was shut down when the country fell under martial law in 1972, and he joined the Bulletin two years later.

The previous press secretary died of a heart attack. In announcing Icban's appointment to members of the press, the president said that, like his predecessor, Icban "is first and foremost a journalist."

1968

**Jerome Aumente** was a visiting scholar at the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii this past December. During his stay in Honolulu, he worked

on his new research project analyzing training, exchange and continuing education programs for journalists in light of major changes in journalism and mass media caused by the Internet.

Aumente is Distinguished Professor Emeritus and counselor to the dean of the School of Communication and Information at Rutgers University.

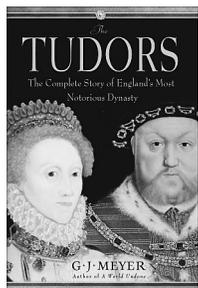
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1972

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**Gerald J. Meyer's** book, "The Tudors: The Complete Story of England's Most Notorious Dynasty," was published in February by Delacorte Press.

While many books have been written about the most famous members of the Tudor clan—namely Henry VIII and Elizabeth I—Meyer's book aims to be the first complete history of the dynasty written for a general audience. "The Tudors ruled England for three generations—118 years in all—and not nearly enough has been done to deal with their five reigns as a continuum, a chain of causes and effects that cumulatively changed the course of English, European, and even world history, often in tragic ways," Meyer said in a statement on Amazon.com.



Meyer's previous books include "A World Undone: The Story of the Great War, 1914 to 1918," "Executive Blues: Down and Out in Corporate America," and "The Memphis Murders."

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1974

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**Ellen Goodman**, a Pulitzer Prize-winning syndicated columnist, published her final column on January 1st. In the decades since she began writing a column for The Boston Globe in 1974, she has examined the meaning of a lot of changes in American culture, especially shifts in women's lives. Her approach was always down-to-earth,

writing in a measured tone about how much women get paid compared to men and how mothers and fathers divvy up responsibility for housework and child care. Occasionally her writing turned personal as when she wrote about getting married in mid-life, sending her daughter off to college, spending summers on an island in Maine's Casco Bay, and coming to terms with the death of her mother. "It has been a great gift to make a living trying to make sense out of the world around me," she wrote in her final column, which attracted dozens of readers to comment on Boston.com, the Globe's Web site. In the rough-and-tumble world of online comments, there was a strong showing of respect and admiration for Goodman. As one reader wrote, "You showed that a columnist doesn't have to be snarky (there's a word that didn't exist when you started out!) to be current."

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1976

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**Janos Horvat** ended his three-year mission as Hungary's ambassador to Cuba in December. He writes: "My first and probably last diplomatic engagement was extremely interesting in this special and challenging country." He has returned home to Budapest and is considering writing a book about his diplomatic experiences.

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1977

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**Zvi Dor-Ner** has retired from WGBH-TV in Boston after more than 30 years at the public broadcast station. His career in television started in 1966 when WGBH hired him as a news cameraman while he was working on a degree in communications at Boston University. After graduation, he worked in Israel as a camera operator, director and producer before he returned to WGBH in 1979. He was executive producer on a number of major projects at WGBH, including "Apollo 13: To the Edge and Back," "Columbus and the Age of Discovery," "Millennium 2000," several "Frontline"

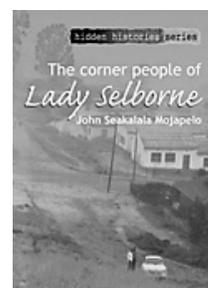
films as well as "People's Century," the 1996 Peabody and International Emmy Award-winning series produced in conjunction with the BBC. He produced "The Bombing of Germany," part of the "American Experience" series, which aired in February.

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1979

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**John Seakalalal Mojapelo**, now retired from the South African government where he worked as a senior communication officer for about 10 years, has written a book about Lady Selborne, the South African township



where he was born and grew up. He dedicated "The Corner People of Lady Selborne" (Unisa Press) to "the 3.5 million victims of the heartless social engineering policy enforced through

the pernicious Group Areas Act by the former white minority government in Pretoria, and particularly those in Lady Selborne." At the launch of the book this past spring, Jane Carruthers, a history professor at the University of South Africa, said, "John shines a creative searchlight onto Lady Selborne, illuminating corners of daily life in homes and on the streets, onto the National Party's machinations, and the various legal and media battles that brave township people fought together with the aftermath of so cruelly losing one's home."

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1980

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**Judy Havemann** started a new job as director of public affairs for the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) this past fall.

In an e-mail about the new position, she wrote: "I left The Washington Post after 35 years in one of a seemingly endless series of buyouts in 2006 and became the senior editor of the Wilson Quarterly. With the appointment of

the new chairman of the NEH, former Iowa Congressman Jim Leach, I decided to see what life was like on the 'other side.'

"My husband **Joel** retired from the decimated Los Angeles Times Washington bureau three years ago but is still explaining economics to the readers of the Encyclopædia Britannica. My four kids are practicing medicine, studying law, and polling likely voters in Georgia—the country."

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1981

**David Lamb** will be leading a 24-day expedition around the world for National Geographic in February 2011. The trip will depart from the National Geographic Society headquarters in Washington, D.C. on a private jet with stops in South America, Australia, Asia and Africa. Highlights of the journey include the moai statues on Easter Island, the Great Barrier Reef, the Angkor Wat temple in Cambodia, the Taj Mahal, and the Great Pyramids of Giza.

His expertise in leading this trip comes from his decades as a foreign correspondent for the Los Angeles Times, when Lamb reported from more than 140 countries on seven continents. He covered the Vietnam War and the Iranian Revolution as well as the first Gulf War. He has written six books.

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1983

**Callie Crossley** is hosting an hour-long show Monday through Friday on WGBH-FM radio in Boston. "The Callie Crossley Show" focuses on current events, local news, arts and culture, and includes interviews with newsmakers and phone calls with listeners.

In an interview with The Boston Globe Sunday Magazine, Crossley said the show will take on "the full spectrum of highbrow and lowbrow. We could go from the Walter Reed [Army Medical Center] story to the kid from Roxbury [Massachusetts] who won 'So You Think You Can Dance.'" She added, "Often when these discussions are

going on, I find it fascinating that you don't get a female perspective and you certainly don't get a perspective from a person of color. That's a perspective that doesn't change, necessarily, what the conversation is going to be, but it certainly adds a richness."

Crossley, the seminar program manager for the Nieman Foundation, is also a regular contributor to WGBH-TV's "Beat the Press."

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1989

**Bill Kovach** received the W.M. Kiplinger Award for Distinguished Contributions to Journalism from the National Press Foundation (NPF) at the organization's annual awards dinner in February.

The award recognizes Kovach's 50 years in journalism during which time he served as Washington bureau chief for The New York Times and executive editor of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. He was curator of the Nieman Foundation from 1989 to 2000 and is the founding chairman of the Committee of Concerned Journalists. He is the coauthor, with Tom Rosenstiel, of "The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect" and "Warp Speed: America in the Age of Mixed Media."

"Perhaps no one in his time has more epitomized the values of our profession—the sense that journalism must be tough but fair, uncompromising but humane, and above all searching, always asking more questions—than Bill Kovach," said the NPF judges in a press release announcing their unanimous vote.

The award is named in honor of Willard M. Kiplinger, the former economics reporter for The Associated Press who founded The Kiplinger Letter and the Kiplinger Washington Editors group, and is given to journalists "who have, through their vision and leadership, strengthened American journalism and furthered the efforts to establish quality in American journalism," according to a statement on the NPF Web site.

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1990

**Vladimir Voina**, the first journalist from the Soviet Union to become a Nieman Fellow, is writing a column for the weekly Georgian Journal, an English-language newspaper published in Tbilisi, Georgia.

His column, "Our Man in Boston," covers Georgian culture and history as well as current events relevant to the countries of the former Soviet Union. His Georgian Journal columns are online at [www.georgianjournal.ge](http://www.georgianjournal.ge). He received the 2009 Golden Plume Award from Georgia's International Foundation of Journalists.

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1991

**John Carlson** retired at the end of 2009 as a columnist for The Des Moines Register, where he worked for more than 30 years.

After starting his career at papers in Fort Dodge and Cedar Rapids, John joined the Cedar Rapids bureau of the Register in 1978 as a reporter. He was named a columnist 20 years later.

In his columns, he mixed Iowa history with human interest, writing about Iowans in the state and across the country. His subjects included a teacher in Brooklyn trying to raise money to take her students to a Broadway play—whom readers were inspired to help—and a Iowa farm family dealing with AIDS, which drew national attention.

His honors included the 1995 National Headliner award for best newspaper reporting, the 1994 Society of Professional Journalists award for feature writing, the Iowa Newspaper Association's Master Columnist award in 2003 and 2004, and first place in the Iowa Associated Press Managing Editors Association column-writing contest in 2002 and 2008. The Iowa National Guard also honored him with the Commander's Award for Public Service in recognition of the time Carlson spent in Iraq writing about soldiers from the state.

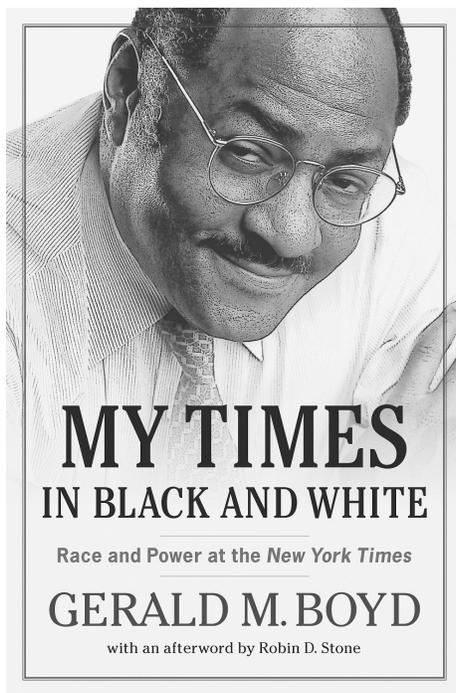
In announcing his retirement,

## Taking the Measure of a Career in Journalism

**Gerald M. Boyd**, NF '81, grew up poor in St. Louis, won a scholarship to the University of Missouri School of Journalism, started his career at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, and worked his way to the top of The New York Times. He fell hard.

At the time of the Jayson Blair scandal in 2003, he was managing editor at the Times. A series of revelations about fabrications and plagiarism by Blair roiled the newsroom and led to questions about the paper's top management. After weeks of turmoil, the publisher called Boyd into his office and told him that he and Executive Editor Howell Raines must resign. He quietly left the paper of his dreams.

At the time of his death in 2006 of complications from lung cancer, he had completed a couple of drafts of a memoir. His wife, Robin D. Stone, enlisted the help of friends and colleagues in finishing the book, "My Times in Black and White: Race and Power at The New York Times," published this year by Lawrence Hill Books. It lays out a lengthy account of the Blair scandal with harsh criticism directed at Jon Landman, who was metro editor at the time and had written an e-mail two years before the scandal broke urging an end to Blair's career at the Times. (Boyd writes that Landman had the authority to order



that end, but did not.)

Boyd writes briefly about his time as a Nieman Fellow, using that experience to make a point that he repeats elsewhere in the book: Sometimes he didn't speak up when he should have. In his recommendation supporting Boyd's application to the Nieman Foundation, **Richard Dudman**, NF '54, mentioned that Boyd's wife, Sheila Rule, a reporter at The New York Times, would be a welcome presence

at Nieman functions. Boyd failed to correct the record; he and Rule were separated and he would be bringing another woman to Cambridge. "This lie-by-omission would come back to haunt me," he writes.

The book's index is stuffed with the names of leading journalists and national figures, but it provides no easy entrée to Boyd's journalistic accomplishments. He led coverage that won the Times three Pulitzers: for reporting about the first World Trade Center bombing, for a series on children in poverty, and for a series about race relations in America. Boyd, who started his job as managing editor at the Times five days before the September 11 attacks, played a key role in directing the coverage that earned the paper six Pulitzers.

Two months after he left the Times, Boyd delivered his first speech—to the National Association of Black Journalists. Sadly, he said, it seemed that people's perceptions of his role in the Blair scandal were influenced by the fact that he and Blair were black. "But racial differences—and differing expectations and attitudes based on race—are still alive and well," he said. "Even at The New York Times." ■

—Jan Gardner

Carlson said, "It's not an easy thing to leave, because this newspaper has meant so much to me for so long. ... But I decided it's the right thing. Thirty-five years is a long time to do anything."

**Raj Chengappa** took over as editor in chief of India's Tribune Group of Publications in March.

Speaking with the Web site exchange4media.com, he said, "The Tribune is a torchbearer. It is a highly regarded and balanced paper and I am honored to be joining it. What The Tribune has always promoted is independence of journalism, which is

both a challenge and an opportunity amid growing commercialization everywhere."

Before joining The Tribune group, he was the managing editor of India Today magazine as well as editor of the Indian edition of Scientific American magazine. He is author of "Weapons of Peace: The Secret Story of India's Quest to be a Nuclear Power," published in 2000 and is a member of the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change.

**Marcia Slacum Greene**, 57, a reporter and editor at The Washington Post for 26 years, died January 4th at her home in Washington. She suffered

complications from pancreatic cancer.

In a reporting career that spanned three decades, she frequently focused on the lives of poor people and children at risk. When crack use was on the rise in the 1980's, she wrote about "boarder babies," newborns who remained in the hospital after they could have been discharged because their addict mothers had abandoned them.

Greene, a native of Baltimore, taught English in public schools for a year before earning a second bachelor's degree, in journalism, from the University of Maryland. After working for the St. Petersburg Times in Florida and The Philadelphia Inquirer, she joined

## David Rohde of The New York Times Delivers Morris Lecture

New York Times correspondent David Rohde discussed his capture by the Taliban and the media blackout that accompanied it, during the 29th annual Joe Alex Morris, Jr. Memorial Lecture at the Nieman Foundation on February 4th.

Rohde, who has covered conflicts in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and the Balkans, was kidnapped by the Taliban in November 2008 and escaped last June. During his time in captivity in the mountains of Afghanistan and Pakistan, his family and editors kept any mention of the kidnapping out of virtually every major newspaper as well as Wikipedia.

Rohde spoke about “the importance more than ever of the need for journalistic institutions that can send people out to do irreplaceable reporting on the ground and also support reporters if they’re kidnapped.”

He said he fears the dangers faced by young reporters who go overseas as freelancers. “If something goes wrong, those journalists don’t have the backing of major institutions,” he said. “I was lucky in my case; I did have that backing.” Despite Rohde’s years of experience as a foreign correspondent, he fell into what he later realized was long-planned kidnapping.

Rohde, who is on leave from the Times to write a book about events in Afghanistan and Pakistan since 2001, is working with the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma to formulate guidelines for dealing with the kidnapping of journalists.

**Charles Sennott**, NF ’06, executive editor of GlobalPost, an online foreign news service, applauded Rohde’s work on the guidelines. GlobalPost issues safety guidelines to freelancers it hires but Sennott said he worries about kidnappings and would like to do more to protect reporters for GlobalPost.



David Rohde talks with Lisa Mullins, NF ’10, center, and Ulla Morris-Carter, the widow of journalist Joe Alex Morris, Jr. Photo by Tsar Fedorsky.

In response to questions from the audience, Rohde agreed that media blackouts pose ethical dilemmas. “What if the American ambassador in Afghanistan is kidnapped and the government tells The New York Times, ‘We don’t want you to publicize it?’ ... It’s a slippery slope,” he said.

The series of stories he wrote about his kidnapping was published in the Times this past October. It was recognized with a George Polk Award and a distinguished writing award from the American Society of News Editors. He joined the Times in 1996 as a reporter on the metropolitan desk. Prior to that he was the Eastern Europe correspondent for The Christian Science Monitor, a suburban correspondent for The Philadelphia Inquirer, and a production associate at ABC News.

In 1996, his stories for The Christian Science Monitor on the mass execution of 7,000 Bosnian Muslims following the fall of Srebrenica were awarded the Pulitzer Prize for

International Reporting as well as the George Polk, Livingston, Sigma Delta Chi, Overseas Press Club, and Investigative Reporters and Editors awards. He revisited the story in his book “Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica, Europe’s Worst Massacre Since World War II.”

With the Times, Rohde served as South Asia bureau co-chief in New Delhi from 2002 to 2005, and in 2009 was part of an eight-reporter team that won the Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting for coverage of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Joe Alex Morris, Jr. Memorial Lecture honors the foreign correspondent for the Los Angeles Times who was killed in February 1979 while covering the Iranian Revolution in Tehran. In the fall of 1981, Morris posthumously received the Nieman Fellows’ Louis M. Lyons Award for Conscience and Integrity in Journalism. That same year, the lectureship in his name was created by his family, Harvard classmates, and friends. ■—Jonathan Seitz

the Post in 1983. She held a number of positions there, including reporter on a metro projects team that conducted in-depth investigations and an assistant editor for politics and government. Before she retired in 2009, she had been city editor.

Robert McCartney, who was Greene's supervisor when she was city editor, told the Post, "Marcia was aggressive and thorough, both as a reporter and editor, and really pushed to hold the city and others accountable. She was quiet but had a wonderfully ironic sense of humor."

At a memorial service for Greene, Jill Nelson, a former colleague at the Post who wrote a scathing memoir of her own tenure at the paper, called Greene one of the "dream team" of African-American women she met there. "Marcia was one of those people who made the rest of us possible," Nelson said.

Yvonne Shinhoster Lamb, a friend from the Post, recalled that Greene would frequently ask: "What is it that we can be doing to make a difference in this world?"

Another speaker at the memorial service, Tyrone Parker, executive director of the Alliance of Concerned Men, a community group, said the attention Greene's stories brought to the problems of the inner city played a role in reducing the city's homicide rate.

Greene is survived by her husband, **Jackie Greene**, a fellow journalist; two stepchildren, a sister, and three brothers.

In lieu of flowers, the family has suggested donations be made for a scholarship in her memory. Donations can be sent to: ATTN: Marcia Slacum Greene Memoriam Scholarship, c/o:

The National Association of Black Journalists, 8701-A Adelphi Road, Adelphi, MD 20783-1716.

**Dale Mezzacappa** is overseeing a major shift at the Education Writers Association (EWA) this year as it moves from a paid membership organization to an online-based community open to anyone interested in education.

"More than ever, America needs sharp, sophisticated and well-informed journalists covering education," said Mezzacappa, president of the EWA board, in the press release announcing the change. "We must do all that we can to create a climate where good education reporting is possible."

The organization will create mechanisms for supporting education reporters in real time while advocating on behalf of first-rate journalism. A recent Brookings Institution report found that education stories comprised 1.4 percent of all national news in the first nine months of 2009.

Mezzacappa spent 20 years covering education at The Philadelphia Inquirer and is now a consultant for the Philadelphia Public School Notebook, a nonprofit publication focused on the city's schools.

EWA was organized in 1947 by a group of newspaper reporters with the intent of improving education reporting. At last count EWA had more than 1,000 members throughout the United States and Canada. Active members included staff journalists and freelancers from print, broadcast and online media. Associate members included school and college public information officers and writers who work for educational institutions and organizations.

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1992

**Deborah Amos's** book, "Eclipse of the Sunnis: Power, Exile, and Upheaval in the Middle East," was published in March by PublicAffairs. It chronicles the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Sunni Muslims in the wake of the war in Iraq and how their spread across the Middle East has upset the

balance between Sunnis and Shi'ites throughout the region.

She previously wrote about the impact of conflict in Iraq in her 1992 book, "Lines in the Sand: Desert Storm and the Remaking of the Arab World." Amos has covered the Middle East for NPR and ABC News during her more than 30 years in broadcasting.

This spring as the Goldsmith Fellow at Harvard University's Shorenstein Center for Press, Politics and Public Policy, she is studying the emergence of media outlets in Iraq.




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1994

**Melanie Sill** has been named to the Poynter Institute's National Advisory Board for 2010. The board analyzes developments and issues in journalism and reviews the institute's programs and plans. Sill is the editor and senior vice president of The Sacramento Bee. Prior to joining the Bee in 2007, she spent 25 years at The (Raleigh, N.C.) News & Observer.

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1996

**Tim Golden** has been named a 2010 Bernard L. Schwartz Senior Fellow at the New America Foundation. He will examine "American policies for dealing with prisoners in the campaign against terrorism and other aspects of the struggle to balance legal rights and security concerns," according to the foundation's Web site.

He is on leave from his job as a senior writer for The New York Times. Golden has written extensively about the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay and he spoke on that subject when he delivered the 2008 Joe Alex Morris, Jr. Memorial Lecture at the Nieman Foundation. He is also a member of the foundation's advisory board.

## Correction

In "Visual Storytelling About the Human Condition" in the Winter 2009 issue of Nieman Reports, Barbara Ayotte is incorrectly identified. She is the former director of communications of Physicians for Human Rights.

**Jacques Rivard** was named a deputy leader of the Green Party of Canada in November. In a press release announcing his new position, Rivard said, “For more than 20 years, as a journalist, the environment became my favorite subject. I am still as interested in environmental issues today, but I would like to work from a political angle this time.”

Rivard, a native of Quebec, began his career with Radio-Canada in 1972 as part of the French-language team. He spent 32 years with the broadcaster, serving as a parliamentary correspondent and columnist on the early morning show “Daybreak” before ending his career as a TV correspondent in Vancouver. Since retiring from Radio-Canada in 2004, Rivard has continued to be a guest speaker around the world. He has been teaching journalism at the University of Montreal since 1991.

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2001

**Sulaiman al-Hattlan** has been named to the editorial board of the World Policy Journal.

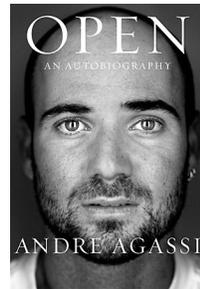
Since 2008, al-Hattlan has been the CEO of the Dubai-based Arab Strategy Forum, which brings together government officials, decision-makers and intellectuals from around the world to discuss issues relevant to the Arab world. Previously he was editor in chief of Forbes-Arabia and chairman of the Forbes Middle East Forum. His articles have been published in The New York Times, The Washington Post, USA Today, and The Miami Herald.

**J.R. Moehringer** collaborated with tennis star Andre Agassi on the critically acclaimed bestselling memoir “Open,” published in November by Knopf.

The partnership came about after Agassi read Moehringer’s book, “The Tender Bar,” a memoir about growing up without a father in Manhasset, New York. Agassi related to Moehringer’s story and tried to enlist his help in writing about his life on and off the tennis court. At the time, Moehringer

was working for the Los Angeles Times, where he had won the Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing in 2000. Agassi told The New York Times, “I wanted to see my life through the lens of a Pulitzer Prize winner.” It was not until Moehringer took a buyout from the paper that the two began working together, amassing 250 hours of interviews.

Moehringer’s name does not appear on the cover of the book because, as he explained in an interview with



The New York Times, “The mid-wife doesn’t go home with the baby. ... It’s Andre’s memoir, not our memoir, not a memoir ‘as told to.’”

The book made a big splash upon its release in large part due to Agassi’s admissions that he had taken crystal meth and intentionally lost matches. “Open” was praised by The Washington Post as an “honest, substantive, insightful autobiography.” The Los Angeles Times called it “literate and absorbing.”

**Ron Stodghill** is writing a business column for The Charlotte (N.C.) Observer while continuing to serve as editorial director of the paper’s six magazines.

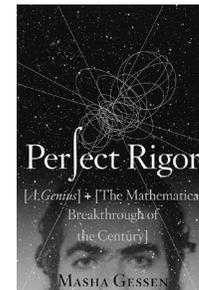
Stodghill, who worked at the Observer from 1987 to 1988 before returning to the paper five years ago, has been a reporter and editor for national magazines in New York, Chicago and Washington, D.C. “But I kept my eye fixed on Charlotte, hoping that one day I might live and work here again,” he wrote in his debut column. In that column, Stodghill offered a brief history of Charlotte’s rise and fall as a center of banking. He promised to “explore the aftershock of Charlotte’s quake and the prospects for building a future in which its best days are still ahead. [The column] will probe the fissures of an identity cracked—in both human and economic terms—and reveal the portraits of people who will shape the new era.”

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2004

**Masha Gessen’s** most recent book is “Perfect Rigor: A Genius and the Mathematical Breakthrough of the Century,” published in November by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. In it, she analyzes the life and work of Grigori Perelman, a Russian mathematician who in 2006 solved the Poincare conjecture, a mathematical proof that had gone unsolved for nearly a century. After solving the problem, he turned down the Fields Medal for his work and eventually left the field of mathematics altogether.

Perelman refused to be interviewed so Gessen put the story together through her interviews with his col-



leagues, teachers and friends. She also drew on her own experiences growing up in Russia as a math whiz.

Writing in The New York Times, Jascha Hoffman called the book “a thorough account of the circumstance that led to Perelman’s rise ... and a brilliant reconstruction of the twisted logic that might have led to his mysterious exit,” adding that Gessen “has written something rare: an accessible book about an unreachable man.”

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2005

**Molly Bingham** was elected to The Center for Public Integrity’s board of directors in January.

The nonprofit center focuses on producing investigative journalism about important public issues. Other Nieman alumni on the 20-member board include **Hodding Carter III**, NF ’66, **Geneva Overholser**, NF ’86, and the former curator of the Nieman Foundation, **Bill Kovach**, NF ’89.

“Molly is a smart, talented journalist whose new media and documentary experience will enhance the center’s investigative journalism,” said Mari-

anne Szegedy-Maszak, chairwoman of the board, in an announcement. “She brings top-quality journalism experience, a distinct multicultural perspective, and a dedication to the profession that will help advance the center’s work.”

Bingham has covered stories in Africa and the Middle East for a number of publications, including *The New York Times*, *Harper’s*, *Newsweek*, *US News & World Report*, and *Vanity Fair*. In March 2003 she and three other journalists were detained in solitary confinement at Iraq’s Abu Ghraib prison for more than a week before being released unharmed.

2007

**Eliza Griswold** has been named a 2010 Fellow at the American Academy in Rome as well as a 2010 Bernard L. Schwartz Fellow at the New America Foundation. She will use that time to

pursue her interest in exploring conflict, human rights, and religion. Her book, “*The Tenth Parallel: Dispatches from the Fault Line Between Christianity and Islam*,” is scheduled to be published in the fall by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, which also published her book of poetry, “*Wideawake Field*.”

Her work has been published in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Harper’s* and *The New Republic*, and she is a regular contributor to *The Daily Beast*.

2008

**Aboubakr Jamaï’s** publication *Le Journal Hebdomadaire* was shut down by the Moroccan government in January after courts declared that its publishers were bankrupt.

Jamaï, a cofounder of the 13-year-old weekly newsmagazine, told the Committee to Protect Journalists that the creditors could have been paid

had the publication not been subject to advertiser boycotts ordered by government authorities.

*Le Journal* had often been critical of the government and ran into financial trouble in 2006 when it was ordered to pay \$354,000 in a defamation suit brought by Claude Moniquet, head of the Brussels-based European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center, after *Le Journal* questioned the independence of the group’s report on the Western Sahara.

**Andrew Quinn** was named U.S. foreign policy correspondent for Reuters in October.

Quinn had been a correspondent for Reuters in China and was the bureau chief in San Francisco and Southern Africa before starting his Nieman Fellowship in Global Health Reporting. Since returning to Reuters he had served as the Washington political chief for more than a year before taking on his new role.

## Nieman Fellows Partner on a New Magazine in Nigeria

In August two Nieman Fellows launched *News Digest International* in Nigeria. **Sunday Dare**, NF ’01, is the CEO and **Declan Okpalaeke**, NF ’04, is the editor in chief of the monthly general interest magazine published by Free Media Communications Network.

Dare worked at Voice of America in Washington, D.C., and was general editor at *The News* and *Tempo* weekly magazines in Nigeria. [See Dare’s article on page 71.] Okpalaeke, former deputy editor in chief of *Insider Weekly* magazine, was the first Nigerian winner of the CNN African Journalist of the Year Award in 1999.

Dare grew up reading *Reader’s Digest* and when he decided to start his own magazine, he modeled its size and content after that American staple which is well-read in Nigeria. The magazine is being distributed not only in Nigeria but also in South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the

United States. It is online at [www.newsdigestonline.com](http://www.newsdigestonline.com).

The new publication emphasizes lifestyle stories and human interest features. A recent cover story heralded the achievement of Kimberly Anyadike, a 15-year-old Nigerian-American girl who is believed to be the youngest black female to pilot an aircraft across the United States.

The magazine plans to host public lectures twice a year on issues of national concern. This past November Ikedi Ohakim, governor of Imo State, delivered a talk titled “Niger Delta



Sunday Dare, left, and Declan Okpalaeke, executives at *News Digest International*, flank Mallam Dahiru Maishanu, commissioner of information for Sokoto State, Nigeria. Photo by *News Digest International*.

Amnesty: Quick Fix or Silver Bullet?” He praised the offer of amnesty to militants in the region though he expressed some reservations. ■

**Hopewell Rugoho-Chin'ono** was honored with the Communicator of the Year Award by USAID in Zimbabwe for his work reporting on HIV and AIDS for South Africa's e.tv. In 2008 Rugoho-Chin'ono was named CNN African Journalist of the Year and received the Kaiser Family Foundation Award for Excellence in HIV and AIDS Reporting in Africa as well as the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Young African Leader Award.

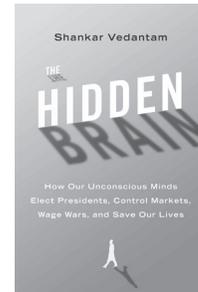
He writes of his latest commendation: "The USAID Award means a lot to me because it looks at what I think is the biggest medical challenge of our times in Zimbabwe, Africa and the world in general, HIV and AIDS. Many people have lost their lives to this pandemic and many will continue to die due to failure to access medication and a decent standard of life that

can sustain their lives and see them work for their families. Multitudes of grandparents have been robbed of their time to rest as they become parents all over again to orphans that are left by their own children. So as a journalist I am more concerned with stories that seek to save and prolong lives. I am happy that through my work I am able to give my little to do just that and I hope that more of us will continue to highlight the problems faced by members of our communities who need help."

**Shankar Vedantam's** first nonfiction book, "The Hidden Brain: How Our Unconscious Minds Elect Presidents, Control Markets, Wage Wars, and Save Our Lives," was published in January by Random House.

Vedantam, a national science writer for The Washington Post who wrote the weekly column "Department of Human Behavior" from 2006 to 2009,

got the idea for the book while working on "See No Bias," a cover story about unconscious prejudice for the Post's Sunday magazine. In expanding the story, he found that "unconscious prejudice was only a special case of a larger phenomenon that affected everything from how people fall in



love to why they get divorced, from how nations go to war to why they sit on their hands as genocides unfold. Thinking about life through the lens of the hidden brain can be an addictive parlor game; it also happens to be one

of the most important things we can do as human beings," according to his Web site for the book. ■

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## Nieman Notes

Share news with the Nieman community: job changes, awards, projects, books. Or just send a note about what you've been doing. It's good to stay in touch.

## A Nieman Fellow Joins Jimmy Breslin's Other Friends in Celebrating His Common Touch

'It was a cross between "This Is Your Life" and an Irish wake, the important difference being, of course, that the corpse was still warm and still pretty ornery.'

BY KEVIN CULLEN

It was Pete Hamill's idea. Because he is a writer, Hamill knows it is important to recognize important work.

Because he is Irish, Hamill knows the best way to do this is to put a bunch of people in a

room and make them tell stories.

Because it was for Jimmy Breslin, Hamill knew the only way to get Breslin there was to enlist the great Ronnie Eldridge, who just happens to be married to Breslin.

"Ronnie says she'll get him here," Hamill was saying, looking nervously at his watch, as we stood in New York University's Glucksman Ireland House, a stately brick townhouse on Fifth Avenue in Greenwich Village.

Nobody believed him. Breslin leaves his Midtown apartment every day to go swimming. And you can occasionally get him out to lunch at Ralph's on Ninth Avenue, around the corner from his apartment.

"I wish [Mike] Royko was still alive," he told me at Ralph's, the day it became known that the governor of Illinois was shopping Obama's old Senate seat like it was a hot car stereo.

But getting Breslin out at night is hard. Getting him out to listen to a bunch of people tell him how swell he

is should have been downright impossible. But Ronnie used to be president of the New York City Council so she can handle anything. And so, about a half hour late, Ronnie and Jimmy came walking in and two dozen of us burst into applause.

*For Ronnie.*

Breslin likes people to read him. He couldn't care less if they like him. In fact, he'd rather you didn't like him. That means he got to you.

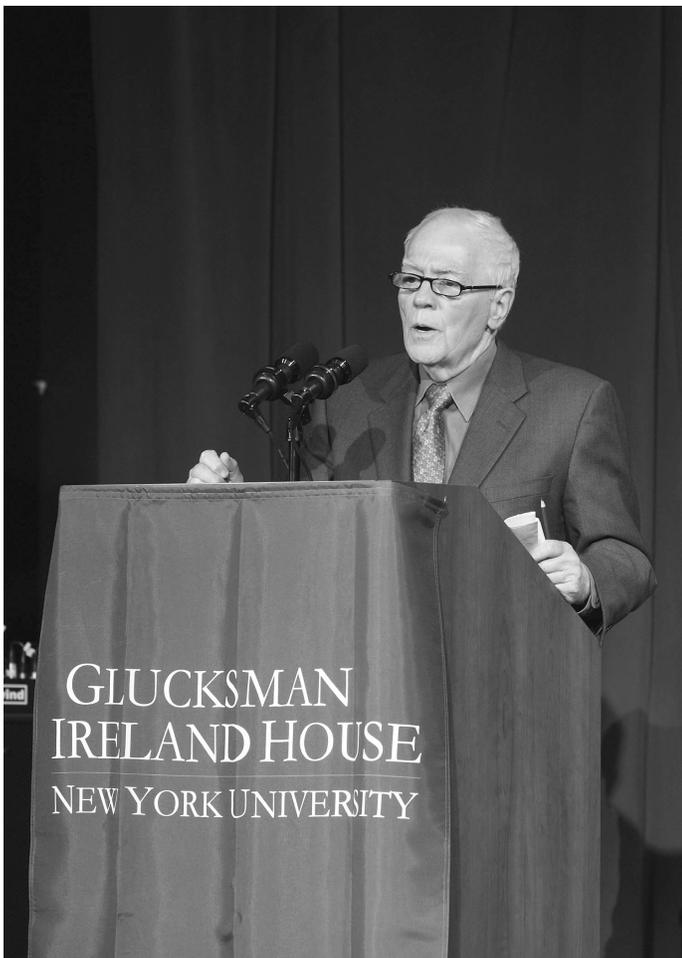
But he couldn't stop himself from smiling as he moved around the room and saw old friends, the ones who are still alive. There was Mike O'Neill, the former editor of the (New York) Daily News, who took Breslin's calls in the middle of the night—a bad headline, a dropped word—with a rare equanimity.

Breslin hugged Mary Ann Giordano, one of his many protégés, now a deputy metropolitan editor at The New York Times. He did the same to Bella English, a reporter for The Boston Globe. He saw Carl Hiaasen, The Miami Herald columnist and author, and had one question: "Why the hell would you leave Florida in the middle of December?"

For you, Jimmy. For you.

And so Breslin waved his arm, dismissively, as if to say, "All you people are nuts."

All the nuts walked across Washington Square, under the



Fellow journalists joined Jimmy Breslin, above, to celebrate his 60 years as a newspaper reporter. ©NYU Photo Bureau: Creighton.

arch, to an auditorium at New York University. There were 500 people in the auditorium. New Yorkers who read Breslin for any number of his 60 years in the newspaper business. (Breslin published his last regular column for Newsday in 2004 but he hasn't stopped writing.)

There were 14 uncomfortable metal chairs on the stage, and a nice puffy easy chair to the right. Breslin was forced to sit in the nice puffy easy chair and he rolled his eyes.

People who know and love and sometimes were driven crazy by Breslin sat in the metal chairs and took turns going to a podium and saying how wonderful and maddening and indispensable Breslin has been to journalism and to the human condition. It was a cross between "This Is Your Life" and an Irish wake, the important difference being, of course, that the corpse was still warm and still pretty ornery.

Gail Collins, The New York Times columnist, remembered the day that Breslin and an editor named Sharon Rosenhouse were screaming at each other in the Daily News newsroom. When Breslin won the Pulitzer for Commentary in 1986, he stood up in the newsroom and announced, "This award actually belongs to Sharon Rosenhouse, but I'm not speaking to her."

Jim Dwyer, a columnist at the Times, read one of Breslin's columns, filed from Alabama when segregation was the law of that land. Michael Daly, a columnist at the Daily News, recalled how Breslin took a taxi to cover the riots in Crown Heights in 1991. The taxi was torched, Breslin got beat up, and yet he wrote columns sympathetic to the people in that part of Brooklyn.

Dan Barry, another columnist at the Times, said that when he was growing up in Jackson Heights, Queens, he would come down for breakfast and his father always greeted him the same way. Not "Good morning." Not "I love you." But "Read Breslin." Barry didn't really know Breslin but Breslin heard that Barry was about to start treatment for cancer so Breslin called him. Breslin's first wife, Rosemary, died of cancer

in 1981 and Breslin survived a bout of cancer and so Barry found himself walking across Manhattan one day, on the way to Sloan-Kettering, and there was Breslin walking beside him and Breslin wouldn't shut up. When they got to the hospital, Breslin followed him inside and Barry thought Breslin was going to get on the gurney with him. Breslin told Barry to write about all this and he did.

"It wasn't until later that I realized the gift Jimmy had given me that day," Barry said. "He gave me the gift of distraction."

Breslin gave the same gift to his readers. We went about our daily

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**We went about our daily chores, thinking we had it tough, and Breslin would distract us, showing that somebody always had it worse, that life wasn't fair and neither were many of those who had the power to change things.**

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chores, thinking we had it tough, and Breslin would distract us, showing that somebody always had it worse, that life wasn't fair and neither were many of those who had the power to change things.

"When Jimmy walked up to the fourth floor of a tenement, people didn't have to explain to him what it was like to be poor in the richest city in the world," Hamill said. "He knew. It was in his DNA."

Hamill grasped Breslin's genius.

"He wrote a column," Hamill said. "Therefore he was entitled to engage in opinion. But the opinion was based on reporting. When he did express it,

he had a knack for not saying it, and letting the reader say it, which was, again, based on the reporting."

## Saying Goodbye

When all of the testimonials were over, a guy who like Breslin grew up in Queens, a guy who Jimmy Breslin knew as Anthony Benedetto from Astoria and who everybody else knows as Tony Bennett, walked on stage and sang some songs and Breslin tapped his foot.

Breslin got up and said that if there was a draft, we wouldn't be fighting wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and as usual he's probably right.

Then he sounded wistful. He referenced a bygone era, a Runyonesque lifestyle, when newspapermen peopled saloons and found stories and arguments and hangovers in equal measure.

"I'm not drinking," he said. "If I was, we could go to the bar and I could tell you a lot of lies and I could almost be charming."

When it was finished, the people, ordinary people, got out of their seats and swarmed Breslin.

It was late and I hugged Ronnie goodbye.

"Did you say goodbye to Jimmy?" she asked.

I said no, that I didn't want to bother him. He was surrounded by his favorite people, ordinary New Yorkers. She ordered me to go say goodbye.

The only thing Breslin and I have in common is that when Ronnie tells us to do something we do it.

So I walked over, waved and mouthed the words that I had to go. Breslin beckoned me closer and held his hand up to silence the people surrounding him and he asked a question, the question he always asks whenever he sees me or calls me on the phone, a question that for Breslin is like "ciao" because it can mean hello or goodbye.

"Hey," Breslin said, "you workin' on any good stories?" ■

*Kevin Cullen, a 2003 Nieman Fellow, is a columnist for The Boston Globe.*

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