

# Nieman Reports

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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## Trauma in the Aftermath Voice, Story, Character and Journalism



### Words & Reflections

Books: About Media Criticism and Policies  
For the Digital Age

Advocating the Archival Preservation of  
Newspapers' Documents

# 'to promote and elevate the standards of journalism'

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## Trauma in the Aftermath

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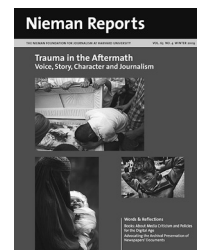
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# Bolstering a Beat: A Nieman Fellowship for Business Journalism

‘This Reynolds fellowship is designed to help journalists acquire new levels of knowledge and understanding about business and economic systems.’

BY BOB GILES

**T**he business of journalism is a subject of extensive coverage—explaining the decline in newspaper revenues, the reason newspaper journalists are losing their jobs, stories the public is missing as a result, and the search for new ways of paying for journalism. The journalism of business, on the other hand, is shrinking for the general audience in these lean times. In the midst of a deep, long and global recession, this seems a contradiction, especially since business news reporting has established its place as a respected beat after generations of neglect by mainstream news organizations.

The value of authoritative reporting cannot be underestimated at a time when economic globalization shapes international politics and national interests as much as wars do. And this worldwide financial crisis has a thousand fathers whose deeds deserve public exposure and explanation. Mary L. Schapiro, chairwoman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, has emphasized this point, suggesting, as David Carr of *The New York Times* put it, that because federal regulators cannot be everywhere at once experienced reporters constitute an added layer of “critical boots on the ground.”

Schapiro’s endorsement of the press as watchdog underscores the value of experienced reporters in holding accountable regulators, government agencies, and the private sector. Here’s the rub. As news staffs get smaller, responsibility for telling such stories increasingly falls to reporters who likely are not prepared to grasp the full complexity of newly created and largely unregulated financial strategies, as happened during this recent crisis. Without having such in-depth understanding, journalists struggle to provide the transparency citizens need to safeguard their interests and the country’s.

The Nieman Foundation is responding to Schapiro’s aspiration for the press through two initiatives designed to educate journalists about business and the economy. Nieman Watchdog ([www.niemanwatchdog.org](http://www.niemanwatchdog.org)) has launched a project, “Reporting on the Collapse,” to explain the causes of the economic disaster and the choices facing the country and to point journalists to ideas for stories.

Henry Banta, a lawyer in private practice who has been an adviser to the chairman of the Federal Trade Commission and counsel to the Senate Antitrust and Monopoly Subcommittee, is the lead contributor on this project. “With a few exceptions, the news coverage has never explained

how the collapse of the subprime mortgages market could have triggered a massive financial crisis causing hundreds of thousands of people to lose their jobs and their houses,” Banta observed. “[The] shock wave from last year has shaken the foundations of conventional economic thinking. But save for the analysis of a handful of writers, the story has never made it into the news. Yet, without that story, it is impossible to have a rational political debate about what to do to get out of the trouble we are in and prevent it from happening again.”

The Nieman Foundation also will award a fellowship in business journalism, beginning with the class of 2011 under a grant from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation. The need for this fellowship was captured by Carr in his column: “Journalism is not nuclear physics, does not require a license or special equipment. But I’ve been in business journalism for some years and have constantly bumped hard up against the limits of my land-grant, liberal arts education.”

This Reynolds fellowship is designed to help journalists acquire new levels of knowledge and understanding about business and economic systems, as the beat becomes more challenging. To report with authority on this news, reporters navigate from basic economics to management and investment theories, from personal finance to math and accounting; even law and international politics are interwoven. The range and depth of resources at the Harvard Business School, John F. Kennedy School of Government, and the university’s Department of Economics offer an exceptional environment for the Reynolds Fellow in Business Journalism, who upon returning will be expected to produce stories for visual and print media.

During a year at Harvard, this fellow can make connections with leaders in business, economics and government. This Reynolds fellow also will be included in the foundation’s network of business journalists at the National Center for Business Journalism at Arizona State University as well as business journalism programs at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, Washington and Lee University, and the University of Nevada, Reno.

A decline in daily newspaper business coverage may be inevitable, and these initiatives by the Nieman Foundation surely will not reverse this trend. But they will contribute to the education of journalists who, in turn, will better inform the public about things they don’t know but should. ■

# Aftermath: Journalists' Stories

Scan headlines and our journalistic challenges reveal themselves.

“Mother Slain in Lowell as Children Watch; Man Held”

“Gang Gunfire May Chase Chicago Children From Their School”

“War Memories May Harm Health”

“Murder and Mayhem at Fort Hood: Post-Traumatic Embitterment, Madness, or Political Terrorism?”

Words not familiar to many a decade ago now appear daily in news coverage. Post-traumatic stress disorder slips into PTSD with nodding familiarity, as does the phrase “child witness to violence.” Knowledge of emotional injury now informs a reporter’s sense of its deeper dimensions when violence visits a family, a community, a nation. News happens. Stories are told. Then, reporting about the aftermath begins.

Read the words of Luis Moreno-Ocampo, prosecutor of the International Criminal Court—words he penned about a photographic exhibit of child soldiers—and in them one hears an organizing purpose for the next stage of reportorial pursuit.



An Afghan woman. Photo by Iason Athanasiadis.

“Delve deeply into the eyes of these children, into the eyes above all else,” he wrote about these images from war. “For there you may see the future gaze of disoriented, disconnected tormented adults, miniature walking time bombs for whom society will struggle to find a place.”

Such haunting gazes are found, too, in grown-ups. Tragedy and violence they have experienced is often ob-

served in their hesitancy to speak of what they know, in their distancing expressions, and in the physical manifestations of their stress.

In this collection of stories, journalists search for language to convey what it means for someone to survive crippling moments of horror. They explore how it is that reporters try to heal themselves after witnessing violence while also acting as part of their newsroom’s effort to heal a community. They tell of carving out safe places to speak about their own internal reactions to what they’ve seen and heard and of pulling open the stoic curtain of invulnerability by seeking help. And they share how grief invades reporters’ hearts when death steals the lives of colleagues because of words they’ve written or images they’ve shown.

Step inside their journeys and emerge with a deeper understanding of why journalists tell these stories and how we can better report on the aftermath. ■

—Melissa Ludtke

## In an Instant, a Bomb Claims Lives and Devastates a Survivor

‘Every part of him was taped and bandaged because of burns and infections, except for his cheeks ... his mouth ... and his eyes ...’



Bombings in Iraq happen frequently, with tragic effects, for Americans and Iraqis. Photo by The Associated Press.

*On September 4, 2007, a roadside bomb in eastern Baghdad killed three soldiers, destroyed the legs of a fourth soldier, and left another, Duncan Crookston, with some of the war's most catastrophic injuries. Washington Post correspondent David Finkel captured the moment and its aftermath in "The Good Soldiers," his account of the 15-month deployment of the 2-16 infantry battalion, nicknamed the Rangers. It was published by Sarah Crichton Books/Farrar, Straus & Giroux.*

*In this excerpt, Duncan's commander, Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Kauzlarich, visits him at Brooke Army Medical Center (BAMC) in San Antonio, Texas while on home leave in January 2008. It was the first time he had seen him since the explosion in Iraq. The scene begins as Kauzlarich is walking down the hall with Duncan's 20-year-old wife, Meaghun, and his mom, Lee. Fellow soldier Michael Anderson was with Duncan in Baghdad on the day of the explosion.*

**T**hey began walking down the hallway now, toward Duncan's room. Four and a half months later, there was still so much about September 4 that Lee and Meaghun didn't know. That Duncan's platoon circled up and prayed before every mission. That his body armor was still on fire when he was loaded into a Humvee. That his hands were so black that Michael Anderson thought he was still wearing his gloves. That as Anderson cradled his head in the back of the Humvee, Duncan, hair and eyebrows and so much else of him gone, began to talk.

"Who is this?"

"It's Anderson. Can you hear me?"

"How's my face?"

"Don't worry. It looks good."

"Ow, it hurts. It hurts. It burns. And my legs hurt."

"Don't worry. Don't worry. I got you. Just rest your head in my hands. It's okay. It's okay."

"Give me some morphine."

"It's okay."

"Morphine."

"It's okay."

"I want to go to sleep."

"Stay awake. Don't close your eyes."

"I want to go to sleep."

"Keep talking to me, buddy. You love your wife, right?"

"I love my wife."

"Well, don't worry, man. She's gonna be waiting for you, man."

"I LOVE MY WIFE."

"You're safe. You're here with us. We got you."

“I LOVE MY WIFE. I LOVE MY WIFE.”

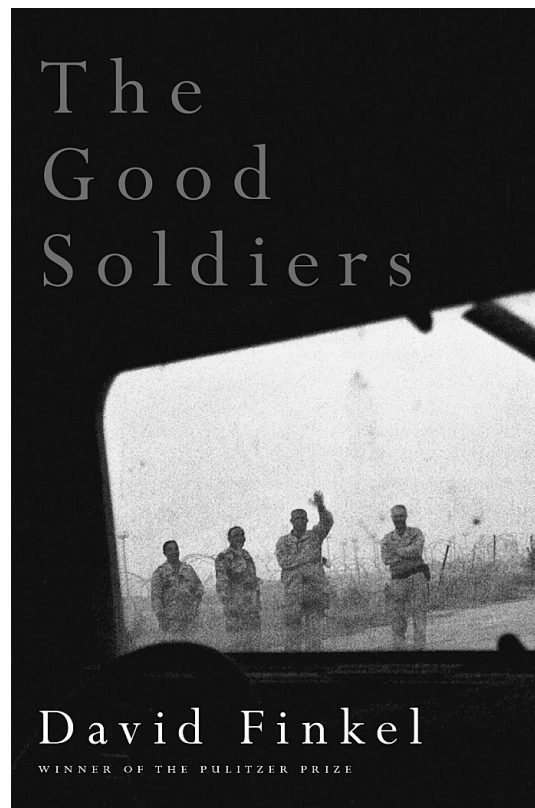
“Nothing’s gonna happen to you. You’re safe. You’re fine.”

“I LOVE MY WIFE. I LOVE MY WIFE.”

He shouted that again and again, all the way to the aid station. They didn’t know that, either, but from the moment he reached BAMC, they knew every thing from then on, because this was their life now. His infections. His fevers. His bedsores. His pneumonia. His bowel perforations. His kidney failure. His dialysis. His tracheotomy for a ventilator tube. His eyes, which for a time had to be sutured shut. His ears, which were crisped and useless when he arrived, and subsequently dropped away. His 30 trips so far to the operating room. His questions. His depression. His phantom pains, as if he still had two arms and two legs.

“I mean, we weren’t even married for a year,” Meaghun said as they neared the room.

“I know,” Kauzlarich said, and now he was looking through the window at the sight that Anderson had called honestly creepy, but even that didn’t begin to describe what he was seeing. There was so much of Duncan Crookston missing that he didn’t seem real. He was half of a body propped up in a full-size bed, seemingly bolted into place. He couldn’t move because he had nothing left with which to push himself into motion except for a bit of arm that was immobilized in bandages, and he couldn’t speak because of the tracheotomy tube that had been inserted into his throat. Every part of him was taped and bandaged because of burns and infections, except for his cheeks, which remained reddened from burns,



his mouth, which hung open and misshapen, and his eyes, which were covered by goggles that produced their own moisture, resulting in water droplets on the inside through which he viewed whatever came into his line of sight. “Bastards,” Kauzlarich said quietly as into those droplets Meaghun now appeared.

“Do you want the music on or do

you want me to turn the music off?” she asked, and when there was no response from him, she patiently tried again.

“Do you want me to turn it off?”

No response.

“Off?” she said.

No response.

The room was hot. The sounds were of the ventilator, IV drips of pain medication, and monitoring machines whose beeps and numerical readouts were the only indication that inside those bandages life continued to go on.

Now Lee swam into Duncan’s view.

“Is that better?” she said as she put a pillow on the board that was supporting the remains of his arm.

No response.

“Yeah?” she said as she fluffed it into shape.

No response.

And now it was Kauzlarich.

“Hey, Ranger buddy. It’s Colonel Kauzlarich. How are you doing?” he said as he stood at the side of the bed.

No response.

“You hanging in there?”

No response.

“Can you hear him? Yes or no?” Meaghun said.

No response.

“All the guys in Iraq want to let you know that they appreciate what you’re doing,” Kauzlarich said. “I appreciate what you’re doing.”

No response.

“We’re doing good. We’re winning,” he said, and soon after that, after listening to Meaghun talk about Duncan’s upcoming twentieth birthday and their plans to someday live in Italy, and then listening as she suctioned saliva out of his mouth, he left, promising to be back. ■

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## When Murder Strikes a Small Community

'What is a news organization's responsibility to its reporters who are eyewitness to murder? Can an editorial staff experience depression or long-term PTSD as a result of such exposure?'

BY DON CORRIGAN



The community of Kirkwood, Missouri mourned the loss of police officers and city officials after a shooting at city hall on February 7, 2008. Covering the aftermath proved to be an emotional ordeal for members of the local media. *Photo by Diana Linsley/Webster-Kirkwood Times.*

On the evening of February 7, 2008, a large, angry man—whom I had once put on the front page of the hometown newspaper as a model citizen—went on a shooting spree at our local city hall. He pumped rounds into two police officers, two City Council members, the city engineer and the mayor. As a bystander to the event, a reporter from Lee Enterprise's Suburban Journals was shot in the hand.

The carnage only stopped when police officers entered city hall and brought down Charles "Cookie" Thornton in a hail of bullets. Our community weekly was not known for covering horrendous crimes. Our reputation was for stories such as the one, years

earlier, about Thornton serving as a reading volunteer for young children in the Kirkwood School District.

Kirkwood, a town in suburban St. Louis that had fancied itself as a sort of Mayberry, was more accustomed to our upbeat stories. The town was not ready for a photograph full of tears and a banner headline, "A Community Mourns," as we covered the hastily arranged funerals. Readers were not ready for the community weekly to be packed with the details of murder at city hall—and neither were we at the Webster-Kirkwood Times.

As I write this, it all still doesn't ring true. How could Mayor Mike Swoboda, whom I chatted with on a local bike trail days before the shoot-

ings, now be gone? How could these people, whom I talked to on a regular basis for city hall stories, now be gone? How could Kirkwood Police Sgt. William Biggs Jr. and Council member Connie Karr, whom I had arranged to speak to my reporting class at the local college the very week of the killings, now be gone? How could this have happened?

These are lifetime questions that do not go away easily. I've learned this from other editors and reporters who've had to cover the murders of people they once knew closely. I've learned this from serving on media panels on "tragedies and journalists" and by becoming familiar with the work of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma which deals, in part, with helping journalists who endure a kind of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) reaction after their immersion in horrors they are called upon to cover.

Haunting questions of why such evil happens do not fall in the purview of editors and journalists. But there are less ethereal questions that can be addressed after being caught up in terrifying events. Among them:

- What is a news organization's responsibility to its reporters who are eyewitnesses to murder? Can an editorial staff experience depression or long-term PTSD as a result of such exposure?
- What are the local news media's obligations to the national news

media as requests for background information and interviews pile up? In the case of a community weekly, when do we say “no” and take care of our own coverage and our own needs?

- When the national dailies, TV networks, and the cable news channel operations finally go away, what should the continuing coverage of the local news media operation be like? Can the content of such coverage help with the healing of a community, as well as a newspaper’s own staff?

## What Happens Next?

When bits of news of the city hall massacre began airing as bulletins on local radio and television in St. Louis, our immediate concern was for our Times’ reporter, Marty Harris, who regularly covered city hall. Although she was not injured, she was directly behind the city engineer who was killed execution-style.

After a debriefing by police officials, we shielded Harris from a slew of interview requests. Then, she was allowed to take as much time off as she deemed necessary and she was offered counseling as were many employees of the city of Kirkwood. She has not covered city hall meetings since the tragedy.

Counselors provided a range of ideas on how to cope in the grim aftermath of the tragedy. Depending on personality traits, I learned that some prescriptives involved long vacation

trips to help purge negative images from the mind. Vacations were advised for the duration of one-year memorial anniversary activities. Other counselors advised reporters to use their writing as a way to confront and to deal with

own situation was compounded by the death of a close friend just days before the shootings, and then learning my dad was diagnosed with inoperable brain cancer days after the shootings. I found it impossible to sleep until I was

prescribed a strong sedative by my doctor. My wife urged me to quit taking the pills because of concerns about dependency and personality changes.

I’d argue that some longlasting personality changes have taken place—with or without drugs—on the news-editorial side of our weekly operation since February 7, 2008. At the Webster-Kirkwood Times, we are kinder and gentler with each other. In our news and editorial department, there is less excitement over “big stories” breaking or at criticism from readers directed our way. Perhaps we are shell-shocked. Perhaps we presume we have been through the biggest and ugliest story of our journalism careers.

## The Human Touch

It is this journalist’s feeling that there should not be a double standard when it comes to granting interviews and being cooperative with others in the news media. If we believe that people in our community should be cooperative with us, then members of local press should cooperate with the national news media

when interviews are requested.

In the aftermath of the Kirkwood shootings, our newspaper staff cooperated as much as possible by sharing past stories and pictures with the national news media. The front page feature photo from a decade earlier of the killer, “Cookie” Thornton, was



A memorial in front of city hall in Kirkwood, Missouri marked the loss of people who were murdered inside the building. Members of the media were among those who witnessed the shootings. *Photo by Diana Linsley/Webster-Kirkwood Times.*

emotions about the killings. They also advised that we come together to talk among ourselves about our feelings and how we were coping with conflicting emotions.

Vacation trips are not an option for everyone in a small news operation caught up in a community crisis. My

shared and seen around the world. In most cases, the national news media credited the Times with the photo, but not always. The Times also opened its story archives on Thornton and deceased members of the community. However, there comes a time when those who work for a local newspaper have to do their own job; that can mean saying no to such requests for interviews.

For our small staff, the job of reporting and shooting photos at six funerals was overwhelming. Yet during that time, requests kept coming our way. There was a network morning TV show staffer who called me at home at 1:30 in the morning, just hours after the shootings. She pleaded with me to give up the home phone number of our reporter who witnessed the shootings. When I told this CBS employee I would not give up the phone number and that I would talk to Harris in the morning about whether she wanted to comply with this interview request, I was reminded about TV deadline demands.

When I still refused to give up the phone number, this person told me that the morning show and all of the United States “wanted to reach out to Marty and express sympathy.” Then I was told that CBS News anchor Katie Couric wanted to reach out to Harris. Finally, I was told that “my boss is going to kill me if I don’t get this interview.” I hung up. I was tempted to tell her that the Webster-Kirkwood Times would reach out to her family if her boss did, indeed, kill her.

In welcome contrast came a call from Chris Bury of ABC’s “Nightline” wanting to interview me about Thornton and the murders at city hall. We could not find a time that worked for both of us, largely because I was attending funerals, including one for my good friend. “Don’t worry about it. Forget

it,” Bury said. “It’s more important now for you to be human.”

### A Time to Heal

In the time since the city hall massacre, it has been important for us to be human as we go about doing our work. When asked, we have covered church and reconciliation meetings, and we’ve backed off when the request for privacy was made.

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**Some readers accuse us of dragging out the coverage of an aberration that is best forgotten. Others feel the incident needs more coverage, more analysis—and that we have sided with the ‘powers that be.’ Most readers express support for our coverage, and for allowing a wide array of voices to be heard as we report on these community reconciliation forums.**

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There was a racial component to these murders. Thornton was black; all the victims were white. A few in the minority community felt Thornton had legitimate grievances against the city and was pushed over the edge. Some of our white readers were offended that we covered Thornton’s funeral and that we quoted “his apologists” at subsequent forums for healing and understanding.

Our newspaper and its Web site covered many community forums, and such events are still happening. Some readers accuse us of dragging out the coverage of an aberration that is best forgotten. Others feel the

incident needs more coverage, more analysis—and that we have sided with the “powers that be.” Most readers express support for our coverage, and for allowing a wide array of voices to be heard as we report on these community reconciliation forums.

A local Society of Professional Journalists’ meeting was very helpful in the aftermath of the Kirkwood shootings. Editors and reporters who covered the city hall massacre attended and heard

Terri Weaver, a trauma expert and professor of psychology at St. Louis University, explain that whole towns can be traumatized, as well as individuals, in the aftermath of extreme violence. As a Virginia Tech alum, Weaver is quite familiar with the trauma that the town of Blacksburg, Virginia has been going through as a result of the 33 shooting deaths on that campus. In her talk she acquainted us with accounts of journalists’ reactions to covering such tragedies.<sup>1</sup>

Familiarity with the personal and professional issues involved with this kind of coverage would help a lot before an event catapults us into it, as happened with us. And the Dart Center—and now Nieman Reports with this issue—offers useful guidance based on the lived experiences of journalists who share tips about ways to cope during and after the coverage of tragic events. Among the observations I’ve found especially cogent is this one from the Dart Center: “Journalists have a history of denial. There is a perception that you are unprofessional if ‘you can’t handle it.’ Journalists claim they are unaffected to their colleagues. But this false bravado takes its toll.” ■

*Don Corrigan is editor and co-publisher of the Webster-Kirkwood Times and South County Times in suburban St. Louis and a professor of journalism at Webster University.*

<sup>1</sup> Such accounts have been compiled by the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma and are available at <http://dartcenter.org/gateway/journalists>.

## Tears Are Part of Telling the Story

‘That day in the bedroom Gary asked the questions; he fought the urge to cry. He did his job.’

BY MIKE WALTER

It’s happening again. The man sitting next to me is crying. He’s fighting the tears, but the tears are winning and right now he’s like a prizefighter who has been knocked to the canvas, wobbly but determined to go on. After a long pause, he spits out two words, connected in spirit, but separated by time. The first is “I’m.” Then he shakes his head and finally, choking back more tears, blurts out “Sorry.” He’s ashamed of his tears, upset with himself for displaying this emotion.

Gary Tippet, one of the finest journalists in Australia, is also my friend. A senior writer at *The Age*, a leading daily in Melbourne, he’s won the Walkley, the Australian version of a Pulitzer. I’m watching Gary as he glances down and shakes his head. Then I look out at the audience. The room is packed and I’d describe the crowd as hanging on Gary’s every word, but actually they’re absorbed by his every tear because words aren’t yet being spoken. I glance over at his remarkable wife, Jeni, and I see tears rolling down her cheeks. She knows this pain her husband carries because she lives with it.

Eventually the words will come, but it will take time. I lift my arm, reach over and grab Gary’s shoulder, and say quietly, “It’s OK.” My hand is on his arm, but I know that my friend isn’t here. His body is in this room but as he tells the story, his mind is drifting back to that day—a day he knows he will never forget.



Mike Walter, right, prepares to go live with a report for WUSA, the CBS station in Washington, D.C. after the 9/11 attack on the Pentagon. *Photo by Bob Pugh.*

Gary knocks on the door, and as he does, in a ghastly turn of events, he realizes his mistake. He has arrived on the day of the boy’s funeral. It is too late to do anything about it. He has come to speak to a father whose child has wrapped his car around a telephone pole. There at the wake, he can’t help but feel uncomfortable. Everyone is there to pay their last respects, to mourn a teenager taken too young. But Gary is there for a story.

At the newspaper and police station, the young boy is a number—a number Gary will never forget. Through his tears, he says this, with a certain sense of shame. The boy is number 76. Gary will tell number 76’s story, but he will be haunted by the fact that he did not do the same for the other 75 who came before him. This teenager was the 76th person to die in a fatal wreck in Melbourne that year. There will be more—more pain and agony.

Gary knows he will be there at moments like this one, doing what he does, listening to, then telling these stories. Remarkably, on this day, the boy’s father agrees to talk. He has thought it through, and he says if talking to Gary can help save one child, it will be worth it. Journalists are accustomed to hearing these words. But what happens next is what has stayed with Gary all these

years later.

Gary tells the audience that the father insisted that they talk in his son’s bedroom. So there, surrounded by the artifacts of a young life cut short, the father begins. As they sit together in this room, tears flow from the father’s eyes, just as they do from Gary’s as he recounts the story years later.

Gary is speaking in a large conference room at the Westin Hotel in Indianapolis. He’s part of a panel at the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) convention brought together to discuss “Breaking News, Breaking Down,” a film I made about journalists covering tragedy and trauma, and some of the issues it raises in the newsroom and in their personal lives. SPJ moved the screening to a bigger room after learning that a larger crowd was expected. People arrive in waves, and the screening is postponed as more chairs are brought in to accommodate everyone.

Those who came to watch the film did not expect to see what is happening now. Gary is clearly in the room with them, but emotionally it is apparent that he has rejoined this father on the bed in his son's room. And as Gary speaks, the father is talking about the journey to the morgue. He identifies his boy, his flesh and blood. He tells Gary how he must hold him one last time. As he wraps his arms around his son, the tears drain from his eyes and he feels something crawling on his arms. His son had been thrown from the car and spent hours in the grass. The ants had claimed him before his father had a chance to hold him one last time.

As Gary recounts this story, there are more tears. That day in the bedroom Gary asked the questions; he fought the urge to cry. He did his job. Later, back in the newsroom late into the night and alone with the father's words reverberating in his head, Gary began to craft one of his remarkable stories. Only then did the tears cascade down his cheeks and onto the keyboard.

### **A Film Reveals Journalists' Trauma**

For this collection of stories about journalists and trauma, I was asked to write about "Breaking News, Breaking Down." Writing about the documentary is easy, but I'm not sure it's as important as the emotions that the film evokes from journalists such as Gary and other members of the audience. It's the little film that sparks a big reaction.

"Breaking News, Breaking Down" tells the story of my witnessing the American Airlines jet slamming into the Pentagon on 9/11. That day affected me in ways I never could have imagined. I'd seen my brother grapple with post-traumatic stress disorder when he returned from Vietnam, but somehow I never saw the same symptoms in myself, even when others did. After that day, I was haunted by nightmares, gripped by depression, and lived my life in a constant fog. I thought I was alone, but soon learned I was not. This film traces my journey

as I met other journalists who were similarly affected by their work, from coverage of 9/11 to Hurricane Katrina.

I am grateful for the media coverage of my film. I've noticed, though, that none of it talks about the audience's response. They get to me. I remember telling someone that this film is really about permission—the permission for people like Gary to open up about these buried experiences. There are many like Gary who have told their stories after watching this documentary—journalists, paramedics, Iraq War veterans, therapists and Vietnam vets.

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**Only then did  
the tears cascade  
down his cheeks  
and onto the  
keyboard.**

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Each exists in a world of trauma. A young therapist thanks me for making the film: "It made me think about what I absorb. It taught me to take my own emotional pulse. I will see a counselor when I return home." A woman who was inside the Pentagon when the plane hit and another who was outside the World Trade Center hug me and thank me for making the film.

The film is therapeutic. In telling my story, I somehow have told theirs, too. When I was in Australia, I heard from Katrina Kincaid. Years ago she was a young producer at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation when she got her first overseas assignment. She was excited to be assigned to cover the war in Lebanon, but that feeling evaporated weeks later when she was clutching her soundman as he died in her arms. She hadn't spoken about what happened that day in years, but she talked about it after seeing the film.

When the lights dim, I always have that funny feeling in my stomach. Mine

is a deeply personal film and it exposes me in a way that would make others uncomfortable. But I know when the lights come up, magical connections will happen. I've watched the film over and over again; I know how it begins, what happens in it, and how the story ends. I cannot predict what will happen next. I only know there will be stories like Gary's, and I will never forget his nor the ones I will one day hear others tell.

I began by talking about Gary, and his story is important in showing me that I am not alone. Journalists can remain objective while still absorbing on a human level what we observe. Yet after 9/11, I felt like a misfit as I asked myself why. Why me? Why was I there that day? Why was I reacting this way? It didn't occur to me to ask the question that boy's father asked himself on the day of his son's funeral. He asked how—how could he take this tragedy, this horrible occurrence, and make something good out of it?

It would take me years to ask that fundamental question, then eventually find a way to create something good out of the experience of bearing witness to such a tragedy. This is what I hope I've accomplished with this film. I'll never forget the people who have shed tears as they've told their stories. I have a saying that God never would have created tear ducts if he didn't want us to use them. Soon, I'll be off to the next screening, the next talk, and I'll be prepared to put my hand on a shoulder, lean over and say, "It's OK." ■

*Mike Walter, the writer and director of "Breaking News, Breaking Down," is a broadcast journalist who worked most recently as weekday anchor at WUSA, Washington, D.C.'s CBS station. He takes his documentary to film festivals, journalism conferences, and universities while keeping a journal about his experiences. Information about the film can be found at [www.breakingnewsbreakingdown.com](http://www.breakingnewsbreakingdown.com).*

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 AN ESSAY IN WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS
 

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# Shooting War: A Photographer's Vision

BY MARCUS BLEASDALE

*Protests against the Indian occupation of Srinagar, Kashmir grew more violent after members of India's security forces allegedly raped and murdered two young women in late May. When Marcus Bleasdale visited in July, angry residents clashed with Kashmir's own police force as well as the Indian security forces. At one point, he watched as large waves of youths advanced toward the police, using the metal ripped off the sides of shops and market stalls as weapons and projectiles. Live rounds were fired and youths threw a grenade at a group of Kashmiri police, killing three and wounding seven. Tens of thousands of people have died over the past two decades of insurgency in Kashmir.*

Riots are frenzied and dangerous. In Kashmir—a disputed region where India and Pakistan clash and an armed insurgency roils longstanding tensions—locals want an independent state but politicians in both countries deny them the chance to vote on this issue. So daily on the streets rocks drop from all directions and security forces fire tear gas and rubber bullets at the crowd of demonstrating youths. There is always a randomness to the shots, from left and right, in the air and on the ground, and with this comes danger.

When shooting pictures at a time like this, there is a split-second chance to make a frame that reflects my feelings about what I am witnessing—the craziness of the environment and pain and danger that are ever present. I am aware of all of this happening around me, but at the same time I try to push it out of my mind and concentrate on small moments—the emotions and the composition to express them—and try to make us all understand and almost feel we are there when we look at the images. I seek to represent the reality of what is happening.

In these moments, I am never sure whether I will be hit, arrested or shot. I just shoot and hope the violence passes me by. The noise is deafening—the guns firing, the screaming. Orders from the military echo all around, as do their guns aimed at the youths. I duck and wince, not always sure where the gunshots are coming from. It is instinctive. I know if I heard the shot then I am fine, but still I duck away from the source of the noise in the mistaken hope that this will protect me.

The children demonstrating in Srinagar, the capital of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, were so young. The local graveyards are full of the bodies of those who fought before them, but still they fight. In watching them, I can't help but think of my niece and my nephew who are about the same age as many of the demonstrators. Could they be doing this? How would I feel if they subjected themselves to these dangers? Here, families accept it as one would accept children running to the park to play for an hour because their anger at occupation is so acute.

Elder brothers and sisters consider

these young demonstrators to be heroes. Many times I saw older brothers proudly presenting their young brothers as fighters against occupation. Yet when I asked them about the history of the conflict, they seemed to know very little; their motivation for getting involved with these dangerous activities was comradeship and “something to do.”

Sometimes they play in front of the lens. When they do this I walk away. I am not there to create a moment that would not otherwise exist. Yet this can be a problem for those of us who come to tell this story with our cameras. Sometimes I see journalists filming and shooting a riot or demonstration and I have the sense that it would not exist without the camera being present. In not wanting to be a part of this problem, I tend to hang back away from the demonstrators, jumping into the action only when I sense things are more natural and honest.

War is seldom well executed. There is panic and fear, indecision and decision; events consist of noise and silence at the same time. To be inside of it is to experience a rush of thoughts and emotions, cascading from the ultimate high to the deepest low, then up and down again. Soldiers, tunneled in their vision, seemed nonetheless scared about what's going to happen in the next 30 seconds and indecisive about how far they should go to enforce their will and the will of their commanders. This mix of feelings and thoughts and emotions—fear, panic, the rush of the moment—is what I want to visually capture.

As I run with the security forces



Early in the morning before prayers children as young as nine or 10 set tires on fire and collect rocks in preparation for the day's confrontations. *Photo and text by Marcus Bleasdale.*

advancing to get into position, I can feel the fear that surrounds me. I try to carry this feeling into my work of capturing this crazy moment of unknowns. How far will the troops go? What will they decide to do once the two sides are engaged? Will they live? Will those demonstrating survive? What I seek is the visual representation of this undefined line between human emotion and the reality of war.

In experiencing death, each of us reacts differently. Nor can any of us know how we will absorb the sudden death of a loved one until it happens. In our minds, some of us see ourselves weeping and collapsing, others as strong-willed and stoic in acceptance. Rarely do we regard death as tossing us into a mixed-up, overpowering emotion that takes full control of our body and mind.

Saying goodbye to a loved one, is, one hopes, a dignified affair that gives us time we need to reflect, think and pray for those whom we have lost.

Time to understand why things like this happen. During war, it is often not possible to have that reflective time to say goodbye. Funerals are rushed as the war goes on. Anger manifests itself into further protests and more death, and a question must be asked: why does one more youngster's life get sacrificed in this cycle of retribution for the young lives already lost?

Photographing these moments is enormously sensitive. I have at times been asked to document these moments for a family so angry at what has happened to them. They invite me into their homes and their hearts at the most emotional time. It's overwhelming, and yet in some strange way I'm honored by this privilege. The family trusts me. They ask me to be their voice, to record this moment in the vain hope that their child will be the last life that is lost.

I try to be quiet and discreet. Once a father spoke to me over the body of his son. He told me about his child

and how he was such a good boy with such a future. He loved life and his family, and he loved cricket. His tears dropped onto the coffin and I listened. This was not the moment to raise the camera; this was a moment to talk, to pray. A few minutes later his head slumped on the coffin—I remember it like yesterday—my hand and my camera rose and I pressed the shutter. The tears rolled onto the lid of the coffin and the family prayed.

*Marcus Bleasdale has spent 10 years covering the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo and has written two books, "One Hundred Years of Darkness" and "The Rape of a Nation." His photographs are widely published in Britain, Europe and the United States. He won a first-place award from Pictures of the Year International in 2009 for his photographs documenting human rights abuses in Congo. His photographs from Kashmir appear on the following pages.*



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A 12-year-old boy tries to protect himself against tear gas and hide his identity in anticipation of joining demonstrations.



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The man with a hand on his head was later rushed to the hospital.

*Photos and text by Marcus Bleasdale.*





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The family of 20-year-old Asrar Mushtaq Dar prepares to bury him after he was abducted and murdered in Srinagar. It is not known whether the perpetrator was a member of security forces, the jealous boyfriend of a young woman with whom the victim spoke, or someone else. The murder led to four days of rioting and many more deaths.

*Photo and text by Marcus Bleasdale.*



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Members of the Indian Central Reserve Police Force face local youths and political activists who were throwing stones.



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Local police officers in substandard protective gear confront the angry crowds. ■

*Photos and text by Marcus Bleasdale.*

# When They Come for Us

‘... when you are compelled to leave your ... family, your work, your country, and your life as you knew it, that’s when you realize you cannot give up. You have to do more, you have to speak louder, write bolder. And now, it’s personal.’

BY SONALI SAMARASINGHE WICKREMATUNGE

The smell of open sewers hung thickly in the air. A makeshift tent of palm leaves, asbestos sheets, and a checked blue sarong stood bravely, defiantly even, on this ravaged soil—ravaged first by the tsunami, then by Tamil Tiger terrorists, and finally by angry aerial fire from the Sri Lankan Army. A tiny face peered out from behind the sarong wall. Framed in brown curls, it broke into a thousand smiles. My eyes stung for a moment. She was so little. The politics of war were so great.

I wrote these stories. The story about the Sri Lankan Army’s costly military victory over the Tamil Tigers in August 2007. Of 17 aid workers from Action Contre la Faim, the French food agency, lined up and gunned down, their murderers never found in a morass of state sponsored independent inquiries. Of a region struggling to regain its economic strength. The story of fishermen whose livelihoods have crumbled due to unreasonable fishing rules. And the story of that little girl who like a pink lotus in a brackish pond had given this jaded journalist hope.

I wrote stories. That is what we do as we attempt to hold up a mirror in which those accorded the public’s trust may see themselves stripped of veneer. And when we succeed in laying one brick on the path toward a better world we have done our duty well.

We are trained to see through a dispassionate lens. It helps to dull the pain though it can’t dull the outrage that comes from witnessing unbridled corruption that has left thousands of women and children living in makeshift camps, yet to benefit from tsunami funds. It doesn’t blunt the memory of

the face of a child orphaned by war. We coarsen our skins and harden our resolve. We act blasé to tell a horrific story.

## When a Journalist Is Murdered

So what happens when the pain is so visceral it tears your life apart? What happens when the murderers who are at the doorsteps of those you seek to champion are now at your own? What to do with the pain now?

It was 8 o’clock on Thursday morning, January 8, 2009, two months to the day after I married Lasantha Wickrematunge. He and I were longtime investigative journalists and editors for the Sunday Leader newspaper, which Lasantha founded. We had been united by our work and now we were united in life. Nothing could shake our confidence. We felt strong. Rock like.

January 8th was just another day. That morning Lasantha and I had hurried to the local pharmacy to buy medicine for a domestic aide who was ill. Soon after, Lasantha received a tip-off from our newsroom that he was being followed. We hadn’t noticed anything. But as we returned home, two men on a black motorcycle sped past. They wore helmets and black fatigues and stared us down as we got out of the car.

Lasantha wanted to talk with them. He even walked toward them but I hurried him into the house and locked the door. It was a disturbing moment but not an unusual one. Over the years, he’d been followed, threatened, attacked with clubs, and nearly arrested for what he wrote. Our presses had twice been burned.

I begged Lasantha to stay home that day, but on Thursdays he was always in a hurry. It was the day he wrote his influential political column, Suranimala. Meanwhile, the motorcyclists had vanished and Lasantha felt confident he could handle any lingering threat. He was determined to go to work. He was used to this, was he not?

He drove to the newsroom during rush hour. As he slowed down in traffic, his car was ambushed in a commando-style operation by eight men on four motorcycles, according to witnesses. The windshield was shattered and Lasantha suffered a fatal blow to his head. The attack happened in a high security zone, five minutes from our newspaper and just yards from one of Sri Lanka’s largest Air Force bases.

Back home I got ready to leave for the newsroom. Even though I had begged Lasantha to stay, I took comfort in his confidence and invincibility and felt emboldened.

A half-hour later I got the call. You know the one. The call army spouses dread. The one spouses of journalists in Sri Lanka fear. [According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 15 journalists have been murdered in Sri Lanka since 2005.]

I didn’t believe what the caller was telling me.

I tried to call Lasantha. My fingers slid over my mobile phone buttons, in hope and silent prayer. Surely my heart had stopped. Damn it, nothing was working. I hate this phone, who gave it to me ... oh he did ... I must tell him it doesn’t work. I pressed the wrong buttons ... on the screen appeared a text message Lasantha had sent a day earlier: “Wifey I love you.”



Sonali touches her husband, Lasantha, a fellow journalist who was murdered in Sri Lanka in January 2009. Photo by Gemunu Amarasinghe/The Associated Press.

Every morning, Lasantha would read the 91st Psalm. "... You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. ..."

Inspired by his faith, Lasantha created his motto, "unbowed and unafraid." It was a sentiment reflected in an editorial he wrote that predicted his own death: "... there is a calling that is yet above high office, fame, lucre and security. It is the call of conscience," he had stated. The editorial was discovered and published a few days after his murder.

### The Pain of Personal Loss

So how does a journalist deal with trauma? I don't know. I only know this. When it strikes you personally, when you are afraid to sleep in your own bed, when thugs on motorcycles kill your husband then come back for you, when you are compelled to leave your home and family, your work, your country, and your life as you knew it, that's when you realize you cannot give up. You have to do more, you have to speak louder, write bolder. And now,

it's personal.

One of my favorite John Dryden verses goes like this:

I'm a little wounded but I'm not slain;  
I will lay me down for to bleed awhile,  
Then I'll rise and fight with you again.

But to rise and fight again, we have to face the trauma of personal responsibility and the guilt that we live while our comrades lay dead. Guilt that we are free while 300,000 men, women and children of the war are interned still in Sri Lankan concentration camps surrounded by barbed wire, not knowing what tomorrow holds.

We have to face emotions we were taught to dismiss. As mourners wept for Lasantha I felt compelled to comfort them. As hundreds of people streamed into our home to pay their last respects to Lasantha's remains, I retreated upstairs to my computer from time to time to edit the newspaper, as I always did in his absence. No emotional choices exist for journalists.

As unknown faces passed through

our home that first week I couldn't help wondering if the four large men in army T-shirts and crew cuts who walked in at two o'clock one morning and lingered near the coffin were my husband's murderers.

Those close to Lasantha denied knowing him. Some who didn't know him claimed to be his friend. Now shock emboldened me to go on. Some of my friends and family would no longer ride in the same car with me, fearing they would be collateral damage as I would be the next obvious target.

Our home in Colombo lies abandoned and it's hard to convince a caretaker or even a friend to check in on our belongings. My cousin fears he'll be attacked by the government if he is seen at our house. Another relative worries about the infamous white van

the government routinely uses for abductions. Superstition has done its bit. Nobody likes to rent or buy the home of tragedy, the home of a couple whose dreams were dashed within two months of their marriage. It's bad luck.

Now, 10 months later, the running stops and finally I grieve. It was easier when there was too much to think about, when all I had to do was look strong and undefeated for the cameras. I face those feelings today, the loss, hurt and anger. The panic of not seeing familiar faces. The stress of the unknown. The sense of abandonment by the country I love.

Suddenly I am not telling the story. I am living it. ■

*Sonali Samarasinghe Wickrematunge, a 2010 Nieman Fellow, is an investigative reporter and editor. She worked with her late husband, Lasantha Wickrematunge, for more than a decade before fleeing Sri Lanka shortly after he was killed, due to threats to her own life. In November, her work in covering human rights, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press was recognized with an Oxfam Novib/PEN Award.*

## Manipulator or Human Rights Facilitator?

A journalist involved with the South African Broadcasting Corporation's radio coverage of that country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission describes how it was done and why decisions made about its approach matter.

BY ANTJIE KROG

A quarter of a century ago, truth commissions emerged as one of the vehicles of transitional justice after times of violence. In the mid-1990's, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) brought new approaches to the process: It gave individual amnesty to those who testified; it allowed victims of the opposite sides to testify during the same forum; and, its hearings were held in public.

Once it was decided that the TRC hearings would be held in public, then decisions about news media coverage of the proceedings had to be made. To enable as many South Africans as possible to keep up with the proceedings, the commission, as it noted in its final report, "judged radio the most effective communication medium." It described its reasoning in this way: "Radio listenership figures far outstrip newspaper readership. In addition radio broadcasts penetrate all corners of the country in the home languages of the majority of South Africans ... [also] for those who are not literate and for those in rural areas."

The commission's radio strategy was buttressed by efforts to make it work. Money was raised to support such coverage; a special room was allocated to radio journalists; feeds of the different translations (of various languages and dialects spoken in South Africa) were relayed to radio journalists, and special phone lines were installed so that reports with quality sound could be fed straight to the news desk and to current affairs shows.

### The Role of Journalists

I covered for radio the drafting of the TRC's legislation in parliament.



F.W. de Klerk, right, shook hands with Archbishop Desmond Tutu, chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in 1996. The former president of South Africa had recently acknowledged that his party's apartheid policies meant suffering and humiliation for millions of South Africans. *Photo by Sasa Kralj/The Associated Press.*

When the South African Broadcasting Corporation set out to create a team to report on the commission's work, I was chosen to direct it. Our team adopted a multi-pronged approach using hourly news bulletins, longer news packages, Q. and A.'s, debates and analysis. At first we used this variety of genres to satisfy our need to understand events or behaviors, but over time this approach also prevented listeners from being bombarded with terrible facts of pain and suffering without any attempt made to find ways to process what they were hearing. We focused on concepts such as memory loss, post-traumatic stress symptoms, and anomie.

There was value in this core reporting group. We developed an institu-

tional memory so we could immediately pick up any change in the process of testimony. More importantly, we could identify silences. We didn't think that we should fill the silences, but we tried to analyze why they were there.

I only forbade members of our reporting team from doing one thing: initiating, looking for, or broadcasting a "live" reconciliation story. Reconciliation was immensely important and personal. I didn't believe we had a right to witness it because our mere presence could interfere with and influence the process in a way that it perhaps didn't really want to go. Individuals dealing with their pasts were always more important than a journalist's story. Sensitive issues such as forgiveness or revenge should

never be manipulated because one wanted a good story. I was and still am hugely suspicious of people who confront victims with questions about forgiveness.

The journalists' devotion to this story, evident in their reporting on the TRC, showed that they felt involved in a process that was not simply a story; it resonated with and affected their lives. We reported this story because we wanted a better country and we wanted the effects of past injustice to come to light. If one wants a better society, a more caring and fair society, then targeting particular people as enemies or presenting some people as the devil isn't productive.

I once watched the BBC's reporting about Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague. The camera, which must have been below him, showed his face looking bloated and arrogant, and he was not speaking in English so BBC viewers couldn't understand what he was saying. I wondered how he would have been reported on if he'd been on trial in his own country. Ultimately, how we reported on P.W. Botha and Joe Mamasela indicated to South Africans the level of injustice and arrogance we were prepared to live with and forgive. There is no point in letting foreign journalists report on a country's own quest for righteousness. It is crucial for reporters from that country to do it themselves, to learn the vocabulary of right and wrong and the treachery of painting a person as "the Devil," and therefore the bearer of guilt so that you become "the Angel," the blameless.

## Lessons Learned

The news media play a crucial part in any open process of discovering gross violations of human rights. I'd like to summarize some recommendations of dos and don'ts for radio coverage, based on lessons we learned during our coverage of TRC:

- Those involved in operating a TRC should be convinced about the importance of mother-tongue expres-

sion and translation through simultaneous interpretation.

- Radio reporters should strengthen their vocabularies in terms of how to convey information about traumatizing events and human rights. Learn or work with lexicographers to create the correct indigenous terms for human rights, indemnity, amnesty, rape, misogyny, masochism and other words that surface during the commission hearings.
- Do preparatory work on underlying concepts and founding legislation before a TRC begins its work. Listeners should know why the commission was established and what it will try to achieve. (Despite the fact that the South African TRC became famous for its individualization of amnesty, the African National Congress applied for general amnesty nine months into the process. Distribution of basic information clearly didn't reach the upper echelons of the new government.)
- A core team of journalists should be kept on the story so that knowledge of the process can be developed and journalists can begin to trust their own judgments instead of being dependent on the information fed by the TRC or other stakeholders.

Keeping the integrity of the narratives is critical. We observed that the terminology, rhythm, pace and nonverbal signs of the victims' narratives could seldom be improved upon.

Once I wrote a bulletin about a mother who talked about a T-shirt that was so full of bullet holes that it looked as if it was "eaten by rats." The news bulletin editor thought it OK to change it to a "bullet ridden T-shirt."

Another time I came across white people who were questioning the honesty of victims. "They waited until



Mourners in Soweto attended a 1977 memorial service for anti-apartheid leader Steve Biko, who died in police custody. Photo by The Associated Press.

the camera was on them, then they cried," they said. Working as closely as I was with the testimonies, I was astonished that anybody could reach this conclusion. Scrutinizing TV news coverage suggested why they had. The TV news coverage was often done by a local news reporter from the area. The result was that the news bulletin would open with an attractive, well-groomed young reporter standing in front of the building where the TRC had its hearings: "Today Mrs. So-and-so described how her son was killed by security forces ..." Then, slap-bam and the camera was directly on this woman who was incoherent with grief. It truly did not seem real.

With our radio reports of testimony, we always used a structure in which a person's actual words could be embedded. In other words, a radio story would not switch from the reporter to the victim but from the reported words of the victim to the victim herself. By the time the victim's voice entered the story, her own words had prepared the listener. ■

*Antjie Krog headed the radio team that covered South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the country's public broadcaster. A lengthier version of this article is at [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org).*

# The Iraqi Shoe-Thrower: When Endangered Journalists Need Help

'I wonder how different things would have turned out if I could have found help for al-Zaidi. If assistance came sooner for his possible post-traumatic stress, maybe the shoe-throwing incident would not have taken place.'

BY JEROME AUMENTE

One thing is certain: Decide to work as a trainer with international journalists from areas of conflict, such as the Middle East or the Balkans, and you will share the pain of their stress, the trauma of their physical injuries, and the heavy price they and their families pay because of their work. Be prepared to expend much time and psychic energy in assisting them, and realize your efforts won't always be successful.

There was the time when Iraqi journalist Yossef al-Naale received a desperate phone call from his wife, who frantically told him that he must not return to Iraq. His young son had innocently told schoolmates his father was visiting with other journalists in the United States in a workshop I directed. Word had reached his political enemies, and when al-Naale finally did return home after delaying in Jordan, he was badly beaten and nearly killed. Beginning in 2005, it took years until with the help of friends—and a series of my advisory phone calls and e-mails—he was finally able to craft a petition that gained him and his family political asylum in Belgium.

Last April I received an e-mail from him letting me know that he and his family were safely living not far from Brussels. He added: "I will not forget you are the man ... who deserves all my respect. I am lucky when I met you



In December 2008, Iraqi reporter Muntader al-Zaidi threw a shoe at President George W. Bush during a news conference with Iraq Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki in Baghdad, Iraq. *Photo by The Associated Press/APTN video.*

so I see [you] even as a father, and a brother and a great teacher to me."

He and I had spent two intensive weeks in the United States with eight other Iraqi journalists. Our time together included a surprise White House visit with President George W. Bush and several Department of State officials, with a candid exchange about the difficulties these journalists perceived in the new Iraqi Constitution that was about to be voted on. (The group had split in a vote about whether they could safely accept the White House invitation; they agreed to do so only with the promise of no publicity.) At the end of our visit, we posed for photos with the President in the Oval Office, but those could not be shown. Leaving the White House,

our escort asked a TV cameraman on routine watch outside to cap his lens to protect the identity of the Iraqis.

## A Journalist Seeks Help

My encounter with another journalist in Beirut in November 2008 had a far different outcome. I was conducting a weeklong series of workshop lectures on the impact of the Internet and new media for about 30 journalists from Iraq. After class, one of the participants, Muntader al-Zaidi, a Baghdad-based Iraqi TV reporter with Al Baghdadia, approached me and shared with me

that in the previous year he'd been kidnapped, then released unharmed a few days later by one of the militant factions. He'd also been detained by U.S. forces and released. According to family members, al-Zaidi was deeply affected by his coverage of the death and suffering of civilians, especially women and children. In Beirut, he asked me for help: he said he was nervous, unable to sleep at night, and was suffering from post-traumatic stress. Could I find him help in the United States?

He brought me clippings about his kidnapping, gave me his contact information, and all week we discussed options. Two of his colleagues had been killed, and more recently, two others had died while doing their

work. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported that in 2008 Iraq was the deadliest location to work as a journalist with 11 killed, down from 32 the previous year.

Al-Zaidi and I strategized about where he might get help; perhaps CPJ, an American university, or the Cairo-owned satellite TV station where he worked. When I left Beirut, I was planning on following through on our discussions when a few weeks later, al-Zaidi in a fit of rage threw his shoes at President Bush during a December 2008 press conference in Baghdad. In Arabic he shouted: “This is a gift from the Iraqis. This is the farewell kiss, you dog!” Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki tried to shield the President as the second shoe flew by and al-Zaidi shouted: “This is from the widows, the orphans, and those who were killed in Iraq.”

Instantly, the TV journalist became a hero to many in the Arab world, but to others his actions were a deep affront to Arab hospitality. In May 2009 I wrote a *Quill* magazine cover story<sup>1</sup> about this foolish action that endangered him, the President (who nimbly ducked out of harm’s way), and the other journalists present. His action that day also dangerously blurred the line of impartiality that journalists must never cross without jeopardizing themselves and their colleagues.

I wonder how different things would have turned out if I could have found help for al-Zaidi. If assistance came sooner for his possible post-traumatic stress, maybe the shoe-throwing incident would not have taken place. Facing a possible 15 years in prison, he was sentenced to three years, later reduced to one year. Perhaps consideration of post-traumatic stress might have kept



Muntader al-Zaidi, right, attended a series of workshops taught by journalism professor Jerome Aumente, left.

him from jail all together. There are times, still, when I even fantasize about former President Bush, who dismissed the incident with humor, meeting and reconciling with this young journalist, who was released in the fall after serving nine months and claiming that he was tortured in prison.

### Dealing With Danger

Beginning in Poland in 1989, with the election of Solidarity and the fall of Communism, I have led dozens of training programs for journalists in the U.S., Central and Eastern Europe, and the Balkans. In 1999, on a trip to Bosnia-Herzegovina, I was scheduled to spend time with Zeljko Kopanja, a newspaper editor and broadcast owner who had participated in one of my workshops. Two days before our meeting in Banja Luka, he started his car. It was rigged with explosives. When his car blew up, he lost both of his legs.

When we met later, his prosthetic legs were not working properly and he asked for my help. I contacted Ann Cooper, then CPJ’s director, and she acted swiftly. Money was raised

for new prosthetics and I worked with an association of journalists in Italy to get him funds for rehabilitation and travel in Vienna. Some-time later I met Kopanja in New York City just hours before he received the CPJ’s International Press Freedom Award for his reporting of human rights abuses and corruption. In Bosnia, he is seen as a hero to the many young journalists whom he has urged to keep doing tough, investigative reporting.

In 1998, during a series of workshops for opposition print and broadcast, I met radio station owner Nikola Djuric in Nis, Serbia. A little while later Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic banned him from returning home and his station was seized. Through the CPJ, help was found for him and his family in the United States, including a Nieman Fellowship and subsequent work. Two years ago, when I returned to Serbia for workshops, I found many of the opposition media to Milosevic, including B92 radio, TV and the Internet, to be a flourishing force for independent media.

The takeaway lesson is about the need for those training international journalists to be engaged beyond the curriculum in embracing the human dimensions of what it means to be a journalist. Counseling journalists in peril and those coping with traumatic stress, physical injuries, and the death of colleagues is an essential part of our job. Then we need to be prepared to act, which means keeping good contact records with journalists and with organizations whose mission includes helping those in trouble and following up on offers of assistance. It also means not over-promising but candidly marking the limits of what can be done.

<sup>1</sup> “Who Is the Iraqi Shoe Thrower and Other Lessons for Journalism Trainers in a Time of Global Conflict” can be read at [http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/spj/quill\\_200905](http://www.nxtbook.com/nxtbooks/spj/quill_200905).



## Altruism's Rise in the Wake of Disaster

Rebecca Solnit's wide-ranging inquiry into disaster led her to a surprisingly good-hearted view of human nature. "In the wake of an earthquake, a bombing, or a major storm, most people are altruistic, urgently engaged in caring for themselves and those around them, strangers and neighbors as well as friends and loved ones," she writes in her 2009 book, *"A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster."*

After surviving the 1989 earthquake in San Francisco, Solnit became curious about the "sense of immersion in the moment and solidarity with others caused by the rupture in everyday life." In her community,

neighbors helped each other, taking turns directing traffic and hosting barbecues.

To gain a historical perspective, she decided to look more deeply into five disasters: the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, the Halifax explosion of 1917, the Mexico City earthquake in 1985, the attacks on September 11, 2001, and Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Solnit, the author of books on subjects as disparate as walking, political dissent, and the American West, is a deft storyteller, but the book's greatest strength is her social critique. Ordinary citizens facing misfortune frequently are selfless. Often, she found, it's the authorities

who behave badly. Out of a fear that anarchy will prevail, they promulgate punitive measures that interfere with the rising spirit of altruism.

Finding purpose and closeness—without disaster—is the great contemporary challenge, she concludes. "Disaster reveals what else the world could be like—reveals the strength of that hope, that generosity, and that solidarity," Solnit writes. "It reveals mutual aid as a default operating principle. ... A world could be built on that basis, and to do so would redress the long divides that produce everyday pain, poverty, and loneliness and in times of crisis homicidal fear and opportunism." ■—Jan Gardner

## Reaching Out to Help Journalists

In response to my Quill article, a former journalist, now teaching, e-mailed me to say she'd experienced post-traumatic stress in covering child welfare deaths in the United States. She urged that we not forget journalists like her who also need help. With the news media resembling the intensive care ward of an industry in steep decline, such reminders seem even more relevant.

To address these needs, foundations should increase their aid to journalists who are emotionally or physically harmed. Assistance, too, is sometimes necessary for their families, as the Iraqi experience taught me. Western reporters rely heavily on nationals in Iraq and Afghanistan to help them gather information, and this exposes these individuals and their families to grave danger. They will require help in obtaining emergency travel visas and need financial assistance as they confront vengeful retribution. For example, the Obama administration should be pushed to provide special immigration status to these journalist colleagues whose lives have been endangered.

In 2001, CPJ created a Journalist Assistance Program for the purpose of aiding journalists in peril who were in hiding or in exile to escape death threats. Direct assistance of nearly \$560,000 in emergency funding has gone from CPJ to more than 374 journalists from 50 countries. An additional \$860,000 in foundation grants has been administered by CPJ to support academic fellowship programs for journalists in peril. [The Nieman Foundation participates in this effort.] CPJ's involvement stretches further to include:

- Maintaining a CPJ Distress Fund, which raises cash for journalists with extensive needs and places endangered journalists at leading universities or training projects throughout the world
- Lobbying governments and international agencies to secure refugee, emergency resettlement, or asylum status for journalists
- Providing medical treatment to journalists forced to flee their country under threat or following attack or imprisonment
- Assisting families of imprisoned journalists

- Nominating journalists for awards recognizing their courageous work
- Helping find assistance with legal fees for prosecuted journalists.

More journalists today are in peril, and their need for assistance is increasing. Reporters have done an extraordinary job of raising the public's awareness of the debilitating impact that violence and trauma have on soldiers. Now it's time to focus the spotlight on them—and from within our community find the will and the ways to shield them from danger, when possible, and offer them a helping hand. ■

*Jerome Aumente, a 1968 Nieman Fellow, is distinguished professor emeritus and special counselor to the dean at the School of Communication and Information (SC&I) at Rutgers University. He was founding chairman of the Department of Journalism and Media Studies and founding director of the Journalism Resources Institute, both in SC&I.*

# Women War Correspondents: They Are Different in So Many Ways

‘It is not by chance that these women have gravitated to the frontlines of war.’

BY ANTHONY FEINSTEIN AND MARK SINYOR

*“Caring about what you see may well be the key to good reporting, for it means you look closer, and you look to find out why. The much-bruited idea that we are all damaged by grim experience is countered surely by the idea that we are all changed by experience, but not necessarily for the worse.”*

—Kate Adie, BBC, from her autobiography, “The Kindness of Strangers”

Reporting from a war zone is increasingly hazardous. Mortality figures for journalists covering conflict during the last century reveal that in the Great War of 1914-1918, two journalists lost their lives. In the six years of World War II, 66 died, 17 died during the Korean War, and 58 journalists were killed during the prolonged Vietnam conflict. In Iraq, the Vietnam casualties have more than doubled in a conflict that has not yet ended.

This troubling progression is not happening because Fallujah is any more dangerous than the trenches in World War I. Rather this rise reflects a fundamental change in the way that war is now fought; warring factions often regard journalists as targets.

The heightened danger and ubiquitous threat that journalists confront carries significant psychological challenges. Exposure to life-threatening events creates potential risk for conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and substance abuse, and journalists are not immune. Data collected from a group of 218 frontline journalists who worked in zones of conflict for 15 years, on average, revealed rates of PTSD five times higher than those found in the general population. Moreover, rates of depression and alcohol abuse in

this group well exceeded those found in journalists who had spent their careers far removed from the danger of distant conflicts.

War journalists are, however, a diverse group. A close look at the data reveals that war photographers, for example, have higher rates of PTSD symptoms than print reporters or producers. And freelance journalists have more depression than peers who are employed by major news organizations.

## Gender: What Role Does It Play?

While exploring such differences we wondered whether gender played any role in the development of psychological distress. To those unfamiliar with the epidemiology of psychiatric illness, that question might beg another: Why is this of interest? The answer: Many factors influence a person’s mental health and gender differences, in particular, lead to predictable variations in the rates of common psychiatric conditions.

Studies of tens of thousands of people from 17 countries demonstrate that geography is less salient than gender in this regard. Whether journalists live in the United States or Japan, Turkey or Taiwan, they are more likely to develop depression or anxiety if they are female. (This finding applies not only in times of peace.) Female civilians in war torn Kosovo, Sri Lanka, Yugoslavia, Nepal and Afghanistan also were found to have higher rates of depression and anxiety. Data collected by the U.S. military show female soldiers to be more susceptible to psychological problems than their male counterparts.

Knowing this, we turned to our

database of journalists whose histories we’ve collected over the past decade. Even before probing the characteristics of their behavior, we looked carefully at demographic comparisons:

- **Gender:** Three quarters of these journalists are male. We weren’t surprised since there are solid neurochemical and evolutionary reasons why men are more likely to gravitate to risky environments than are women.
- **Marriage:** The marital data revealed unexpected findings. By the time people reach their late 30s (the average age for males and females in our sample), more women than men are usually married. This is not true with war journalists. While most of the men in our sample were married, the majority of women were single.
- **Education:** Female frontline journalists are better educated than their male colleagues. These findings, which we believe cannot be attributed to chance, are of clinical significance as they help frame and explain the behavioral data.

## War Journalists: Habits and Health

These war journalists were questioned about PTSD, depression, general psychological distress, and weekly alcohol consumption. As with our demographic findings, what we found out went against the grain of what we knew about the general population’s gender divide. Female war journalists are not more likely than their male counterparts to develop PTSD, depression or psychological distress in general. They also drink just as much, if not more alcohol than the men when measured

by the standards of what is considered healthy drinking. Medical orthodoxy dictates that women, by virtue of their smaller body mass and smaller livers (the main site of alcohol metabolism) should drink no more than nine units of alcohol per week. The upper limit for men is 14 units, with a unit defined as a shot of spirits, bottle of beer, or glass of wine. With these thresholds in mind, the percentage of women and men frontline journalists exceeding them is 21 percent and 24 percent, respectively.

While this gender difference is not statistically significant, what stands out is its contrast between the general population and the habits of war journalists. Men, generally, are two to three times more likely than women to drink to excess. There is an important caveat that goes along with the findings; the absence of gender differences in the war journalists' alcohol consumption should not be misconstrued as indicating an absence of emotional problems among the women. Rates of distress are high in both groups. Rather, it is the gender parity that is remarkable.

How do we explain these intriguing results? Here we enter the realm of hypotheses since our studies have been primarily descriptive. We've not yet probed cause and effect. However, the emerging profile of the female war journalist—more likely to be single and better educated than their male colleagues, no more vulnerable to PTSD, depression or overall psychological distress, and keeping up with the men when it comes to drinking—suggests they are a highly select group. It is not by chance that these women have gravitated to the frontlines of war.

Undoubtedly there are good biological reasons for this. Dopamine, a neurotransmitter, and testosterone, a hormone, are two biochemical markers under tight genetic control. And each has been linked to the more adventurous life. This does not imply that war journalists are primarily motivated by risk or a desire for new experiences, but there can be little doubt that the predictable nine-to-five daily grind that



American foreign correspondent Martha Gellhorn, center, covered World War II and other major conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Photo by The Associated Press/British Official Photo.

characterizes so many job descriptions is not a lifestyle they are likely to embrace. So in trying to understand what we are seeing, we cannot minimize the role of genes and biology.

The facts, figures and statistics tell a compelling story. And so do the women journalists. Unwilling to let the data speak on its own, we've read the memoirs, interviews and biographies of many female war journalists. From these, we have culled anecdotes and opinions that complement the dry precision of the data. In bearing witness to war, these Cassandras, to use journalist Martha Gellhorn's memorable self-depiction, have had many harrowing experiences. While our data reveal no gender differences in frequency of exposure to grave danger, percentages, on their own, will never fully describe the experiences these women have. In their lives and outlook there seems to be woven an intrepid insouciance that overlays a seriousness of purpose driving and sustaining many of them.

To illuminate this, we turn to war correspondent Marie Colvin writing in *The Sunday Times* of London about her near death experience reporting on the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka:

I am not going to hang up my flak jacket as a result of this incident. I have been flown to New York where doctors are going to operate on my injured eye in about a week or two. They have told me it is unlikely I will regain much use of it as a piece of shrapnel went straight through the middle. All I can hope for is a bit of peripheral vision. Friends have been telephoning to point out how many famous people are blind in one eye. They seem to do fine with only one eye, so I am not worried. But what I want most as soon as I get out of hospital, is a vodka martini and a cigarette.

In an equally blunt assessment of the risks she took in her reporting, and in response to some who called her "stupid" for taking such risks, Colvin wrote:

So, was I stupid? Stupid I would feel writing a column about the dinner party I went to last night. Equally, I'd rather be in that middle ground between a desk job and getting shot, no offence to desk jobs. ...

For my part, the next war I cover, I'll be more awed than ever by the quiet bravery of civilians who endure far more than I ever will. They must stay where they are; I can come home to London.

What we've discovered in the data and learned from these women's words reminds us of the work that lies ahead as we dig deeper and search more widely for clues that can help us explain our intriguing results. ■

*Anthony Feinstein is professor of psychiatry at the University of Toronto and author of "Journalists Under Fire: The Psychological Hazards of Covering War." Mark Sinyor is a third-year resident in psychiatry at the University of Toronto.*

# Trauma in the Aftermath: The Conference

Trauma resides on pathways carved by acts of violence, witnessed and experienced, and by the close proximity of tragedy. The sudden upheaval visited on an individual, whether she is the victim or a person left to grieve, and the pounding pressures of war's relentless toll leave people first without words and then, for some, tugged into the grip of trauma's debilitating hold.

Enter the journalist or the poet, the photojournalist or the artist, each there to find some way to express what it is like to live in the aftermath of such wrenching moments. The approach each takes differs, but they enter this effort with the shared desire for genuine connection.

To this end, Stefanie Friedhoff, special projects manager at the Nieman Foundation and a 2001 Nieman Fellow, took the germ of an idea—a multidisciplinary exploration of how to tell narratives about the human condition in the aftermath of violence and tragedy—and in collaboration with the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma and the Dart Society created a forum where 110 journalists, trauma researchers, and



A doctor in a Fallujah, Iraq hospital raises an X-ray to show head injuries to this 9-year-old boy whose home was hit by American airstrikes. Three members of his family, including his father, were killed and his 12-year-old brother was also seriously injured. *Photo by Thorne Anderson/Corbis.*

scholars shared information and discussed possibilities. From recordings of their presentations and conversations this issue of Nieman Reports emerged; edited excerpts appear on our pages, and on our Web site ([www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org)) audio clips can be found. Information about this audio content is woven into the print edition to guide this multimedia experience.

At the close of this three-day gathering at the Nieman Foundation, Friedhoff recited a poem of sorts that she'd composed out of striking snippets of revelations. A few lines are repeated here, inviting you to venture online to hear her closing words:

No comment.  
Intimacy. Obscenity.  
Emotions carry enormous cognitive content.  
It is essential to allow and integrate them as a  
critical source of information.  
Every generation has its own sense of meaning.  
God came to my city to cleanse it of its evil.

Let her words serve as your introduction to a transformational event in the lives of those participants whose words await your eyes. As Friedhoff envisioned, by learning about trauma's impact and the craft of storytelling we can push past what is formulaic and numbing into places where the touch is raw and real. ■

—Melissa Ludtke

## Bringing What's Buried in Folders to Life

‘The closer I felt to these people, the more attention I paid to details—to timelines, to chronologies, to what kind of food they ate, what kind of medication they were on, and at what time they’d done something.’

**Julia Reynolds**, a criminal justice reporter for *The Monterey County (Calif.) Herald* and 2009 Nieman Fellow, moderated this panel presentation about the intersection of investigative journalism and trauma. She led off by offering this observation:

Investigative reporting definitely has its own challenges with trauma; it’s an even more intense immersion than many other kinds of reporting because you can stick with a story day after day, sometimes year after year. If you’re an obsessive kind of person, there can be personal damage by only focusing on one thing, and sometimes it’s a terrible thing that you’re thinking about. It might be con-artist sociopaths or businesses or institutions that are abusing power. Whatever it is, it can take its own toll in terms of personal trauma on journalists. Often we cover other people’s trauma as we try to find people who are victims of anything from financial scams to abusive governments.

**Miles Moffeit** is an investigative reporter with *The Denver Post* who has reported on social justice and corruption issues that have led to government reform and criminal prosecutions. His most recent project exposed how police mishandled DNA samples nationwide and he went on to chronicle what happened to Tim Masters, the first man in



Beverly Kondel was raped in 1974 while serving in the military. She did not report it because she feared that the commanding officers would blame her. Photo by Kathryn Osler/*The Denver Post*.

*Colorado freed by DNA evidence from a life sentence, after he left prison. In his talk at the “Aftermath” conference, Moffeit described his approach to investigating the incidents of rape at the Air Force Academy.*

With every project, a reporter needs to find the people who understand the culture, the emotional landscape, whether it’s a psychiatrist or the spiritual leaders or anybody who sort of orbits that community.

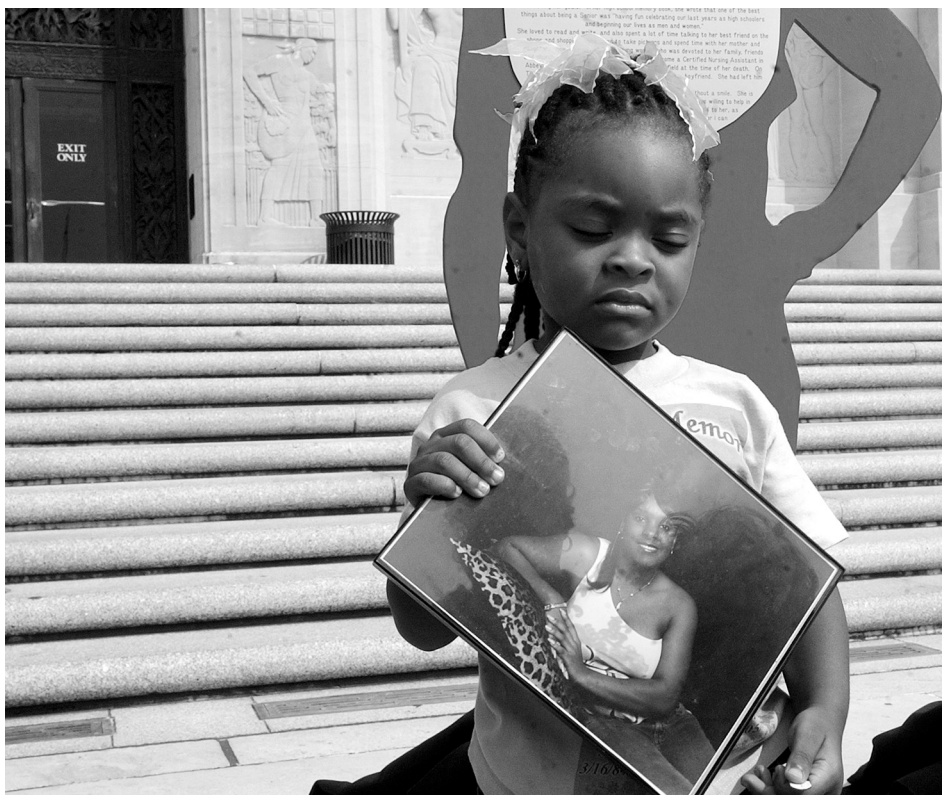
When I tried to think about the military, I needed to know how to connect with these victims. So I immediately went to the rape crisis center that sat next to the Air Force Academy and had a long conversation with a woman who opened her door at midnight to these cadets who were allegedly raped. And she was able to explain to me that this had been going

on for years, that women who came to her crisis center never got justice, and the statistics really bore out. There were like 60 accusations and zero convictions, and she was really frank with me. She said, “As a man, you’re going to have difficulty connecting with these women. You may need a third party in the room and a woman to go with you into these interviews.” And so we developed sort of this long-term strategy.

🔊 Listen at [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org) as *Moffeit* recounts the ways

*he—and a female colleague from the Post—went about interviewing women who were alleged victims of rape. After hearing one woman tell of running back to the barracks after she was raped, he tried to put himself in “that person’s path” as a way of trying to understand how she’d felt. “And I asked her during our next session, ‘So what did it feel like running back to the barracks and, you know, wearing your military boots?’ And she said, ‘They’d never felt heavier on my feet.’ And that line alone was really powerful.”*

*Arnessa Garrett has been a journalist at both large metros and community dailies for more than 15 years. She’s a senior editor of news at The Daily Advertiser, a community newspaper in her hometown of Lafayette, Louisiana, where she directs local coverage of courts, crime and natural disasters,*



Kiiurstin Davis holds a picture of her mother who was killed by her father before he killed himself. The girl's story was the focus of a special feature on domestic abuse in *The Daily Advertiser* of Lafayette, Louisiana. Photo by Claudia B. Laws/*The Daily Advertiser*.

including hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. She's been the lead editor on several of the paper's investigative projects, including "The Days After," a special report on domestic violence. Edited excerpts follow of her observations about how editors work with reporters on long-form, investigative stories involving trauma.

Investigative journalism today is also about telling a compelling story, in addition to looking through documents and creating databases. Because of this, journalists who cover violence and trauma have to draw upon a wide range of skills; while delving into a person's often tragic story, broader issues of justice and injustice and inequities in public policy that can provide context to your readers need to be kept in mind. But journalists who cover trauma don't always come with that investigative skill set.

At a small newspaper, the night cops reporter is often the youngest, most inexperienced reporter on the beat;

they're the ones usually sent to talk to mothers who've lost their children, to victims of fires, floods, car accidents. So for editors who work with these reporters, it's important for us to push not only for the story that happens in that moment but what happens in the aftermath of violence and tragedy.

In the daily news cycle, it's easy to forget victims because after one tragedy happens, the next one is on your doorstep. But if we listen to the victims, we can give our audience a deeper understanding of issues that matter to our communities and issues that you can't convey in drive-by journalism. And as we talk about newspapers and journalism facing difficult economic times, we see over and over again it's those kinds of stories that our readers are demanding from us. There is an audience for these stories. And, as an editor, I've realized that the best stories come from reporters who are out in the field. That's where your best ideas are going to come from, rather than someone sitting in an office telling a

reporter to go investigate something.

I do listen to my reporters at our community paper. Like many cops reporters, ours work on a constant treadmill of covering car accidents, shootings and stabbings. But in my six years there, the best cops reporters have always managed to find time to stop amid the daily coverage to recognize the larger trends that need to be exposed.

» Listen at [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org) as Garrett describes the genesis of the paper's long-term domestic violence project. It began as an idea from a reporter and photographer after a man killed his ex-girlfriend at her apartment in view of many, including the paper's photographer, and then killed himself in a local church.

I asked them as an editor would and not in a way that diminished their idea, but I really wanted to press them for what was new about what we had to say about domestic violence. They had the idea of following every domestic arrest for a year in our city, seeing how long it took for the arrest to make it through the court system. For several months, we refined that idea and developed it into this project. From looking at this one family's tragedy, the project broadened to put a spotlight on how police and prosecutors deal with victims of violence in our community.

» Garrett shares in more detail several tips based on what she learned in this project. Among these tips are the following:

- **First, do no harm:** Victims of trauma are under so much stress ... give them the opportunity to reconsider [being involved in a story] and to say no. There's no story, I believe, that's worth harming an innocent human being, and this person has already suffered so much.
- **Be persistent:** While I say this—and this may seem contradictory—if you are pursuing a story about a victim of trauma and you're passionate about the story, be persistent.

*In talking about persistence, Garrett describes how a woman initially backed away from being involved with the project, but over time—with connections to her maintained by the reporters—she changed her mind.*

- **Double-check reporting:** Victims of trauma are processing their experience. Don't assume they'll remember all the details accurately. At the most basic level, everybody double-checks your reporting.
- **Demonstrate patience:** Trauma victims are not going to be aware of every interview or photo shoot you schedule.
- **Shop for an editor:** If you are doing this kind of work, you're going to need an editor who cares about the project as much as you do; you're going to need somebody just to process your own feelings as you're going through this whole project.
- **Numbers do matter:** I like a good narrative, but what elevates a trauma story to the next level is the context, and trauma reporting is strengthened by investigative techniques. I think readers want to be told why this person's tragedy matters on a large scale. And in trauma journalism especially, investigation can help shed light on ways to avert tragedies.

We like to do stories about victims because they tend to be sympathetic. But I think we serve an important role when we tell stories of victims who are not so sympathetic. After Katrina, we did reporting on what happened to prison inmates who were transported from the Orleans Parish Prison to our local jail, and they had horrific stories. They didn't know whether family members were dead or alive or if they had a home. They had no way of contacting anyone because they had evacuated to other areas. We ran that story and, as you can imagine, the reader response was, "So what—they're in jail." That was discouraging, but I still think it was one of the best pieces that we ran after Katrina. It's hard, but the challenge is there to write stories when the perpetrator is sometimes the victim.

*Paul McEnroe is an investigative reporter at the (Minneapolis) Star Tribune with a focus on social justice issues. He's been a national correspondent for the paper and has covered international events, including the Gulf War, the war in Bosnia-Croatia, and the Iraq War. In 2008, he received a one-year fellowship with the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma. He began his presentation by speaking about people who were mentally ill and institutionalized and whose names he doesn't know but whose information he has in records identifying them only by numbers. Edited excerpts from his remarks follow:*

How do you find your voice as a reporter to speak on behalf of those that have no voice? That was my great dilemma. One day I got in my car and just started driving. I was trying to sort all of this out. I found myself going through southern Minnesota, and I ended up at a prison that had been the state hospital for the feeble-minded, the derogatory term they used. I parked my car and saw this barbed wire and razor wire. It occurred to me that this is what prison is like for people who couldn't speak.

I started walking on rolling hills with beautiful autumn colors. It was about 65 degrees at four o'clock in the afternoon, and I'm walking by myself to an area that's probably as big as this courtyard. I look through the tall grass and leaves and I see plaques. No, they're not plaques. These are stones, and then they're not stones. Wait a second. They're not stones, they're plaques—what are they?

And all of a sudden it came to me. These people were people, but they were not seen as people. They were the most vulnerable people in our society who had been stripped of everything including their name. In some binary system of bureaucratic hell, they'd been given a list of letters and numbers; they didn't even know their name. And it all came to me. As with any good investigative reporting, there's the need for physicality—a physical effort that has to take place to be able to successfully complete the

story for the reader, the viewer, and the listener. Good editors will always want reporters to explain what they heard. What did it sound like? Smell like? How did it make you feel? When you drove home, what were you thinking about? Did you turn the radio on to try to not think about it? Or did you just drive home in silence and really let it wash over you? There has to be a physicality to our effort; when we do that, the story grows exponentially.

I started seeing these people in a completely different vein. At one point I must have had files of 40 or 50 different people—men, women and children—in my briefcase, and if I was stuck at a traffic light, I'd just pull out a file and start reading. And I would get to know these people as if they weren't numbers but they were a Peter or Michele, Deidre. I got to know them as if they were alive. They were friends, neighbors and my colleagues at work. The closer I felt to these people, the more attention I paid to details—to timelines, to chronologies, to what kind of food they ate, what kind of medication they were on, and at what time they'd done something.

So when we talk about narrative arc—the presentation of the problem, the conflict, the meaning, the character development—one thing that's missing in that writing formula is if you're not emotionally tied into people whom you're writing about. You need to plug into your emotional partnership with the people.

🔊 **Listen as McEnroe at [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org) describes how he wrote about an institutionalized mentally retarded woman, Elaine Kleinschmidt, by digging into a thick folder containing fragments of her life and emerging with succinct paragraphs about her. He uses this as a teaching exercise with his students. His instructions: "Here's this report. It's this thick. Write four paragraphs on it." ■**

## When a Crime Is Just the Beginning of the Story

By establishing relationships of trust with those touched by crime, reporters discover an intimacy of thought and emotion that can assist healing—for individuals and for communities.

**Julia Reynolds**, a 2009 Nieman Fellow, began reporting on crime for the *Monterey County (Calif.) Herald* after she'd spent four years working on a documentary film about gang violence in Salinas, California. A personal experience she had with violent crime left her with an understanding shared by few reporters. As she put it in opening her remarks, "A lot of reporters forget that seeing someone get sentenced in your case has really nothing to do with justice and definitely nothing with closure or healing." Early in her career as a journalist, she didn't want to cover violence, but two decades later, after reviewing court records about her case, she went to Salinas to do a documentary film about "a lot of young people who were killing each other over a kind of confusing cause. It was all young Latino males getting killed and doing most of the killing." Reynolds went on to talk about the emotional toll on those who cover a crime beat when young people are murdering other young people.

In terms of trauma, the crime beat takes a different toll from some others. It's one thing to be a war correspondent; people acknowledge that you've been through a whole lot. But the crime beat is often thrown on real young people and then day after day after day it chips away at them. It's an insidious kind of numbness and little horrors that are witnessed over and over again. People cope very differently, but I'd say that the way we cover this story also affects how much trauma we're going to experience. You can look at it as a story about how we have the innocent victim here and this horrible person over here who is a murderer or rapist. If a reporter follows that paradigm, and it probably suits the



When Julia Reynolds, center, met Armando Frias his first words were "I always wanted to be just like my father," a gang member. Here, Josiah Hooper records their interview for a documentary. Photo by © Janjaap Dekker 2003.

majority of reporters, they can go home and sleep at night. In fact, you'll probably leave work early if you're just going to write that story—good guys, bad guys. But good reporters know it's not that simple.

Every time there's a gang shooting, two families, at least, are ripped apart. There are the parents of the victim who've lost their son or daughter and the parents of another child who's about to go do life in prison. Very often it's only a very fine line of fate between the two that decides which one is which. This good guy/bad guy innocent victim thing is completely blurry. And often in the same family there are victims of violence and perpetrators of it; sometimes this is the same person. So to cover this responsibly we have to dig deep. We cannot just tell the cops' side of the

story. And it's even too easy to cover the victims' side of the story.

Let me give an example of how a more rounded approach can help a community, or at least get it started on a different road. We covered a gang shooting with a 19-year-old kid named Little Mando in Salinas. It was a murder in a bar, gang-related, execution style, and that is how it played out in the papers and on the television. But my co-reporter George Sánchez and I started digging around on the perpetrator's side of the story and found out that this kid was literally raised in a gang. Since he was nine years old he was smoking pot and committing robberies; his first armed robbery was when he was 12. Everyone in this family raised him to be part of this.

As we started doing stories about his



life, we'd hear people in the community asking, "Well, gee, did Armando Frias have a choice? He was raised in this. How could he be anything else than what he was?" Other people would say, "Yeah, of course he had a choice. We have free will. There were kids faced with worse things than Armando who walked away."

I asked Armando if he had a choice. He said he did. But then he'd tell me that everyone in his family looked at him as soon as he was born and said, "You're going to be just like your father. You're going to be just like your father." And his first words when I met him were, "I always wanted to be just like my father."

But the important thing was that his crime wasn't a random front-page thing; it became a community issue, a matter of public discussion. People in Salinas asked themselves, "Did he have a choice? Or did we help make this choice?" This is where a little more in-depth reporting can take a crime like this one out of the context of a random act of violence. And it can at least get a community to start asking the right questions because gang violence is a community trauma.

I know reporters don't have time to always go around and talk to Armando's family and do all that. But in between the deadline breaking stories, I feel passionately that we've got to take the time every few weeks, or whenever possible, to get behind what's going on. Even if it's just once every couple of months to put something in context, and even with the little breaking stories put some context.

This kind of journalism requires a lot of immersion, which also means more emotional involvement. Because you've spent more time in the streets, you've also spent more time with families, holding hands, listening to stories. So, how do you deal with this? I've got a few things on my list. [See accompanying box on page 33 for Reynolds' suggestions of coping mechanisms.] These things, by no means, make you heal; there's a part of you that never recovers from even covering trauma so to expect that you will is ridiculous. You're going to carry

this weight and this pain with you the rest of your life if you're a caring, sensitive human being. It's not going to go away, but you have got to figure out how to function.

**Rachel Dissell** is a reporter for *The Plain Dealer* in Cleveland, Ohio who covers juvenile justice, children and family issues, and county corruption. In "Johanna: Facing Forward," she explored the tragic story of what happened after a young woman reported that her former boyfriend had raped her.

He was arrested and put in juvenile detention, then released with an electronic monitoring bracelet. He did not follow the rules; he basically went wherever he wanted, and 12 days after he was let out of juvenile detention he stalked her. She was sitting in her driveway and he came up and shot her, and the effect of the shotgun blast pretty much blew off the entire bottom of her face. So of course we covered that as a news story, and we wanted to cover it as a continuing story. There was a lot of context needed and we didn't really know what the situation would be.

The first time I met Johanna, who I'd follow around for the next eight months, she was in a hospital bed and she had something that looked like a football helmet wrapped around her face. The only way we could communicate was on a dry erase board. This presented all kinds of complications. Also I learned from her family that she had a tough time talking about things; they knew this because she'd had a tough time talking when she had suffered a previous trauma. I mean she'd had these two immediate traumas—being raped by her ex-boyfriend, and then shot, but several years before she'd lost both of her parents within a week's time. Her mom died of a kidney disease that she'd had for a while, and then 11 days later her dad died in a car accident.

So I'm thinking about what is the most sensitive way I can approach her. But she pretty much came up with a solution on her own. On the day we met, she started asking me questions about writing, and I asked her, "Why? Are you interested in writing?" She said, "Oh, I always keep a journal. I like to keep a journal. I write a lot. I write a lot of poems. You know, when



Eighteen-year-old Johanna Orozco was shot in the face by her ex-boyfriend, Juan Ruiz, after she accused him of raping her. Her story, entitled "Johanna: Facing Forward," became a running series for Cleveland's *Plain Dealer* reporter Rachel Dissell. Photo by Gus Chan/*The Plain Dealer*.

my parents died they made me go to this counselor and he just kept asking me how I was feeling and I just wanted to hit him over the head and say, 'Like I'm going to tell you.' She wrote it in her journal instead.

So that's the way I decided to proceed, and from there our process evolved. It ended up being the oddest thing; it's like a story that I reported through reading someone else's journal, a dry erase board, and text messages. After we got to know each other and we'd gained each other's trust, Johanna gave me a set of journals that she had kept through her relationship with this young man, and it was such a powerful thing. One night when I was going to meet with her doctor so we could kind of discuss his role, I sat in my car in a alleyway behind a sushi place and started reading Johanna's journals. This was a big mistake because by the time I went in for the sushi I was almost sobbing.

The language of teenagers is not always the most eloquent language, but in some ways it gets across things that you can't get across in a conversation with a teenager because the answer to a lot of questions is, "I'm fine." "How are you?" "Sad." You know? You get these kinds of responses that don't help you a lot.

So this is a journal entry that she wrote, just a short one on April 30, 2006; she was 17 years old and about a year into this two-year relationship she had with this young man. And she wrote:

Dear Journal,  
My heart is really sad right now. Today, Juan pushed me down and called me a bitch. It hurt me so much inside. I don't understand why he turned out to be this way. He never was like this towards me before. I don't know what's wrong with him, but I really do love him. I treat him so good. I just don't know why he has to be like that. I miss the way he used to hold me, treat me, kiss me, and just think of me at night. Well, that's all my thoughts for now, I'll write you back soon.

And so I had these two volumes of things like this to go through. And I think they were really helpful in letting me see the arc of this relationship, because without that I'm just seeing the result. I'm not seeing everything that came before it. And it really helped me understand some things that I came across later.

»» At [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org), listen to Dissell read from Johanna's journals and hear Johanna read the poem she wrote about her former boyfriend on the day he pled guilty to shooting her.

**Luis Rodriguez** writes about issues of race, class, gender and personal rage through dialogues, stories, poetry and art. In his book *"Always Running: La Vida Loca: Gang Days in L.A."*, he wrote about his life as a gang member. In his "Aftermath" presentation, he spoke about "the regeneration of traumatized communities" and of the healing during the aftermath of violence and tragedy. He began by setting the scene in Los Angeles.

L.A. is "the gang capital of the world." Let me explain the numbers. From 1980 to the year 2000, 15,000 young people were killed in the streets of L.A. There are 700 gangs in L.A.; 500 are Latino gangs. The murder rate in Los Angeles is very low for the city, one of the lowest for the big cities. There are whole communities in L.A. that have hardly any crime and no murders. But take just parts of South Central and East L.A. and the murder rate officially for Latinos is 70 per 100,000. That's as high as the highest murder rate in the world, which is in South Africa. But for African Americans, it's 120 per 100,000. It's higher than even the highest rate in the world.

I've been a journalist for 30 years, and so I have come here as a journalist but also as somebody who has been a perpetrator, a victim, and a survivor. I can't tell you that I was just a victim. I was a gang member. I did shoot people, I stabbed people, but I was also shot at, and I lost a lot of friends. This was 40 years ago and people didn't know about gangs. In

fact, I had lost 25 friends by the time I was 18. But unlike a lot of my friends, I did transcend some of this, and I became a journalist and an activist.

Besides journalism, I've been working for many years in the regenerative, renewing work of community. And this is primarily reflected in my book, "Hearts and Hands: Creating Community in Violent Times," in which I try to summarize 30 years' worth of work that I've done in Chicago and in L.A. to recreate, re-imagine and regenerate community, which is something the media do not cover very well. They can cover the trauma and they can cover all the pain, and then they stop. They don't go back to see what happened to those who were involved in the violence. What did they do? Who actually got healed? Who actually changed? That never gets covered.

If you don't heal, you become very bitter, and bitter makes you brittle. The communities are very fractured and very vulnerable and very weak. So we decided to create this little cultural center, Tia Chucha's Centro Cultural ([www.TiaChucha.com](http://www.TiaChucha.com)), in a strip mall in the Northeast Valley, which is the "Mexican" side of the San Fernando Valley where 80 percent of the 450,000 residents come from Mexico and Central America. There was not one bookstore, art gallery or cultural center until we opened our doors. We've become like the oasis in strip malls, creating places where people can come and be creative. We have a guitar workshop, piano and drumming. We have Son Jarocho, a tradition out of Veracruz, and capoeira and other healing arts from indigenous communities. We have writing workshops and original theater and a weekly open mike for which people just show up and tell amazing stories, sing songs, do poetry, hip hop, whatever they want.

»» Rodriguez talks about some of the lives that have been changed through the efforts of Tia Chucha's Centro Cultural. Hear him tell the story about Alex Carpio. Like Rodriguez, Carpio grew up in East Los Angeles and joined a

*gang, but Carpio was shot five times in his head when he was 15 years old. Even though he became blind, Carpio remained an active member of his gang, until he was 30 years old and decided to turn his life around.*

I want to end with an idea: trauma has trajectories we've talked about, and then it has one we rarely think about—the imagination. Real violence comes from the total lack of imagination, and no imagination exists in these children's lives. Just injecting the idea that they could be creative is powerful—letting them know they could have imaginative ways of looking at things and could even care. The arts, creativity, poetry, all of these wonderful things begin to open up the possibilities that normally wouldn't be open. That is why I don't have an anti-gang moniker at Tia Chucha's. That's why I don't have any of the stuff that is treatment. I don't have a problem with that; if people need treatment; we will refer them. If they need a job; we'll refer them. If they need their tattoos removed, we'll refer them. But what we do is imaginative work in that community. And that's the kind of work that I know heals and can transform community.

This is the kind of story that we don't get told. But it is probably the one that now needs to be told. If you're covering this violence, also cover what happens when people go into these communities and change people's lives.

*During the question and answer period, panelists talked about a lack of understanding among journalists about the full dimension of crime stories.*

**Rodriguez:** It's very sad that most news media won't cover what we do. I have my own online magazine; I have to have my own news outlets and I also write about it myself. I've tried. We've sent out press releases and once in a while somebody will show up from the Los Angeles Times, but most of the time nobody shows up. We have this great festival—the only literacy and art festival in the whole San Fernando Valley every year with

## Strategies for Reporters Coping With Stress

**Julia Reynolds** offers approaches to handling the stress that can be part of this demanding crime beat.

**Learn to tell our stories.** I don't mean on the front page of the paper, but to someone, somehow. Talk to a fellow reporter or someone who will hear what you've been through because so often you're isolated. You covered that murder by yourself; finding someone else to share it with is a big deal. It's really important. The newsroom totally discourages this; if you come in crying, your boss is going to take you off the story and say, "You're getting too close. You're getting too ..." Well, maybe you're too close, but maybe you're the right person to do it.

**Check out [dartcenter.org](http://dartcenter.org)** for the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma. There's a lot of useful information

there to help explain to others in the newsroom why all of this is important.

**Get a mini-life:** Do this, even if you're passionate about journalism. When I got the Nieman Fellowship, I was stunned to realize there is all this other stuff in the world that is also important. It's just good to remember that.

There's also this other minor but not insignificant trauma going on in newsrooms about something we care about very much, which is the American newspaper that is imploding. We feel bad for ourselves, but one thing I realized is that our boss is also worrying more about the budget and layoffs. So people on whom we used to lean as mentors are no longer there for us. I go to my boss now and he's like, "Don't talk to me." So we have to get out of our bubble and connect with each other. ■

500 to 600 people who show up, but no media show up. But the one year some kid got shot down the street, everybody from the media was there. And that's the way it is; if I had shot somebody, people would have shown up. I think it is shifting. People are starting to realize there's more to the story. This is what I would like to help get people to see—the healing part, the community regeneration, and the capacity that communities have to heal themselves. I'm doing a film called "The Long Run: Finding the Life You Were Meant to Live" documenting this kind of work.

**Reynolds:** Right now we're not asking the right questions in our stories of our local leaders because we don't have the education. We need to be training and teaching journalists much more about the solutions; we're learning about the problem here, but we're not always learning a whole lot about solutions, and there are solutions that work.

The city of Stockton, California has had an incredible turnaround with almost no budget whatsoever, but they were able to put what resources they had and turn neighborhoods around and drop the homicide rate. Reporters need to know this and then ask questions and do stories analyzing where the money is going in their city and point out in the articles that it's not going to this. And then ask the mayor, "Do you know about the Stockton miracle? Well, here's the report. Read it and then I'm going to call you tomorrow and ask you about it and see what the city is doing and compare what we're doing to what worked in Stockton."

We've got to learn and then we've got to put public officials' feet to the fire. You could say, OK, that's the fine line between being an activist and being a journalist, but I think it's civic journalism. There's nothing radical about wanting fewer kids to die. ■



This boy grieves for his friend Einer Metaute, murdered by paramilitaries when he stopped at a café in Medellín, Colombia.

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AN ESSAY IN WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

## Forming Connection, Finding Comfort

BY DONNA DE CESARE

*Donna De Cesare is an associate professor of documentary photography at the University of Texas at Austin. As a photographer, writer and videographer, she has covered the spread of U.S. gang culture to Central America. "Documenting Migration's Revolving Door," her photo essay, appeared in Nieman Reports, Fall 2006.*

*In her remarks at the "Aftermath" conference, she spoke about taking photographs of those touched by violence during the drug wars in Colombia. Edited excerpts follow:*

Upon becoming aware of the camera, people often assent to having their picture taken if they imagine that their image will create a bridge to a larger world in which people might care to act if only they knew. However, consent and consequences cannot be taken for granted. Even when you must move quickly and when respect demands a nonintrusive presence, there must always be time to ask for permission. Emotional intimacy, rather than simple physical proximity, makes nuanced images possible. This is achieved when

the available time and the camera are used as tools for compassionate interaction. Balancing the public right to know with the right to privacy and the human dignity of those surviving conflict, disaster or stigmatized conditions requires collaboration with the affected individuals or communities.

As journalists and documentary photographers, our role is to witness and to communicate so we can get the stories out to a public. But in the 21st century the collaboration and the conversation must be multi-direction-




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Nancy and her six siblings survived one of Colombia's most brutal paramilitary massacres in the village of El Salado. We only had a few hours together for me to learn their story first, and then to make an image. As Nancy led five of her siblings up the hill, each of us noticed the effect of their shadows. "Let's hold hands to show we're united," she said.

al, not only multimedia. In carrying forward the tradition of concerned photography, photojournalists honor specificity with attentiveness. When we are present to record moments in an unfolding crisis, we become a witness to history. We record evidence and we ask the audience to identify with the details and with the protagonists. At other times, we document in the aftermath. As nonfiction artists we also explore the meanings of specific gestures, finding archetypes and symbols which coincide to amplify meaning.

In taking the image at the funeral in Medellín, had I not been with the victim's mother, who told the crowd that she wanted me there, I certainly would have been run out of the cemetery, or worse. The community was caught in battles among guerrilla groups, gangs and paramilitaries for control of Medellín. The mourners were extremely distrustful of the media. When terror grips a community suffering such violence, hair-trigger rage may erupt, or silence may fall like a dense fog. Part of our work is to earn trust.

How does one responsibly report when danger still exists? One thing is critical; in whatever time you have, you must invest in developing a relationship. When I work on projects that involve survivors of trauma, I look for ways to reduce the potential for harm, to engage in a collaborative relationship, and to make the process as transparent as possible and as helpful to the protagonists under whatever time limitations I face.

*Photo and text by Donna De Cesare.*



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After hearing her story of survival on the streets, I asked Rosario, who had been raped by Guatemalan policemen, how she wanted to be photographed. She immediately embraced a lamppost. Her vulnerability in this eerily lit abandoned street and her need for something solid to hold on to make a revealing portrait while obscuring her face.



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Carolina was shy about posing, and so I went away after the interview and watched from a distance. I caught this gesture as she begins parting her veil of hair, poised to reveal a former child-soldier's longing for love and a normal teenager's life. She lost her right foot in a land mine accident.

*Photos and text by Donna De Cesare.*



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This 15-year-old boy asked me to take his picture behind the curtain as he spoke about his struggle with HIV-related illness. In all of these images, I was sensitive to the global reach of the Internet. If a child might suffer lethal consequences from making their private story public, then together we found a way to obscure their identity because even in remote areas of Guatemala and Colombia the Internet makes every story available.

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Claudia is haunted by memories of finding the butchered bodies of five fellow university students more than a decade ago. Several years later she suffered a mental breakdown—the result of accumulated trauma. She is alive because she was late to the meeting that she was going to attend with her closest friends.



*Photos and text by Donna De Cesare.*



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Mariela looks out from her balcony into the darkness. It's more than a decade since her husband, a human rights lawyer, was gunned down as he walked toward his home with his two small daughters.

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In a group meeting with counselors, Joaquin recalled a dream in which his murdered brother appeared at the window telling him to stop drinking and to live instead for his children. It was the first time that Joaquin was able to speak openly about finding his brother's tortured remains at the body dump known as the botadero where paramilitaries often threw their victims' corpses.



*Photos and text by Donna De Cesare.*





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Haddie and her children became homeless when her husband disappeared. After his body was found, the army claimed that he was a guerrilla killed in combat. His sister, Dora, is skeptical. The diagram prepared by the medical examiner showed that he was shot at extremely close range after first being beaten and tortured.

»» At [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org), Donna De Cesare talks about a collaborative photography project and workshop she directed at a women's prison in Colombia in which she took pictures of the women and children imprisoned there and provided them with cameras to document their own lives. ■

*Photo and text by Donna De Cesare.*

## Trauma in New Orleans: In the Wake of Katrina

Journalists and a poet explore this story's intimacy, its emotional power, and its cultural significance.

**Jed Horne** was an editor and reporter with *The Times-Picayune* in New Orleans for 20 years before leaving in 2007 to write books. He is the author of *Breach of Faith: Hurricane Katrina and the Near Death of a Great American City*, published by Random House in 2006. During Hurricane Katrina, he was metro editor of *The Times-Picayune*. In the Fall 2007 issue of *Nieman Reports*, which focused on post-Katrina reporting, Horne shared ideas about how out-of-town journalists might approach coverage of the storm's long-term aftermath. Edited excerpts from his remarks at the "Aftermath" conference follow:

What characterized the ordeal that we went through with Katrina was the intimacy of our experience. Intimacy in the sense of the obscenity of what had happened and also in the sense of being stripped away and laid bare in the eyes of the world and brother

and sister media operatives. Among us there was the more agreeable sense of intimacy that came with being a band of journalists—given that so many others operated in the same manic way that we did for so long.

Journalism is ordinarily a very aloof practice. We're instructed to be objective. The Heisenberg uncertainty principle is somehow suspended for journalism; we're able to interact in environments without leaving any trace of ourselves on them. And if there is a trace or if there's a conflict of some sort, you're meant to recuse yourself. Acquaint your editor with the problem, and then recuse yourself.

We did not have the luxury of recusal. I remember at one point a great and belabored, rigorously ethical discussion on how we were going to deal with the fact that so many of our staff—many of them homeless, after all—now found themselves involved in a class action suit against the Army

Corps of Engineers. How were we going to be able to report on this?

One of our most important reporters in the Katrina coverage was Mark Schleifstein, who had lost his home and who duly was going to sue the Army Corps. We worked out some elaborate and, I think, partly self-deluded mechanism through which we would somehow exempt certain people from covering lawsuits and require disclaimers from others. Ultimately those kinds of concerns began to seem sort of metaphysical and beside the point as we embraced this event in all of its dynamism and all of its intimacy.

Watching TV one night, the news comes on and it's just one of these in one ear and out the other things. Some maniac has been picked up by the cops driving down Napoleon Avenue—which is one of the big thoroughfares in New Orleans—bashing his car into other cars and, when police finally stopped him, trying to run them over as well, it was a classic attempt at "suicide by cop." I woke up the next morning to find that this person was a good friend, a photographer at the paper, who had simply gone bonkers for various reasons characteristic of the time. Other reporters went bonkers in print—notably Chris Rose, who wrote in a fascinating and courageous way about his breakdown. My concern as a newsroom manager is that nothing was found to be more therapeutic than work, indeed overwork. People were just truly undermining their health through the kinds of hours, days, weeks and months they were putting into their job.

The danger was, of course, that all of this was going to come to a crashing halt, and the people who had somehow sustained themselves on manic energy were going to crash a little more horribly. So it became a business of easing them away from burnout, and



As tens of thousands of evacuees waited without food or water, the convention center in New Orleans became an epicenter of despair. Angela Perkins pleaded with the world with her cry, "Help us, please." Photo by Ted Jackson/*The Times-Picayune*.

trying to let them down gently into a more sustainable pace and level of productivity. I think we succeeded in most cases in making that happen without folks disintegrating.

At [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org), Horne describes the approach he took in writing his book, one that he decided to follow as he'd observed the coverage of extremes that dominated so much of the out-of-town and some of the local reporting about New Orleans and Katrina. Here is an excerpt from his remarks:

All of a sudden there in print were lurid stereotypes of a city described as “bestial,” as a “bunch of looters and rapists”—details later proving to be false. It occurs to me that if you are going to describe a young couple that simply walks away from a child that has expired of asthma; the sewage-stained carpeting of the convention center, and just toss it off into the 18th paragraph of a story as an example of something that was going wrong in New Orleans, that's not an interesting detail. That's a redefinition of human depravity and you need to, I think, frame it and herald it in that way; and maybe in the course of that time you'll discover that it was a falsehood as well—as it was, indeed.

The goal was to find people able to tell their stories. I looked for people who told more reasonable stories, rather than the extreme stories, because I didn't think they were that representative. By definition the extreme stories are not going to be that representative. It seemed important also to broaden the sort of *dramatis personae*, and include more than just the destitute.

**Brett Myers** is a field producer for Youth Radio, Youth Media International's National Network, which includes Youth Radio bureaus in Atlanta, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., as



The corpse of Alcede Jackson was reverently laid out on his front porch in Uptown New Orleans, covered with a blanket and held down by slate. The body was left abandoned for 17 days with an epitaph on a poster board, “Rest in peace in the loving arms of Jesus.” Photo by Ted Jackson/The Times-Picayune.

well as collaborations with partners throughout the country.

**Jiarra Jackson** is a New Orleans native who was a reporter and host of Youth Radio's “Generation Katrina,” an award-winning radio documentary. Edited excerpts of their presentation follow.

**Myers:** Youth Radio began almost 20 years ago at a time of escalating violence in California, and it was a violence that was particularly known by young people. So Youth Radio was a way for young people to tell their stories in a more unfiltered way. And our model is that young people work with adult producers to learn the trade and the skills of journalism so they can tell all of the stories that are important to them—the light stories, the dark stories. From the beginning, Youth Radio was about internal narratives. To think about Youth Radio in the most practical way, we function as the youth desk for a lot of major news organizations that don't often cover—or really know how to cover—youth news on a regular sort of daily grind.

Youth Radio's Katrina coverage

started the day the storm hit, when a young person in our newsroom in Oakland said, “This is important to me. I see relevance to my life. This is something we have to cover.” Others agreed. So without a bureau in New Orleans and without funding, our Katrina coverage started because it was our beat. In that first year, we did a documentary—all youth produced. Then we hit the one-year mark and started to encounter some Katrina fatigue: tired of hearing these stories, hard to get them on. Some of our early stories were produced for National Public Radio and various media outlets.

So at the one-year mark we started “Generation Katrina,” which would become our second documentary from New Orleans. If it wasn't for Public Radio International (PRI), then a lot of our stories would not have found a home. PRI gave us a home for these stories, done by a team of youth journalists from around the country who came to New Orleans. They worked with adult producers in hitting the ground to find stories that were important to young people and young people who could tell the stories. A lot of young

people we found we invited onto the team: “You’re really talented, you’ve got a story,” we’d tell them. “We’re going to train you, and you’re going to be the reporter on the story.” Jiarra Jackson, who was a student at the University of New Orleans, is one of those young people and she became a reporter on this project.

**Jiarra Jackson:** What I expected out of the project was that I’d be their tour guide to bring them to devastated areas such as the Lower Ninth Ward, and show them what Café Du Monde was so they could eat beignets. Instead, I was really surprised that they wanted to know what we, as the youth, were actually building with after the storm, what we’d encountered, and how we were transitioning to our newer selves.

I was kind of reluctant to share my story with them at first. I’d heard so many disturbing images and I really did not want to share my story and have it twisted into the wrong words. I was like, “Well, what do you want to know?” Once I understood that she really wanted to find out what was going on, I told her that I’d evacuated to St. Louis, Missouri without my

family because I wanted to continue with my education. So I went to this city I had never been by myself just so I could continue with my education, and she was, like, “Well how did you make it through that?” And I was, like, “Through Bounce music.” And she was, like, “Really? I’ve never heard of Bounce music,” so I played a few things for her.

» **To hear Bounce music, listen at [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org) to an excerpt from “Generation Katrina.” And then hear Jackson and Myers talk about its importance to her story and its telling. Here’s an excerpt from Myers:**

If you think about the trauma that was done to that city with the hurricane, one of the main traumas was—is all of this culture going to be washed away? So doing a story about music has relevance because it’s part of the entire culture, and it’s also a way of talking about trauma, not in an I’m going to stab you in the stomach, make you cry kind of way. Those kind of traumatic stories are out there.

**Brett Myers:** Let me give you a broad picture of the kind of topics and stories we covered in the one-hour documentary. There’s a street corner conversation between 10- and 12-year-old boys talking about gun violence in their neighborhood. They talk about watching people die, how it makes them feel about their neighborhood, their home, and how it’s changed after the storm. There are spoken word poems and there’s a profile of the Vietnamese-American community in New Orleans East showing how the generation of young people there vaulted to become the leaders of the community because they had the English language skills to battle government bureaucracy that was trying to reopen a toxic landfill in that neighborhood. They also had the Vietnamese language skills to unite the community around the fight.

Then there’s a story about God and Katrina; we asked young people in New Orleans, “How do you feel about God and Katrina? Was there any relevance? Do you believe in God?” And most young people we spoke with said, “I think God sent the hurricane to my city to cleanse it of its evils.” A shocking number of young people



Firefighters struggled to start a small floating pump to fight a raging inferno in the wake of Katrina, in an attempt to keep it from spreading to the next house. “It’s the best we can do,” one fireman said. *Photo by Ted Jackson/The Times-Picayune.*

said that, and so we put that story out there. But by putting a story out there does it absolve the other wrongs that were clearly a part of the storm—the slow federal response, the weak levees, all of that?

So the whole point of each of these stories was not just that listeners could learn from the documentary, which I hope they did. But it was also so the young journalists from New Orleans could own the narratives that they were putting out there. To stand behind it and feel like “that’s my story, and I told it in the way I wanted to tell it.”

🔊 **Listen to a story from “Generation Katrina”** at [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org) in which a family in the city’s Lower Ninth Ward talked for the first time among themselves about the experience they had together during Katrina. Here is an excerpt as Myers describes how this family’s 14-year-old daughter became the reporter on this story:

It needed a different treatment, so we decided that the 14-year-old, the eldest child, Angelica Robinson, would be the reporter for the story. And 14 is really the youngest possible age you could be to tell a story of this gravity and emotional intimacy and complexity. So we went back, and I spent a week with her working on and off, choosing the best clips, producing other stories in the process, and then writing a script, and she voices the story.

**Larry Blumenfeld** writes about culture and his stories have appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Village Voice*, *The New York Times*, and *Salon*, among other publications. As a Katrina Media Fellow for the Open Society Institute, he mined cultural recovery in New Orleans. Edited excerpts from his talk follow:

The B-roll of every broadcast story started with a trumpeter or with the second line or with some element of New Orleans culture that we can visually remember but know nothing

about. The B-roll is where the stories that I was interested in lay. And they were important stories in a complete telling of the continuing trauma in New Orleans—and it has been a continuing trauma as last year 4,500 units of public housing were bulldozed. You cannot understand New Orleans without understanding its culture. To understand what was needed in New Orleans, what was happening in New Orleans, you need to understand what was happening to the culture and how elemental the culture would be to whatever the new New Orleans would be. I talked to people who were panicky or cynical about what that new New Orleans would be.

I want to make the case that there was also just a trauma to culture. In other countries—both developed and undeveloped—if a cultural center were under water and embattled there would be a different sort of outcry beyond the humanistic and political outcry. In New Orleans people told me what they fear and are experiencing is erasure. That they are being erased, and their history is being erased. I think that’s a really deep trauma that we need to pay attention to, and that’s been something that I was able to get across.

I agree with Jed [Horne] that in the immediate wake of Katrina the story was well told primarily. But beyond that it was poorly told or not told. And the continuing trauma was largely ignored, especially as it related to race, poverty, inequity and urban ills. And I think those things were really well addressed and differently addressed through culture.

🔊 **Listen at [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org)** as Blumenfeld describes the ways in which he developed stories around what was happening with New Orleans’ cultural life. Here is an excerpt about one of the city’s core traditions, the jazz funeral’s second line parade:

Any Sunday through most of the year you can go to these parades; hundreds and hundreds of people for hours following brass bands. If that was shot from above on CNN it would look like, “Wow, in

the wake of all this these people can have this rolling party and can dance. That’s really nice.” If they went down to the ground and spent four hours, you would see that this was the political statement at that moment. This was the assertion of their right to return.

**Patricia Smith’s** fifth book of poetry, *“Blood Dazzler,”* chronicles the human, physical and emotional toll exacted by Hurricane Katrina. Her poems have appeared in a wide variety of publications and she has read her work at venues around the world. For her presentation at the “Aftermath” conference, she recited a poem based on a news story she’d read.

ST. BERNARD PARISH, Louisiana, September 7 (UPI) – Thirty-four bodies were found drowned in a nursing home where people did not evacuate. More than half of the residents of St. Rita’s nursing home, 20 miles southeast from downtown New Orleans, died August 29 when floodwaters from Hurricane Katrina reached the home’s roof.

I do a lot of stepping into other people’s shoes. I have persona poems written in the voice of skinheads, an inner city undertaker, and what I wanted to do in terms of persona was I wanted to take those 34 people and wind the clock back for a second, and just give them a moment of their voices back. So they could say not “I was,” but “I am.”

🔊 **Hear Smith** read her 34-stanza poem on our Web site. One stanza reads:

We are stunned on our scabbed backs.  
There is the sound of whispered splashing,  
and then this:  
Leave them. ■

## Visual Storytelling About the Human Condition

‘The tools are so powerful now that, as journalists, we can ... be focused on doing the kind of journalism we want to do and then partnering with other organizations to get the word out.’

**Brian Storm** is the president of *MediaStorm*, which produces multimedia narratives that combine audio, video, still photography, and animation to tell stories of the human condition. They include “*Intended Consequences*” about Rwandan women who became pregnant through rape during the 1994 genocide, “*Finding the Way Home: Two Years After Katrina*,” and “*Never Coming Home*.” In his presentation at the “*Aftermath*” conference, Storm talked about the emotional process of producing “*Intended Consequences*.” To watch the story, go to [www.mediastorm.org](http://www.mediastorm.org). What follows are edited excerpts from Storm’s presentation:

“*Intended Consequences*,” a project done by photojournalist Jonathan Torgovnik, is basically the story of the Tutsi women who were raped by Hutus and how they’re struggling with the legacy of genocide now that they have 12- and 13-year-old kids as a result. This is a pretty complex project for a variety of reasons. It was traumatic for us to bring the multimedia story together; I think I probably listened to each of these women’s stories 20 or 30 times, and there are 26 women with whom we worked on the piece. We worked on the Rwanda piece for a year. It was a really hard production for us. We had to take time off; we had translation issues and we had to take big periods of time off because we were pretty torn up by it as well.

*Storm showed the video in which three Rwandan women describe their lives:*

After the genocide I have many children that I look after. My brothers and sisters were all killed, but they had children

who had survived. So I have seven children that I look after. My children, my orphans, my daughter are my hope. They know I’m their everything. I’m their uncle. I’m their auntie. I’m their mother. I’m their father. I’m their grandmother. I am everything for them. So they don’t want to hear that I am HIV positive. But that’s the reality they have to live with. I am. I live with HIV, which is a legacy of genocide.

I am a mother but unwilling to be a mother. Whenever I look at this child I trigger back to the memories of rape. Maybe with time I will love this daughter of mine. Maybe. But for now, no.

I love the first daughter more because I gave birth to her as a result of love. Her father was my husband. The second girl is a result of an unwanted circumstance. I never loved this kid.

» At [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org), Storm describes how he spreads word about his projects through his Web site. Go to [www.mediastorm.org](http://www.mediastorm.org) and follow along as Storm walks through the site’s interactive features. To learn more about how *MediaStorm*, his for-profit company, functions, explore Storm’s background, and understand his approach to producing these multimedia narratives, read an interview with him in the Spring 2009 issue of *Nieman Reports*.

We do a lot of things to create awareness. We use YouTube; we’ll do this as a trailer that allows the viewer to then click through to our site. That

drives a lot of traffic and exposure. We’re really focused right now on the social network opportunity. We’re on MySpace because a ton of people will watch a project there. And Ning, which has very little traffic right now, I think will eventually blow up. And the granddaddy, Facebook, which went from nothing five months ago for us to the number seven driver of traffic to our Web site. I use Facebook pretty intensively.

The tools are so powerful now that, as journalists, we can take journalism back—to not be answering to shareholders but to be focused on doing the kind of journalism we want to do and then partnering with other organizations to get the word out. The opportunity now is really big for independent producers to create compelling content and transact with larger organizations. And we do interactive applications. When I look at the future for a media company this is an important element: being able to do interactive applications that help make information more accessible.

I’ve long ago crossed that line of being an objective journalist. I’m an advocacy journalist. I make no bones about it. I describe our organization as a purpose-driven organization, not a profit-driven organization. We’ll do a job for Starbucks because it pays for Rwanda. The beauty is I never took venture capital money. We’re totally break even, making a little money every month and then we’re just plowing it back in. I don’t have to go home and talk to my investors and say, “Dude, I’m not close to that 30 percent margin.” I’m focused on building what I want to build and practicing journalism the way I always wanted to practice it.

The thing that’s so important about

SocialDocumentary.net provides space to photojournalists for work related to human rights issues.

our model is that we don't do volume. We don't do perishable content. Every story on our site still matters, it's still valuable. In fact, stories that we did three years ago are getting watched more today than they were then. We do the universal story that will stand the test of time. That's what we're looking for. I think that can work. That's a patience model.

**Glenn Ruga and Barbara Ayotte** are the founders of *SocialDocumentary.net*, a Web site featuring documentary photography from around the world. Ruga is a full-time graphic designer, part-time social documentarian, and a lifelong human rights activist. He is the owner and creator of *Visual Communications* and the founder and president of the *Center for Balkan Development*, a nonprofit organization created in 1993 to help stop the

*genocide in Bosnia and to create a just and stable future for the former Yugoslavia. Ayotte is a communications strategist and human rights activist. For 17 years she directed Physicians for Human Rights where she paired storytelling with advocacy on behalf of torture, rape and land mine survivors, refugees and asylum seekers. Edited excerpts from their remarks follow:*

**Ruga:** Human rights photography is actionable as opposed to representational. In other words, the power of the work is really to make change. It's not strictly to represent something out there in the world, but the act of presenting this work and looking at this work itself can make change. It sparks public discourse, it can spur reform, and it can shift the way we think about these situations in the world and ourselves.

In the world of human rights there are perpetrators and survivors, and there are journalists who inform us about these violations, researchers who give us data and analysis, and advocates who work for policy change to prevent violations and support the victims. Artists, filmmakers, photographers and writers document and help us understand the abusers and the abused. Then, there are lawyers, judges and lawmakers who provide the legal context. Of these groups, photographers can document the abuses, honor the victims, and tell their stories of abuse, survival and justice.

Our goal is to use the power of photography to humanize these global situations. Unlike traditional journalism, we at SocialDocumentary.net encourage a point of view. Exhibits are not necessarily objective, yet

each exhibit must demonstrate infinite respect for the subject even when a photographer approaches the subject with disdain or superiority. The work must be fundamentally about the subject, not about the photographer. This is a very un-modernist approach to image-making. So much of modern image-making is about the image maker. What we're interested in is work that really is about the subject.

Photographers must be willing to invest time. It's not adequate to just go into a situation and spend one day photographing. Most who do this work will go back repeatedly over the course of months or years to tell these stories.

**Ayotte:** Our content on SocialDocumentary.net is user-generated; we don't edit the work nor do we solicit it. It's a collaborative approach to trying to understand the human condition.



Silence Speaks enables the telling of stories that might otherwise remain untold.

We try to encourage links to be made to nongovernmental organizations and other people who do work related to the issues raised by the photographs so that viewers who come and look at the work can do something about it if they feel moved to do so.

*As the special projects director for the Center for Digital Storytelling in Berkeley, California, Amy Hill manages Silence Speaks and other national and international projects related to youth development, public health, and human rights. Silence Speaks is a decade-old digital storytelling initiative that blends oral history, participatory media making, and popular education and workshops to support the telling of stories that often remain untold. In the edited excerpts below, Hill describes what distinguishes digital storytelling from other media:*

People use the term “digital storytelling” in a lot of different ways to refer both to production practices or processes as well as to media products. I would like to comment on what distinguishes it for me from other ways to make media. Also, all of the work that I do is explicitly tied to trying to effect policy change. That is different from journalism. I don’t claim to be a journalist.

The digital storytelling I do privileges the first-person narrative voice that is somewhat absent from more

traditional daily journalism. It also relies on a group process in which mutual telling and listening provide

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**In rural Uganda and South Africa, we have provided people with disposable cameras and talked with them about how to use them. We’ve done a lot of work blending photo and voice strategies with digital storytelling.**

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a safe container and contribute to the shaping of the narratives. It’s not an individual practice in which one journalist or filmmaker or artist works one on one with someone. There is a commitment to participatory production methods; storytellers don’t passively give their stories but they have a direct hand in making their stories into short media pieces. The extent to which they can do so varies

by location. It’s intended to be purposeful, whether at an individual level alone as healing or as practice in building and transmitting skills or at a wider level in terms of its potential impact on viewers.

With computer tutorials we assist people in learning what they need to know about editing to put together their own stories. In rural Uganda and South Africa, we have provided people with disposable cameras and talked with them about how to use them. We’ve done a lot of work blending photo and voice strategies with digital

storytelling. This might also happen through tactile art making, such as illustrating with drawings. There are a lot of different options depending on the context.

Those who participate in this process are very carefully screened to make sure that they have adequate internal readiness as well as external support for sharing their stories. I very, very strongly emphasize that this is not a process for somebody who is experiencing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. It’s a much more reflective practice. It tends to work better when people are sharing stories that span a slightly longer time frame and addressing more historic issues. In working with survivors of trauma, it can be useful to think of trauma as a spiral; if you’re working with somebody who’s been through a traumatic experience, your role is to facilitate them in a journey into that spiral but also to make sure that you spiral them back out. Otherwise, you can do a lot more damage and re-traumatize.

I’m a trained sexual assault counselor, not a licensed therapist. But I have a lot of background in working with survivors. And I’ve worked with a good friend of mine who’s a social worker who specializes in trauma issues. We have a whole set of screening materials and readiness questions that we work on with people to help assess whether they’re prepared. ■



## Connecting Threads of Individual Pain With Societal Responsibility

From Northern Ireland, Chile and Kosovo come stories of the struggle people have in healing from terror and torture when political accountability and reconciliation are absent.

**Jack Saul**, a public health psychologist who works in New York City with survivors of political violence and torture refugees, introduced the panel “Speaking Horror: Truth, Accountability and Reconciliation,” which explored telling the stories of trauma through public and private testimony in truth and reconciliation commissions and other forums. Saul’s remarks and those of the three speakers addressing sociopolitical challenges in Northern Ireland, Chile and Kosovo appear as edited excerpts.

It’s been researched that many trauma symptoms subside after going through the testimonial process. We also see that giving testimony in different kinds of contexts, whether legal, artistic or as an oral history, provides a reason for survivors to tell their story that they may not find so quickly in the therapeutic sessions. In fact, many of the survivors I’ve worked with want and seek this kind of public forum for the recognition and as a form of redress. We see now many situations such as truth and reconciliation commissions, testimonies, archives, different contexts in which people are telling their stories. It is not just individual narration that is being developed, but it is collective narration.

**Seamus Kelters** is assistant news editor with the BBC Northern Ireland. He covered Belfast for 20 years, 16 of them with the BBC. He co-authored “Lost Lives,” chronicling the stories of men, women and children who died as a result of the Northern Ireland troubles.

I and a lot of others grew up with a 40-year conflict with 3,700 people dead, 50,000 wounded, and at least 9,000 jailed. If that seems small-scale,



Soldiers and guns were a fact of everyday life in Belfast, Northern Ireland during the Troubles. Photo by Stan Grossfeld/*The Boston Globe*.

it was. We received undue focus because we were white and spoke English. Conveniently on our doorsteps were television, print and radio newsrooms full of young journalists eager to cut their reporting teeth. Our Troubles, and that is what we called our conflict,

received coverage, too.

People segregated for 400 years live at opposite ends of the same street. Along those fault lines of sectarian divide was always the angry noise of violence. When it spewed onto the streets again 40 years ago in August 1969, it was familiar to older people. We’d had our troubles before. Police shot my grandfather when he was 17 years old, and he was badly wounded. Another relative of mine was killed in Belfast in 1921 as he walked toward my grandmother; a sniper shot him in the head. I grew up with these stories.

The book, “Lost Lives,” grew out of that family memory. The details of the shooting recorded in the only book on the subject were wrong. Working as a print journalist, and with official and unofficial records and communal knowledge weathering, I realized that no matter how many funerals and bodies we covered, the most recent troubles would not be adequately recorded.

“Lost Lives” was squarely a work of journalism. In close to a million words, we attempted to record not just the names, but the detail of each person’s life and death to the fullest extent possible. Working chronologically, we recorded every fact we could test. We knew the work would cause pain. Although some credited “Lost Lives” with having contributed to the peace process, we never saw it as our job to make things better.

We cannot necessarily do justice to the dead. Ink isn’t blood, but as journalists our first duty was to the record. We became almost obsessed with facts, reality and truth as far as we could find it. As important as what we said was the way we said it. David McKittrick, one of my coauthors, was born in the

Loyalist Shankill Road heartland. I came from the fiercely Republican Falls Road and we did most of the writing between us. Five of us though were working across the material and we needed a style guide. So each entry starts with three introductory lines; in those three lines we list the age, the victim's name, date of death, marital status, number of children they had, religion and occupation.

We estimate there are 22,000 pieces of information in those first three lines alone before we get anywhere near the text where we wanted to write at length about each life and each death. What started as a simple advisory note mushroomed into a style guide which in itself was 50,000 words. Working and living in a divided society, to record that conflict we'd have to be respectful to the other side with our language and be aware of the sensitivities of victims' relatives. Also, we had to be aware of the truth. In our book, which is close to a million words, unless it is within quotation marks, we don't use the term "terrorist." We don't use the words "freedom fighter."

Most controversial were the times when we were writing and we were inclusive. So the perpetrators can be found in the pages alongside the victims. We made no judgments of right or wrong. To some extent that was unnecessary in a place where so many of those are confirmed in the cradle. We didn't spare facts, but we took other cares in our language. We had access to some coroners' files, but we didn't feel it appropriate to introduce pathological descriptions. The families of the dead, we felt, knew that all too graphically already and we did not need to pander to any voyeuristic darkness.

Most of our material came from newspaper combings. Some of it also originated with our own journalistic trusted sources and a few came from personal experience. I saw my first person shot dead when I was nine years old. Two years later, I helped to hold someone together after he'd

been shot. Many of my primary school class joined the IRA. At least one was shot, several were killed, and I don't know how many were jailed.

In the first edition of "Lost Lives," we dedicated it to children that they might learn the lessons. Of all the journalists I know who have covered those troubles not one of them tells the stories to our children. So one of the things that I always take away from events like this and one of the



Children in Belfast, Northern Ireland were so used to seeing British soldiers pointing rifles at them that the little ones imitated them, sometimes with a stick. Photo by Stan Grossfeld/The Boston Globe.

points that I always make at home is how much better a journalist I would have been if I would have had this vocabulary 20 years or more ago when I was just starting. It is something that I think all of us can help young journalists with.

*At the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication, Marc Cooper is a journalism professor, director of Annenberg Digital News, and associate director of the In-*

*stitute for Justice and Journalism. His memoir of Chile, "Pinochet and Me," describes his experiences as a translator for Chilean President Salvador Allende and his escape from Chile after the 1973 military coup.*

Being in Chile during those 17 years of Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship was a surreal experience. Everybody who wanted to know knew that people were being tortured and that they were being disappeared. There was no rule of law, only complete and arbitrary and unaccountable use of terror, but you could speak about it only under penalty of death, literally.

There was a truth commission in Chile that was established right at the time of Pinochet's having lost his own plebiscite that he couldn't rig properly. What was very upsetting about that was an amnesty law that he'd put into effect made it impossible to prosecute anybody who was found to have committed any of these crimes. We had a break in the ice around 1990 and 1991 with the truth commission, but that hardly healed the country. If anything, it made it worse. It made it clear that people were tortured and were disappeared, but there was nothing you could do about it. In fact, the guy who was in charge of it was still commander in chief of the army because of the Constitution he wrote. Not only that, he became senator for life under his Constitution.

I went back to Chile in 1998, eight years after the fall of the dictatorship. I wrote a 10,000-word article saying that Pinochet was the historic victor because his economic model had been imposed. He was immune; everybody else was immune. There was no accountability. The whole world knew about this and it didn't matter. Half of the Chileans had convinced themselves either that it was impossible to speak about it or wouldn't speak about it. The other half had convinced themselves that being Chileans, they could not be bad people, and therefore there was no torture. If there was torture, it was

because there'd been a war, even though one side had guns and the other side didn't.

There must be a political, juridical recognition of that healing. People can heal individually at a certain point, but if the society does not accept responsibility for what it does, then the invented narrative is allowed to prevail. The old narrative that justified the torture continues to prevail unless you can institutionalize its reversal by saying, "No, in fact, we are not going to build the statue to this person because this person is now indictable for murder." Things looked the darkest for me in 1998 when Pinochet became senator for life after stepping down from being the army's commander in chief. There was a civilian government in power that was in its eighth year of power. Democracy had been restored. Not one military officer had been prosecuted in Chile.

*In 1998, Pinochet was arrested by the British on a visit to see Margaret Thatcher.*

The 501 days that Pinochet spent in British custody from October 1998 until the beginning of 2000 changed the entire political atmosphere in Chile. The invisible shield of impunity and an invincibility that had been created by him through terror, through a juridical system imposed by the military and by the complicity of many civilian political and journalistic organizations who did not have the courage to pierce that bubble of invincibility, was popped by the British detention.

When he arrived back in Chile, he was immediately indicted on charges of murder. He never completed a trial because of health reasons, but I don't even think that mattered. Whether Pinochet goes to jail or not when he is 87 years old meant nothing at all. What mattered is that he was indicted and that as recently as last year, 30 some odd years after the fact, another 100 military officials and police officials were indicted for torturing and murder by the Chilean courts which



A refugee arrived in Albania in the spring of 1999 after being expelled by Serbian Army and police forces from his home in Kosovo. *Photo by David Brauchli/The Associated Press.*

are just starting to catch up. The importance is in having that political recognition. The personal thing is important, especially for the persons involved, but any ability to grow a new healthy generation cannot be achieved until society collectively accepts what it has done.

*Anna Di Lellio is the author of "The Battle of Kosovo" and editor of "The Case for Kosova: Passage to Independence," a collection of essays on Kosovo's history, politics and culture. She teaches in the graduate program in international relations at The New School university in New York City and at the Kosovo Institute of Journalism and Communication in Prishtina.*

There is no intention on the part of any government in these countries to really be engaged in establishing and carrying on a truth commission facing the past. They've gone ahead, however, with collecting stories. Memories of violence and trauma are often the basis of narratives of origins and of loss and recovery, so we shouldn't be surprised that people reach far back to the 17th century in the case of Kosovo, and with Serbia to the 14th

century, to find the roots of the trouble they experience today. These narratives, both individual and collective, compete with one another and cannot be reconciled until there is a political solution to the conflict. Only after that can there be recognition of the shared humanity of the people who have been involved in the conflict. This is not the reality now in the Balkans or in Serbia, where there is no political solution. This means the conditions are not in place to carry on with the exercise of having such commissions.

Journalists should be aware that they are not just interviewers, not just recorders. They need to have a framework of reference which is historical and political because in modern conflicts, competing narratives are produced and supported by groups of individuals that produce a story line of the suffering, of the conflict, of their history and identity, and they try to impose it as the story line. Borrowing from the Argentinean sociologist Elizabeth Jelin, these are the "memory entrepreneurs." Journalists should be aware of this. In these types of conflicts, there aren't just two parts; there is also a shared history of colonialism and post-colonialism. ■

## It Matters Who Tells the Story in the Middle East

‘The deliberate or unconscious dehumanization of Arabs is also reflected in the way they are portrayed on television. ... selective images confirm the stereotype that Arabs are inherently violent.’

**Scheherezade Faramarzi** is an *Associated Press* reporter who has covered the major conflicts in the Middle East, Pakistan, Afghanistan and North Africa during the last three decades. Her reporting has focused on revolutions, civil war, suicide bombings, kidnappings, hostage negotiations, guerrilla warfare, and terrorism. A 2009 *Nieman Fellow*, she has been in Beirut since 2006 covering Hizbullah and Iran’s regional influence. She began by talking about competing narratives.



A Shi’ite youth plants the Hizbullah flag and rests the Shi’ite Zulfikar scimitar upon the rubble of the Shi’ite-majority al-Dahieh suburb of Beirut. *Photo by Jason Athanasiadis.*

We have covered the Middle East as it has evolved dramatically over the past 30 years that I have been a reporter, gradually in the beginning but at a greater speed in the past decade, especially after 9/11. Nowhere has the transformation been as marked as in the demonization or dehumanization of Middle Eastern people in reporting their suffering and the injustices inflicted on them. In 1982, journalists could walk into a Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut in the aftermath of a

massacre and talk to survivors, do our own investigation and write pretty much what we saw and heard. The story would reflect what really happened. This would not be as easy to do today.

Now stories tend to lean more to what authorities want us to believe, and this results, at best, in dismissing deaths of Arabs as collateral damage. Whether on TV or in print, civilians, including children, have taken on a different role in the conflict. When many children were killed in the southern Lebanese town of Qana as they took refuge in a shelter during the 2006 war, much of the Western media accepted Israeli claims at face value and blamed their deaths on Hizbullah for using them as human shields, never checking if this was

actually the case. This proved to be wrong, as documented a year later in a report by Human Rights Watch.

In May 2004 U.S. warplanes bombed a house in the Iraqi desert near the Syrian border. The U.S. military immediately said the target was a suspected safe house for foreign fighters from Syria. The Iraqis said the planes attacked a wedding party killing up to 45 people, mostly women and children. The U.S. military denied that women and children were killed. Over the next few days, we were able to gather evidence, including film footage, from the wedding as well as interviews with survivors that indicated the attack was on a wedding party and the victims were overwhelmingly women and children. The U.S. military eventually admitted that it might have been an attack on a wedding, but still insisted that foreign fighters were killed. At one point a spokesman made the remarkable claim that “Bad guys also have weddings.”

In the end, the news media largely abandoned the story and consequently the army got off the hook even though two-year-old Khoolood was no fighter. She survived with severe injuries, but lost her parents and four sisters and brothers in the raid.

At [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org), Faramarzi tells what happened to other civilians who were attending that wedding and survived the bombing attack.

The deliberate or unconscious dehumanization of Arabs is also reflected in the way they are portrayed on television. We’re all too familiar with images of angry Arab women, thick black cloth wrapped around their tattooed faces, cursing, crying, wailing, beating their heads when innocent loved ones are killed, massacred. These menacing

narrow images, dripping with negative energy, do not provoke sympathy in the Western public.

In contrast we see well-dressed poised mourners grieving the deaths of American soldiers or Israelis. Relatives hold onto one another. The whole ceremony is performed with utmost dignity. In between the chanting and eulogies there is utter silence interspersed by quiet weeping while in Gaza cameras show a wide shot of crowds running in a frenzy through the streets carrying high the wobbling exposed body of the deceased. And they zoom in on wailing mourners shouting revenge, eyes flaming with hatred. These selective images confirm the stereotype that Arabs are inherently violent. And viewers become partial to the trauma of one, but far less of the other.

When American soldiers kill two innocent young Iraqis by mistake not only do they not admit their mistake, apologize or pay compensation, but they go so far as to accuse them of being terrorists. Reporters duly put that in the story without question, sometimes even when they know it's not the case. Why? It's the balance factor. Already we have planted suspicion in the reader's mind: maybe they weren't so innocent after all. Again we dehumanize them. We move away from the real story: the murder of two innocent Iraqi youths. They're no longer seen as victims, but perpetrators and their deaths perhaps unavoidable. It's the good guys/bad guys characterization. It's us and them.

People are so used to the carnage of the Middle East that they have stopped caring. Yet the Middle East has provided Western reporters with the best opportunities to make it big in the industry. Many with stints there, especially in Iraq, return with big promotions and go on to win awards or to write books. But how much do some of these reporters really care about the story or understand the complexity of the region when many don't even speak its language? How can they understand the suffering of a mother who wants to tell them how the death of her son has destroyed

her? Or understand the trauma of a child who witnessed the killing of her father and siblings at a Baghdad intersection by American soldiers? Can a translator really do justice?

There's supposed to be a connection between the reporter and the subject. That connection is the magic of being a journalist.

I want to share with you my first experience of what to me was a Western reporter's insensitivity with regard to Arabs. It was in late 1980. An Israeli air strike on a small town south of Beirut had killed scores of civilians including, as always, many children. Their mutilated bodies were scattered in the rubble. "Great story," this journalist said when he returned from the site and quickly went to type his story.

Two and a half decades later on a quiet morning in Baghdad I ran into a fellow journalist and asked him why he was so frazzled. "There's no story to write," he complained. I joked that he shouldn't worry for there was bound to be a bomb soon. When a bomb did explode somewhere in Baghdad, I told the same journalist that he should be happy now since he'd gotten his story. He didn't detect the sarcasm in my voice. "Yeah, but no one died,"

he grumbled. No death meant no front page.

TV screens don't show the real horrors of war that we journalists witness, at least not so much in Iraq anymore because since 2004 Western reporters hardly ever leave their offices. What we see is sanitized. Viewers are spared gruesome pictures; they don't see what's really going on in Iraq or in Gaza or in Lebanon. If the American people were able to see those pictures, I think they'd have a different view of the war.

Nor are they told in stories from Iraq, which they should be, that somewhere between 250,000 and one million Iraqis have been killed since the start of the conflict. We hear mainly about dead American soldiers. We are told their names, even their children's names and how they lived their lives before they volunteered to fight in Iraq. The Iraqi dead—no volunteers for the war—are hardly ever mentioned. Americans have no idea of the extent of civilian suffering in Iraq even though it's their country's war that caused the deaths.

When I was invited to speak at this conference we had to struggle to find a suitable topic for me. Being a Middle Easterner who grew up in



A girl who returned to her house in the village of Aita Shaab, Lebanon surveyed the damage. *Photo by Jason Athanasiadis.*

Iran, Iraq and Lebanon, trauma is a fact of life. We don't even think about it. I faced the horrors of living under an authoritarian regime in Iran, through several Iraqi coups, and then during the Lebanese civil war, just as others there did. It's our life. I'm not a foreign journalist. I'm not a foreign correspondent.

But what struck me since I've been here as a Nieman Fellow is how the Middle East is a topic of endless roundtable discussions and talks, usually by Westerners. I don't know why but I find boasting about having been in Iraq troubling, even painful, and somewhat arrogant, especially when they pat each other on the back. There's a kind of glorification of war. I just find no glory in covering sufferings.

*In the discussion that followed, Bruce Shapiro, executive director of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, began by asking Faramarzi this question:*

If you were writing your own stories in Iraq now, what are some of the guidelines you would draw out? How would you calibrate your nose for news to represent people more accurately in their suffering?

**Scheherezade Faramarzi:** I think what I would do—and I have tried to do—is spend much more time than just to get a quote or two. If we're doing a very in-depth story, I spend hours and hours. But in Iraq for instance, there are no therapists. So they use us. I sometimes feel I'm a therapist. If people know I'm staying in a town in Iraq for several months, people get to know me and come and want to talk. They tell me their problems. I really insist on the fact that you really have to be there not to just be over them. This is what I resent, maybe because I'm a Middle Easterner myself. I appreciate very much what Westerners come and do. They do great stuff, most of them do; but I feel sometimes there's this kind of "we're the whites and we're telling your story, and you should be grateful."

I remember the first day I arrived

in Iraq, a Canadian TV journalist was so angry because they had given his room to me. He was screaming at the hotel staff that "You should be grateful we're here to cover your story." He went on and on. He was a sort of celebrity journalist in Canada. I think this is very common. Even if they don't know it, there is this unconscious thing that we are here to tell your story. This is our country. This is our part of the world. You can't just become famous because people are dying.

**Scott North** (*Projects reporter, The Daily Herald, Everett, Washington*): What you said, Scheherezade, about this being a story that is affecting people where they live and viewing it as a story of who you are, really, people sort of appropriating that, that is one of the key things we have to do as journalists: Recognize that we're part of that story and we have an effect on others just by coming to tell the story. It's a real challenge to do it in a way that's respectful. It's not about us, even though in a weird way it kind of is.

**Shapiro:** In the history of journalism there have been storytelling conventions at different times and different places. Sometimes the presence of the journalist—the first-person account—has been more honored as a part of storytelling. At other times, in the U.S. for the last 50 years or so, the first person barely has existed in daily journalism. The Internet is actually bringing the first person back as a forum. It's a first-person friendly forum, and we're seeing more first-person reporting in general bleeding into papers. I think the question is not just about the representation of the self of the journalist, but this very deep question of how do we defeat the stereotype.

**Lori Grinker** (*Photojournalist*): I was embedded for People magazine on the American hospital ship for the first month of the war. My assignment, and the writer's, was to find an American doctor or medic on the ship and follow them treating American wounded.

What started happening was all these Iraqi wounded were coming onto the ship and they didn't know how to deal with it. They wouldn't do any stories on it at all. I was on the ship for three weeks and there was not one story about the Iraqis. In America, if it doesn't relate to us we don't want to read about it, we don't want to know about it. I've been doing stories about Iraqi refugees. Nobody cares because it's not about them. They care about the Americans because then, suddenly, they relate to the story.

**Kael Alford** (*Photojournalist*): I appreciate so much Scheherezade's anger at this issue. So many of us who work in Iraq come away feeling angry. We're covering stories where we feel that the things we're seeing aren't represented in the media in the way we perceive them through whatever filters there are out there, whatever choices that are made over which we don't have control. One of the things that is so important—and I see a small shift—is that reporters who are covering the story need to be local reporters: not only us going there to tell the story, but locals as much as possible. I think this is a really huge problem. It's ridiculous because we get there and we trust them with our lives, but we don't trust them to tell the story.

In my experience showing photographs of dead Iraqis, particularly at the beginning in 2003 when the war coverage wasn't about civilian casualties, I tried to publish pictures of civilian casualties during the first two years of the war. [Her photo essay from Iraq begins on page 78.] I still travel with these pictures around the country. I meet groups of Americans all over the country, in small towns, and they're shocked when they see violent pictures of Iraq because they say they haven't seen it before, which I know isn't true. Their pictures are all over the place. They're on the Web. That's why I think pictures of violence are important because people don't believe it's true until they're confronted with them in a large group and they're asked to focus on them. ■

## Approaching Emotional Pain—As a Journalist

‘Routinely we witness the awful things that people do to each other and the most enduring awfulness of all, the aftermath.’

*In a panel discussion entitled “The Narrative of Emotional Injury,” author and journalist Pete Hamill, psychologist Elana Newman, and psychiatrist Jonathan Shay spoke about various dimensions of trauma—journalistic, clinical and political. What follows are edited excerpts:*

**Hamill:** All of us who have practiced this craft and those who’ve raised it to art and literature have dealt with what human beings are capable of doing to other human beings, either one at a time or in great fields of battle. We have to tell what we see. It’s not easy, people running some of these events don’t want us to see, and so photographers are banned from certain events. Francisco de Goya in “The Disasters of War” could go back to his studio and show what he saw about war. Too many photographers who present the evidence know that what’s chosen to be shown are often the most banal versions of the events they’ve seen.

Many of us are permanent citizens of what I call “the republic of trauma.” Routinely we witness the awful things that people do to each other and the most enduring awfulness of all, the aftermath. We’re sent to make sure that this latest murder, caused by an ancient human flaw, is specific and concrete. We do that most effectively by using all the senses to tell us what it looked like, what it smelled like, and whether there was a dog barking when the police arrived and whether the dead guy in the alley had socks that didn’t match. And if he had socks that didn’t match, you’d ask a lieutenant, “Why does the guy have two different color

socks on?” and he’d tell you, “Because they dressed him in the dark.” So you understand the details that make this particular murder something unusual and unique. It’s always the details.

One of the best of Ernest Hemingway’s stories is called “Big Two-Hearted River.” It’s about a guy back from the war. The war is never mentioned; it’s about a man trying through the simple act of going fishing again in his hometown river to start to feel

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**For journalists, the question is how you tell stories about something so disorganizing. And how do you use language about trauma’s victims and survivors?**

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normal again. It’s one of the most brilliant of Hemingway’s stories. Its details construct a concrete sense of the world, of putting your hand in a swift moving river, and remembering that that’s the river you put your hand in when you were a boy. Those kinds of things are what we have to do. Those details are meant to remind people who didn’t go to war what is being done in their name in places throughout the world, whether it’s Iraq and Afghanistan or other places we’ve been part of during the last 50 years.

**Newman:** A traumatic event is something that disorganizes someone. We expect to be able to walk out right now and know that we will have ground beneath us. A trauma event takes

away that ground; it takes away our way of understanding our experience. For journalists, the question is how you tell stories about something so disorganizing. And how do you use language about trauma’s victims and survivors? How do you represent their vulnerability and their strength? As journalists, how do you handle that tension? Coming out of the feminist perspectives toward sexual violence, do you call someone a victim or do you call someone a survivor?

In interviewing survivors and victims, there’s a lot of variety in their responses, which also means there are a lot of stories to tell. Which ones do you tell? And the issue of approach and avoidance is found in your sources, your topics and your audience; people want to hear these stories and they don’t want to hear them. How do you think about that? You want to hear these stories and you don’t want to hear them, so how much do you absorb?

When you listen to survivors’ stories, the more upset they are and the more they have psychological difficulties, their words will be less organized. They can’t articulate. Their words are not in order. Things are fragmentary and there’s repetition, and there are memory lapses. That is common in people who have PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and also in acute reactions to trauma. And meaning is disrupted; people aren’t sure how to make sense of it. Yet, here you are trying to make sense of their experience for other people when those telling you the story aren’t sure what their own meaning is.

**Jonathan Shay:** Fearless speech is the literal translation of the phrase that the Athenians used to describe their aspiration politically and socially about communicating with each other—it was to be fearless. Today I want to reflect on the significance of this phrase as it relates to the cycle of the narrative communalization of trauma.<sup>1</sup> As part of this cycle, first fearless speech has to empower the trauma survivor to speak—to tell the story. The second step is that it has to be safe to hear, believe, remember and record. Journalists and literary artists throughout history have been the trustworthy listeners, the people who could hear, believe and remember, and it has to be safe for them to do it. The circle is closed when a third party can retell the story with enough authenticity that the trauma survivor can say, “Somebody was listening. Somebody cared.” Every step of this cycle requires safety, that it be possible to speak fearlessly, to listen, remember, record fearlessly, to retell fearlessly. Fearless speech.

This is also true in the microcosm of the newsroom when someone comes back from a horrific assignment. Whether it’s the cub reporter at a local newspaper sent out to cover bloody, gruesome auto smashes week after week or a veteran correspondent

sent into a dangerous war zone, it has to be safe for a journalist to speak about their own distress, about their experience, about the turmoil they may carry with them from what they have witnessed and heard. So the ecology of power in the newsroom has to make it safe for the journalists to tell the truth about the impact of covering these events. This is very much a work in progress in the profession of journalism. It’s not a done deal.

*Questions followed their presentations.*

**Stefanie Friedhoff:** Elana, you pointed out the challenges that journalists have between their own avoidance and going into issues. Do you have ideas or tips on how we can deal with the process?

**Elana Newman:** One of the things that we train clinicians to do is to deal with their feelings so that they can be more objective for their clients. The approach in journalism is to avoid feelings so you can be more objective. There are ways for newsrooms to change, but I think a lot of it comes from destigmatizing the fact that you are people and that your responses to this, in fact, will make you a better reporter. So that’s my simple answer to a much more complicated question.

**Shay:** It is essential that you allow your feelings to play inside you as a critical source of interpreting information. Understanding it is not always easy. But if you just cut it off and engage in this kind of stoicism that says emotion is at one end of a spectrum and reason and truth is at the other end—that more emotion leads to less reason and truth and less emotion to more reason and truth—well, this is a prestigious notion and it’s crap.

**Newman:** I don’t think there’s anything wrong with showing some emotion and showing tears, but I think there is this whole issue of what you do with it. Do you write about your reaction? Is there a ritual that you can engage in a way to process it before you get home?

**Pete Hamill:** One way to deal with it is to keep a journal; put your subjective reactions into the journal. Get them out of your head and onto paper. If you have complicated emotions as a journalist and they don’t belong in the story—and if it’s a hard news story, nobody gives a damn what you think or feel and they shouldn’t—keep a journal. ■

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<sup>1</sup> Shay acknowledged that he owes his account of the communalization of trauma to Judith Herman, who wrote about it in her book, “Trauma and Recovery.”

## When Language Fails Us

‘... truth is not at all lovely and not at all reconcilable with the military communiqués of war correspondence.’

**Alexander McFarlane**, a psychiatrist who heads the Centre for Military and Veterans’ Health at the University of Adelaide in Australia, spoke at the “Aftermath” conference about how trauma affects the brain and the failure of language to express those feelings. Edited excerpts follow:

Trauma disrupts the integration of the brain; its networks do not talk to each other properly so our capacity to form representation is changed. This fundamental bedrock of clear communication is an acquired abnormality following trauma experience. One critical region that is affected is the

left dorsal lateral prefrontal area of the brain, an area central to language formation. As a consequence, people who are traumatized have a disrupted affective language and struggle to use words with the same facility as people who don’t experience trauma. The facility and capacity of language



to express trauma is a very real issue because it disrupts this primary human quality.

I would like to begin not with the words of mental health professionals, but with those of authors and poets who speak through personal experience. Their struggle to find a voice through self-reflection offers us a collective exploration of the difficulty we have in speaking about trauma.

“Landscape With the Fall of Icarus” by Flemish painter Pieter Bruegel does not appear on superficial examination like the depiction of a disaster. Rather it conveys a sense of everyday serenity. The legend of Icarus is about the young man who stuck feathers to his arms and legs with beeswax so as to fly like a bird. Like any self-respecting adolescent he didn’t take his father’s advice of caution and he flew too close to the sun. The sun’s rays melted the wings with the obvious consequences. This is not the immediate image of Bruegel’s painting, where we see a shepherd tending his flock, the serf plowing the field, a fisherman, and a galleon sailing by. Only when we look at the corner of the picture do we see a leg disappearing into the water with the surrounding wavelets adorned with the feathers that had melted free.

The subtlety and strength of expression of this painting inspired W.H. Auden to write a poem that captured the essence of the visual sentiment in language:

About suffering they were never wrong,  
The Old Masters; how well, they understood  
Its human position; how it takes place  
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along;

The problem is that too many journalists and too many mental health professionals walk dully along and keep eating and they do not see. Why did W.H. Auden understand what he saw? Like many of the great authors of the 20th century he had been in-

involved in the Spanish Civil War and it is telling how the direct and personal experience of people’s encounters with trauma often is what galvanizes them to explore new genres of expression.

Shakespeare also had an uncanny sense of the challenge to speak of what one sees. In “Macbeth,” Macduff runs onto the stage having found the slain body of King Duncan and cries, “O horror, horror, horror! Tongue nor

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**‘I have reported what I saw and heard but only part of it. For most of it I have no words.’**

—Edward R. Murrow

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heart cannot conceive nor name thee.” The greatest wordsmith of all time understood the vacuum of language to convey the depth of emotion that Macduff was struggling to utter. The philosopher Nietzsche, who was an ambulance officer in the Franco-Prussian War, said “that for which we find words is something already dead in our hearts. There is always a kind of contempt in the act of speaking.” I think this is true: The most painful thoughts and feelings we have about ourselves, we never really quite say to another person.

Ed Murrow was one of the first journalists into Buchenwald concentration camp after the end of the Second World War. He said of that experience “I have reported what I saw and heard but only part of it. For most of it I have no words.” Nobody could better capture the dilemma of the limitations of language. A similar sentiment was expressed by a military photographer whose horrific images showed the naked emaciated bodies being bulldozed into graves. He said, “No words could match this place. I’ve read about camps like this but

never realized what it really was like. It must be seen to be believed.” Here we have accurate testimony from two people who use two different genres of expression that reflect on exactly the same dilemma.

Tolstoy, who was one of the first war correspondents, often reflected on the awfulness of human suffering in his accounts of the Crimean War. In one passage, having witnessed a military surgeon perform an amputation, he writes that as a participant “you will see war not as a beautiful, orderly and gleaming formation with music and beaten drums, streaming banners and generals on prancing horses, but war in its authentic expression—as blood, suffering and death.” The introduction to the Penguin edition of Tolstoy’s “The Sebastopol Sketches” quotes R.F. Christian stating that “the hero of his story is truth, and truth is not at all lovely and not at all reconcilable with the military communiqués of war correspondence.” This tension between official accounts and the narratives of those who struggled with the reality of combat are the dilemmas he then set about exploring in his epic novel, “War and Peace.”

Despite all the stories that have been written about the horror and suffering of war, it remains an inescapable part of humanity. Wars become more complex and bloody as the enemy blends with civilians and the Geneva Conventions are circumvented. I will finish with the words of Auden who prophetically reflected on the tragedy of the endless cycle of violence when he wrote on the first of September, the day the Second World War broke out:

The unmentionable odour of death  
Offends the September night.

Accurate scholarship can  
Unearth the whole offence ...

The enlightenment driven away,  
The habit-forming pain,  
Mismanagement and grief:  
We must suffer them all again. ■

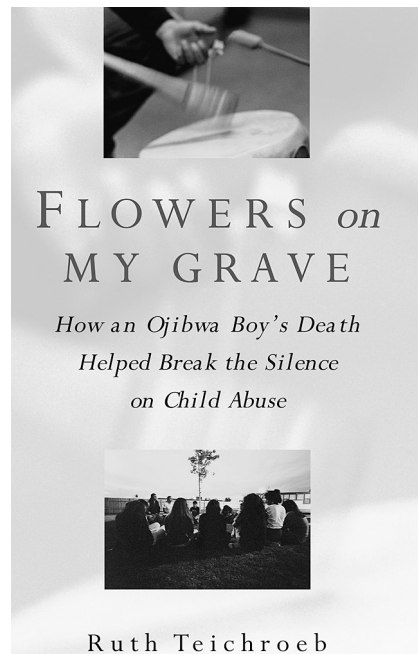
## How to Do an Interview—When Trauma Is the Topic

‘It’s just a totally different landscape when dealing with someone who’s been traumatized. They don’t know the rules, and what’s so essential in these interviews is to give the person choices about a whole host of things ...’

**Ruth Teichroeb** was an investigative reporter at the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. In her 22 years as a reporter, she devoted much of her time to covering social issues involving vulnerable people. She described her work as being about “children, child abuse, a lot of intimate violence issues, domestic violence, institutional violence where for various reasons people, usually children or vulnerable people are put in an institution for their own safety and protection and then end up being violated or traumatized as a result of this experience. I’ve talked people into starting up beats that allowed me to do these stories.” She is the author of *Flowers on My Grave: How an Ojibwa Boy’s Death Helped Break the Silence on Child Abuse*, a story she worked on when she was with the *Winnipeg Free Press*.

I’d never really thought of what I’d done as “the trauma interview,” but when I look back over the kinds of things I’ve covered, it’s almost all I’ve done over the years. I’ve learned by doing, by making mistakes, by learning what works, and one thing that is primary is the issue of control.

It is just so different in an interview with a governor; everybody knows the rules and you play the game to hopefully extract information and find out what’s going on. It’s just a totally different landscape when dealing with someone who’s been traumatized. They don’t know the rules, and what’s so essential in these interviews is to give the person choices about a whole host of things—from logistics like where the interview is going to be done and who’s going to be there, all the way to what’s going to appear in print. Time is crucial. I think it’s insulting to a victim to go in and take their story



and leave and put it in the newspaper without having that relationship—without them being able to say this is OK and this is not.

«) At [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org), Teichroeb describes her experience investigating charges of child abuse at a residential school for the deaf. As she explained, “I had to take a long, long time to build trust. And not all of us have that time, but I did in this case. It took months in many cases for people to be willing to trust me enough and to know what my agenda was in order to share the secrets of what had happened at that school.”

It’s important, too, to learn the language of the community that you’re reporting on. With my story on the state-run school for the deaf, this was literally a cross-cultural experience for me. I was trying to understand their community and their language

and dealing with a translator until I discovered instant messaging. This was wonderful; it was the best way to interview in the deaf community because it was the only way to communicate directly with the victim. Can you imagine trying to interview someone who was assaulted as a child through a translator? It just doesn’t work. And so instant messaging was a way to communicate directly even though it wasn’t verbal.

*With a story she did about police abusing their own families and partners, Teichroeb learned another important lesson about her responsibility to protect the person who comes forward to tell a personal story involving trauma.*

Sometimes it’s literally life and death issues that you are dealing with so it is important to give people the ability to say, “No, it’s not the right time,” or to control how they are identified in a story. They know what their level of risk is and need to make choices about that. But sometimes people don’t realize how dangerous the situation is for them.

Women were calling me to talk about their cop husbands, but there was one woman who called and she was in the middle of the most scary situation. Her response to it was almost suicidal. She wanted to tell the newspaper about it because she thought it would stop him, but it was absolutely the wrong place for her—she needed to be in hiding. She did not need to be in the newspaper.

So in that case a reporter has to make a choice. It was a big story. Some people might have gone for it. You have to weigh the situation and go, no, maybe five years from now, but not right now. Again, control

and danger are issues that need to be thought about.

**Karen Brown** *has been a public radio reporter for WFCR, the NPR affiliate in Amherst, Massachusetts for 11 years. In her work as a daily reporter, she has gravitated toward stories involving health and mental health, doing a few radio documentaries that have looked at refugees' trauma and trauma related to mental health issues. She had recently done a shorter documentary on a soldier suffering post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and his wife and the dissolution of their marriage. She focused on how best to approach stories about trauma when a reporter does not have the time necessary to form close bonds of trust.*

How do you get at the trauma story in a respectful way? The choice I usually make is I give up the building of the relationship and I try to just let them know that I'm going to listen to them. I try to approach them in a way that they feel that they can trust me, and either they do or they don't. But I've never chosen to save time by stopping them in the middle of their story. That's the deal breaker. People need to start at the beginning of their story and go through it, telling whatever details are important to them. If you've got a five o'clock deadline and you're thinking "I've got to get to the stuff I need to get to," then the deadline is just going to have to be missed or do it the next day or whatever.

The most important thing is to let people tell the whole story so they know that you're willing to listen to it. People get into sort of a trance sometimes, and it would be really harmful to break that up. What I might give up because I'm on a deadline is some of the details that I wanted. I'll just have to get them later or I'll have to do without. Those are sort of the choices that I find sometimes have to be made if I'm on a daily deadline.

Another choice I've made is I don't pre-interview people. I do talk with a person long enough to know that this is someone I want to interview and get the basics of their story, but

I always want them to be telling me their story for the first time when I have my tape recorder out and it's on the record. To some degree that makes me unprepared, but I think it's also helpful in a way. Part of it is just journalistic; you get the best material when it is for the first time, which is a little bit crass, but that's part of what our concerns are. I also want them to feel like they're telling me the story for the first time. I feel that is another way that I build trust when I don't have a lot of time. They're not telling me just as a vehicle, but they're telling me because I don't know the story yet and they want me to know it.

I want to make sure that people I am going to interview understand that they could go through a pretty emotional experience. I try not to talk them out of it, but I just want to make sure that there's full disclosure about what they might go through. I learned that from a woman I interviewed who was tortured in El Salvador. She was a nun and, by now, an advocate, and she had told her trauma story a number of times. When I was setting up the interview, she told me she needed to have two days after the interview when she had nothing scheduled, when she could just sit alone in her house. She was willing to do that. This was part of her job and part of what she believed in; those were the conditions that she needed to live by based on her experience that every time she told her story, even if it was for the 50th time, she needed two days to recover from what it did to her. To me that was very instructive as to what my experience with them might have done.

🔊 **Brown does her interviews for radio** *so she needs to use a microphone to record words for broadcast. At [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org), hear her talk about the microphone and how she helps people adjust to its presence.*

I've found that people are put off by it [the microphone], so I spend the first five or 10 minutes talking about something completely different ... it's down here and we're talking and then

we're just making eye contact, and by then it's just face to face and they really don't pay any attention to the microphone. I think it's more jarring if you put the microphone on and off based on what they're saying, and most of the time people just get used to it. And I feel it's also honest. They know that it's all on tape.

**Mike Walter** *was for six years the morning anchor at WUSA in Washington, D.C. In this issue of Nieman Reports on page 10, he writes about reactions that journalists have had to his documentary film, "Breaking News, Breaking Down," about emotional responses journalists have to covering stories involving trauma and violence. At the "Aftermath" conference he told what happened during an interview he did with the 16-year-old brother of an 18-year-old woman who'd been raped and murdered.*

🔊 **Walter describes** *how he and the young man did this interview on the day after his only sibling died at [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org). Here is an excerpt from the story he tells:*

This kid—I'll tell you. The first question I asked him, his lips started to quiver and I said, "Do you want to stop?" And just having that control—that we would turn the camera off—he said, "No. No. I'm going to get through this." I'll tell you what. I think it was one of the best stories that I ever did and I poured as much of my heart into that story as that kid did in front of me and the amazing thing to me was the story aired.

🔊 **To learn more** *about journalists' dilemmas in interviewing children who have been traumatized, listen as reporters and clinicians discuss issues of privacy, protection and the processes they use when talking with young children about sensitive and personal topics at [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org). Dr. Frank Ochberg, founder of the Dart Center, moderates the conversation. ■*

## A Journalist and a Survivor

'If I can give advice to journalists, I suggest it's all about relationships.'

**Julia Lieblich**, a journalism professor at Loyola University in Chicago, and **Esad Boškailo**, a psychiatrist and a concentration camp survivor from the Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian conflict, are coauthoring a book about finding meaning after terror. Each spoke about their collaboration on this project during the "Aftermath" conference and vividly described how over time they discovered ways of being able to tell and to hear stories about the horror that Boškailo experienced.

**Lieblich:** Three years ago a Bosnian man I didn't know, Esad Boškailo,

took a seat in our cramped room at the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies. I was the lone journalist on a panel on trauma and the media and I was supposed to talk about how journalists should treat their most vulnerable subjects. But after a decade of interviewing survivors in the United States, Asia and Africa, I'd given up pretending that journalists could teach survivors about the aftermath of remembering. An Afghan woman, I explained, could not tell me about the death of her son without enduring weeks of headaches. An amputee in Sierra Leone spoke of a

young man yielding a machete only to have nightmares of the attacks. Trauma, he told me, is a special kind of insanity, and storytelling, I believe, is a creative act.

Esad approached me as soon as the session ended and asked if I wanted to have breakfast with him and his wife the next day. I learned that Esad was both a survivor and a psychiatrist now working in the United States. Fifteen years earlier, he had been liberated from concentration camps and he was finally willing to talk about his ordeal. Would I be interested in coauthoring a book about both our



Bosnian and Croatian prisoners of war at a prison camp in Trnopolje, Bosnia in 1992. Photo by Ron Haviv/VII.

work, he asked, that would benefit survivors of all kinds of trauma? I'm not an impulsive person, but I said yes.

🔊) **At [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org), Lieblich explains what happened as they worked to delve into Boškailo's memories.**

Contradictions in accounts were surprisingly rare. More striking were the details Esad had omitted, such as the time men were so thirsty they drank their own urine or how bugs crawled on the skin of prisoners who had not bathed in months. These were not issues of competing narratives and subjective truth. What mattered were the details that ground true stories—the name of a prisoner who was shot; a guard who brought them figs. The long-term effects of such deprivation were the most devastating to witnesses and perhaps the most compelling evidence of trauma.

We are writing about finding a sense of purpose after trauma, but a close friend of Esad's told me he could find no meaning after life in the camps. "They take away your soul," he said. Yet, like Esad, he was willing to take me through those dark nights. The hunger. The sweating. The despair that lasted for months on end. If I was going to write about the first concentration camps in Europe since World War II, he seemed to say, the least I could do was get it right.

🔊) **Esad Boškailo, a Bosnian refugee who survived 16 months of imprisonment in 10 concentration camps during the Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian conflict, reflects on experiences he's had with journalists who have approached him to tell**

*his story and what ingredients are necessary for him to find the safety and trust to do so. Edited excerpts from his presentation follow:*

I came to the United States directly from the concentration camps in 1994. Somebody said earlier that survivor stories are disorganized, and they are for a reason. I can choose what to talk about. When I talk here about my story it's difficult. To do so requires safety and trust. If I can give advice to journalists, I suggest it's all about relationships. One of the first steps in recovery is about reestablishing human relationships and reestablishing how much control you have because during the torture you didn't have any control. One of the purposes of torture is to take control from someone's life—control of integrity, identity and humanity.

In the mid-1990's a Chicago journalist, Michael McCauley, interviewed me for a short piece on NPR. If he'd asked me immediately about my concentration camp experience, I would not have talked to him. Probably. I was very angry after 16 months in those camps. But we talked about my life prior to my trauma, and that I respected.

With me and Julia writing the book, we very carefully built the story in pieces. That was my ability. I couldn't say the story at once. One of the most important parts is that it was relationship and collaboration; I was able to partially edit the story and say that I don't want this and I want to expand that. I had that control that I lost completely when I was in the camps. ■

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**An amputee in Sierra Leone spoke of a young man yielding a machete only to have nightmares of the attacks. Trauma, he told me, is a special kind of insanity, and storytelling, I believe, is a creative act.**

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AN ESSAY IN WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

# When War Ends: The Trauma That Remains

BY LORI GRINKER

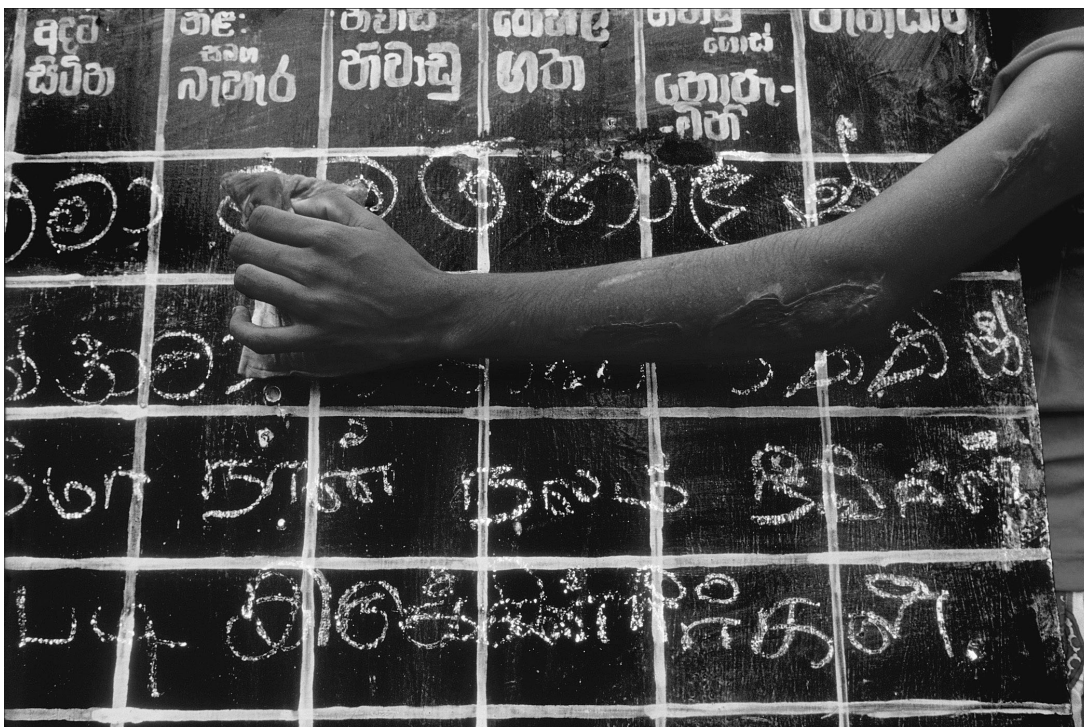
*In her introduction to “Afterwar: Veterans from a World in Conflict,” photographer Lori Grinker writes, “If I have discovered any single truth about war ... it is that it is a deeply personal experience. ... What is common to all is the aftermath.” As Alicia Anstead, a 2008 Nieman Fellow, who moderated the panel “Artistic Expression: Trauma as Muse,” said of Grinker’s work, “in the veterans’ photography, in particular, but also in other topics that she photographs, I actually see the echo of Goya, I see the intensity of Vermeer,*

*the vibrancy of David Hockney, and the fearlessness of Frida Kahlo. Today, we turn to this artist to illuminate the ... relationship between her work and her subject.” Edited excerpts from her talk “Using the human body as the narrative device to portray the horrors of war” follow:*

In “Afterwar,” what was important to me was telling the story of women, children and men from various types of conflicts and situations, such as people who had been imprisoned,

who’d done things during the war that they would never do in their civilian life, and exploring what makes them cross that line. As a young man from England who served in the Falklands said, “there’s no button they can press to switch your emotions back on.” In “Afterwar,” Iraq War veterans are included in the introduction in the book, which is organized from the most recent conflict to those going back in time—from Sri Lanka to World War I, peeling back the layers of history.

*continued on page 65*



When I took these photographs of female child soldiers, I was not permitted to show faces. This was at a government rehabilitation center in Sri Lanka where these Tamil girls were being taught Sinhalese. Piriya, pictured here, said she had placed a bomb under a bridge, it went off, and her arm got blown up.



These are child soldiers in Liberia at the Don Bosco School for Boys, which is a Roman Catholic religious order that aids street kids in this country. They are all street kids at a Sunday church service who have just started playing, doing military drills, playing “war” with a hockey stick in hand. Otis, who was 15 years old when I took this picture, said:

I was eight years old when the National Patriotic Front of Liberia came to town. I was happy because Charles Taylor took us in a convoy. We were 36 boys. I thought he was taking us somewhere good. I was selected to be in charge. They called me “Commanding Officer Dirty Ways.” I killed in bad ways. I’d be killing and laughing at the same time. I didn’t like it. I just did it. It was the drugs working. I regret the killing. In the middle of the night, they gave us drugs. When we woke up, we were numb. It made you strong, gave you the urge to do things. War is not a school. You kill and you go. There is no benefit. In school, you go to learn something; you remember it. War is something you do to destroy. They want you to fight so they can destroy the country. They are laughing at us. They’re sitting in their cars laughing and destroying the country.

*Photo and text by Lori Grinker.*



In Belfast, I was doing a story on Republicans and Protestants who'd been imprisoned for their terrorist activities. Jennifer McCann had been in prison for 10 and a half years; she is now a community activist who was elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly for West Belfast as a Sinn Fein member. This photograph reveals how the conflict continued through these murals that can be seen throughout this area. They represent Loyalist and Republican divisions. The idea for this mural was taken from "Schindler's List."

*Photo and text by Lori Grinker.*





I took this photograph in 1995 in Ramallah, the West Bank. The man in the wheelchair, center, is named Arafat. He told me how he was injured and described what has happened since then:

I was injured during the Intifada. There was a conflict and I was putting a mask on my face. The Israeli soldier told me to stop and I did, but even after I stopped, he shot three bullets in my back. Then he took me to the hospital, the same soldier who shot me. I didn't play basketball before. Now we have a team. We play against teams from Jordan, Iraq and Iran—the Sports Union Federation of Handicaps. Some of our guards have even played on the Jewish teams in Ramat Gan and Jaffa. I know the Jewish man who brings the wheelchairs. He brings me to their team. They like my playing and they put me on the team. I still play with them but now the roads are closed.

*Photo and text by Lori Grinker.*



This is in Asmara, Eritrea. Forty percent of the fighting army here were women. This is the Mariam Ghimbi prison, a former torture center. At one time, there were 400 women in this one room. The holes in the walls are from insects. If the women talked to each other their Ethiopian guards would chain their hands together. They suffered many horrible tortures. Saba, pictured here, said of this experience:

When I sleep, I feel it. It still fears me. I am in pain when there is a cold breeze. If there is a hard knock on the door, it shocks me because in prison just to hear the sound of the door being opened or shut was terrorizing.

*Photo and text by Lori Grinker.*



I interviewed this Canadian gentleman, Paul Métivier, a World War I veteran, in 2001. He was 101 years old when he shared with me memories of events now decades removed:

You can't imagine how awful, how sickening the war was. It doesn't seem fit for human beings. To amuse ourselves when we had time in the bunkers we would kill the rats. We would put the cordite in their tunnels, light it up, and blow them out. The rats would come out all dizzy and we would shoot them with our rifles. The rats were having a good time over there. Look at all the flesh they could eat with all the body parts lying in the mud. There was mud as far as the eye could see. I considered the mud to be my enemy more than the Germans. There were no trees back then, just mud: mud like porridge with too much milk. If a man was shot but still conscious and he fell in the mud, I'm sure he would die. A man could drown in the mud of Vimy.

*continued from page 60*  
Grinker also described what continues to propel her to do the work she does.

After working in the field for nearly 15 years documenting stories of war veterans, I found it difficult to take in much more information; I was overwhelmed with so many emotions. However, I'd been in Guantanamo Bay in 2002 and in March 2003 at the start of the American invasion of Iraq, I was embedded on a magazine assignment on the USNS Comfort, the American hospital ship.

When I returned home, I found it difficult to listen to reports from the war; even reading novels with war stories became challenging. I needed a break, so I started photographing landscapes and lighter subject matter. But all the while I was thinking about the Iraqis I'd met on the ship as many wounded Iraqis were brought there for treatment. I wondered what became of them and what would become of the detainees in Guantanamo. This led me to begin my project documenting the lives of Iraqi refugees and of the wounded.

Something keeps bringing me back to war—to the effects of war. I think it's to try to understand something that in a way remains so foreign to me, but to understand it from a very human and personal level. Because once news coverage diminishes, the war is still going on for these people, and they live with its consequences. How does it affect their lives long term? It's a story I feel needs to be told. ■

*Grinker's photo essay, "Iraqis: Making Visible the Scars of Exile," was in the Summer 2008 Nieman Reports.*

*Photo and text by Lori Grinker.*

## Narratives—With Trauma at Their Core

‘There’s a kind of emotional insight that a skilled writer with a great command of language and of the human condition brings to a story.’

**Constance Hale** teaches narrative writing at the Nieman Foundation and was the founding editor of the foundation’s online *Narrative Digest*. At a small group session during the “Aftermath” conference, Hale led a conversation about how to produce good narrative journalism about trauma. During their time together, the journalists spoke about successful approaches to narrative writing, and Hale addressed these elements in remarks that are excerpted below:

All of us are bundles of contradiction, and if you haven’t found the contradiction in someone, then you haven’t done the character work that you need to do for a narrative to work. We’re talking about paradox so character description becomes a skill that’s very important.

What place do your emotions play? What place does what you’re experiencing play in the story and the totality of your experience as a human? There’s this wise narrator that is there sometimes, even when it’s a very objective, third-person story. There’s a kind of emotional insight that a skilled writer with a great command of language and of the human condition brings to a story.

Some trauma narratives can feel very small-bore because I think sometimes as reporters and editors we’re like, yes we have great characters, sympathetic, narrative arc, dramatic escalation, climax resolution; all the elements of narrative, but what’s the second level? What’s the deeper level? What does it tell us about life? What does it tell us about humanity? What does it tell us about the human condition? And so the larger context is the thing we often find missing.

🔊 Listen at [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org) as Hale describes a narrative story



Chaplain Darren Turner prays with Specialist David Battle and his wife, Lakeisa, as their son Ahmarion, 2, sleeps at the foot of the bed in the “warrior care” unit at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Battle lost three limbs in Iraq. Photo by Curtis Compton/*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

that appeared in *The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer* in which a reporter wrote about having been raped 20 years earlier—and why her particular approach to reporting this story worked so well. Here is an edited excerpt:

She went and found the rapist’s family and the story became not just about her experience of rape but about poverty and race and violence within families. It turned out the rapist had come from a very violent family and had been subjected to abuse as a kid. That’s a very ambitious story, to write about your own experience of rape 20 years ago and then to build class and race into the story.

🔊 Hale reads from the beginning of a story written by Neil Shea, who was sent by *National Geographic* to Iraq.

When he came back with a story that was not going to be published in that magazine, he wrote it for *The Virginia Quarterly Review*. Hale introduced her reading by observing the following:

He probably didn’t make very much money, but he was given the space and he was allowed to write a narrative. It’s kind of interesting to me that this was the outtake, the story that didn’t sell—the story that he wasn’t sent on assignment for, but it was the story that he wanted to write.

🔊 In another section from Shea’s story, Hale illustrates how the author uses fresh, detailed language to describe what it was like to get into a helicopter.

In a second small group session about narrative, Moni Basu, then a reporter with *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*,

## Toxic Storytelling: When Trauma Is Sensationalized

**Richard Mollica**, director of the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma, introduced “Aftermath” attendees to a woman whose story is part of a collection at Harvard’s Schlesinger Library of oral histories by Cambodian women. This project was undertaken by members of the Harvard program who have cared for more than 10,000 survivors of extreme violence worldwide during the past 30 years.

At [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org), Mollica tells the Cambodian woman’s story.

Mollica described what he calls the “toxic trauma story” and spoke about journalists’ use of it.

The toxic trauma story is so much a part of medicine and journalism. Brutal facts and high emotions. Where are the other three elements—the cultural meaning of trauma, revelation and our relationship to the survivor? Where are those?

A classic example happened in New Orleans. In one clip I saw there was an African-American woman with eight children floating in a bathtub. A reporter goes “Excuse me, how does it feel to be in a bathtub floating down the street? Wow, it’s really upsetting. Well, thank you



Families found a variety of ways to float away from their flooding homes; some, like this one, were rescued in boats as the water rose in the Lower Ninth Ward after Hurricane Katrina. Photo by Ted Jackson/The Times-Picayune.

very much. This is ABC News.” Then the woman starts going off into the horizon and disappears. I have this clip, but I don’t know where she went. Where is she? I’m still thinking about this lady and her kids. I don’t know where she ended up in the bathtub with those kids.

When I hear the toxic trauma story, I immediately switch off. I’m just raising the question about comparing what I call the full trauma

story with the toxic trauma story. I don’t know if you use this term in journalism. But I think one needs to consider whether certain stories are being told in ways that are toxic because they’re not about revelation. They’re not about learning. They’re not about cultural meaning. And I think these elements are key to the full trauma story. ■

and **Scott North**, a projects reporter with *The Daily Herald* in Everett, Washington, and documentary filmmaker **Peter Davis** shared their experiences in doing long-form trauma narratives. Basu described how she decided to focus her eight-part Iraq narrative series on Chaplain Darren Turner.

Basu explains how her search for a central character began in Georgia. The first clip begins with moderator Andrea Simakis, a reporter with

*Cleveland’s Plain Dealer* and a 2009 Nieman Fellow, reading from her story, followed by Basu’s talking about her work on it. In the second audio clip, Basu explains what it was like when she followed Chaplain Darren Turner to Iraq, embedded with his military unit, and returned to Atlanta to write. Basu provided a poignant glimpse of how Turner’s role in the war affected him.

What happened in the story was I went to document this young, green

chaplain who went into battle thinking he would save these young souls, and in the arc of the narrative, when you get to the last chapter, you see how he is the sponge for the whole battalion. All through the story he has absorbed all of the wounds of all of his soldiers. By the end of it, you see him so completely spent where his anger comes out in what he says. At the beginning of the story, he goes to Walter Reed, and at the very end of the story you hear him say, “I don’t

## Aftermath

want to go” to Ibn Sina, which is the combat hospital in the Green Zone where nine of his men have been taken from a burning Bradley. He says it because he’s just completely done. He’s so stressed out by that point. I had not ever imagined that to be the arc of my narrative but that’s how it ended up.

*After five years of reporting a story about Mylo, a 19-year-old member of the Tulalip Indian tribe, who died after ingesting hallucinogenic mushrooms, North wrote an 11-part serial narrative that was published in The Daily Herald.*

» At [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org), Scott North tells how he approached Mylo’s family and stitched together the story of the teenager’s life and death. In talking about his work on this story, North observed the following:

It’s an easy trap that we fall into: young man on drugs, encounters the cops, he’s dead. Game over. The reality was Mylo had been trained to be a leader in that community. Mylo was somebody with tremendous charisma, and Mylo had just left home three days before. He was a kid in whom people had invested great time and energy trying to help him make good choices, and he made a kid’s choice and he died. It was a tremendous tragedy and loss, and I tried to capture what that meant over the course of his lifetime by reflecting on who the people were that I met. It was the hardest part of the story to write, but it was the last thing I wrote, which was how does this connect very, very directly with my family.

*Peter Davis is the filmmaker responsible for the Academy Award-winning documentary, “Hearts and Minds,” a film about the Vietnam War that was released in 1974. Moderator Simakis read from a review by New York Magazine’s Judith Crist:*



Mylo Harvey’s brother and his mother mourn for him at his grave on the Tulalip Indian Reservation. Mylo died at age 19 after struggling with police in Everett, Washington while under the influence of hallucinogenic mushrooms. Photo by Kevin Nortz/The Daily Herald.

The title is derived from President Lyndon B. Johnson’s noting as he escalated American involvement in the Vietnam War that, “the ultimate victory will depend on the hearts and minds of those who actually live out there.” But Davis’s triumph is that he is even more concerned with the hearts and minds of Americans. And though its time-set is the 10-year foreign war that cost some 60,000 American lives and caused internal upheaval and bitter aftermath, his work endures as a touchstone for a concept of Americanism, patriotism and personal and political principle.

» **Davis explores** how he dealt with three central questions—*Why did we go to Vietnam? What did we do there? And what did the doing, in turn, do to us?* In this edited excerpt, Davis observed:

The last two—“what did we do there and what did the doing do to us?”—that’s trauma. I didn’t call it that then. I didn’t know it, but I knew that something

horrifying had happened to America in the process of doing these horrifying things to the Vietnamese. ... dropping more bombs on Vietnam, for instance, than were dropped in all of World War II including the Far East, Hiroshima and Europe. By the way, none of that is mentioned in the film nor are the three questions. I didn’t want a narrator. I still didn’t know what I was going to do with those three questions, but I decided that everything in the film has to be related to them—to at least address the questions; there are no real answers to those questions. Even if these questions were not heard in the film, I wanted the film to be an inquiry rather than just an anti-war blast.

» **Three Vietnamese people** in this documentary are talked about by Davis who explains their significance to his film. ■

## Tugging Meaning Out of Trauma

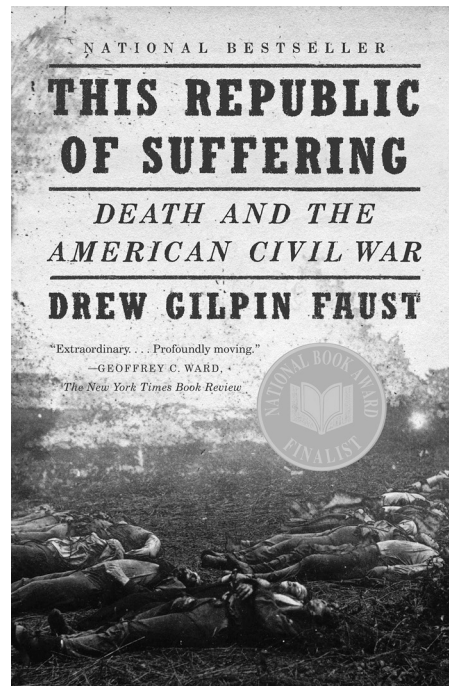
‘The journalists, by telling the survivors’ stories, are a witness to the witness and they bring that story to the larger society.’

*In the opening panel of the “Aftermath” conference, “Life After Death: War, Memory and American Identity,” historian, author and Harvard University President Drew Gilpin Faust and psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton, known for his pioneering studies of Hiroshima survivors and Nazi doctors, discussed war, trauma and death and the role that journalists play in developing narratives to chronicle and share these experiences. The moderator was Jacki Lyden, a host and correspondent for National Public Radio, who since 1990 has reported from more than a dozen conflict zones in the Middle East and Afghanistan. An edited version of their conversation follows:*

**Lyden:** In your long years of studying psychohistory in Vietnam and Nazism and cults, have you thought about the ways that storytellers tell stories and if we are human enough in our storytelling?

**Lifton:** I’ve thought a lot about stories in relationship to extreme trauma; and I’ve thought a lot about survivors and the psychology of the survivor. One model that’s useful because it’s so simple and general—and many people in this room have been using it or something like it—is to look at the psychology of the survivor.

In every chapter of Drew Faust’s book, “This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War,” I thought about Vietnam, Hiroshima and the Holocaust. The connecting link is the psychology of the survivor. There is the indelible image of that death encounter; it includes a struggle with feeling—how much I can feel or not feel. It includes usually a kind of self-condemnation for remaining alive while others died and not doing more



to stop the evil force. But above all the survivor’s preoccupation is with meaning. How can I understand this vastly death-saturated event? And if I can’t understand it I can’t understand or deal with the rest of my life. That is the connecting point.

Journalists are really mediators between those immediate survivors who experience the war or the event viscerally and the more distant survivors—the rest of us on the home front. The journalists, by telling the survivors’ stories, are a witness to the witness and they bring that story to the larger society. So the psychology of the survivor is key.

**Faust:** What is the future of these countries that have recently lost the dead? How will the dead and the trauma have an effect in years to come? One aspect that I think is probably generalizable beyond the war I know

best, which is the Civil War, is that the dead turn into The Dead, with capital letters. After a time, they are no longer mourned so much as individual lost brothers, fathers, sons, wives, children, but they instead take on a meaning as a kind of political force, a shared loss that then can become a justification for more wars or national conflicts, or something of that sort. That’s one of the things that happens: that the mourning becomes generalized and takes on a nationalist or shared or political meaning beyond the individual emotional trauma of loss.

**Lifton:** That’s a crucial point. That, again, comes down to the meaning we give to the dead. In the dead lodge all moral authority and people assert moral authority by speaking on behalf of the dead. Read the “Iliad” and there are voices in Homer—even though the “Iliad” is the glorification of the warrior hero in many ways—often women’s voices that say this war may not have been worth the suffering it has caused. Perhaps these deaths cannot be justified. That is the alternative meaning from the traditional warrior ethos given to those deaths that “we must not let the dead have died in vain,” and, therefore, we extend the war. The alternative meaning is to question. It’s often a meaning through the meaninglessness of war. It’s a survivor mission that embarks on a determined cause of questioning and opposition to the war; and that’s the meaning that is taken from the dead. We should not lose sight of that meaning nor suppress it in our work as journalists or as scholars.

Another point is that no tragedy, no disaster, no matter how great, has an inherent meaning. We create meaning from it. We are meaning-hungry

creatures and we must create meaning every moment of our lives, but all the more so with the kinds of tragedies that absolutely destroy and disrupt lives. That means that every generation has its own set of meanings. The flow of history is a series of survivals and of meaning structures that we create and recreate. There's no end to it and there's no single meaning that ever dominates.

It is important for us to be brought closer to the actuality of war. There is nothing more valuable and more beautiful than the interview method whether for the journalist or the scholar, especially when dealing with contemporary war. It cuts through the platitudes and the ideological assertions and gets to the direct human experience and especially the human pain. Once you talk to somebody who's fighting a war and who tells you what it's really like, you're into that inner-narrative we heard about in terms of Herman Melville's "Billy Budd," rather than an outside narrative. You're getting to the real human cost of war and the real suffering. [See related story about "Billy Budd" on page 73.]

Related to this can be a macho assumption on the part of the journalist as well as the fighter; "Well, I'm a tough-minded journalist. I don't get excited about these things. I can plunge into it and take care of it." Then one over-extends oneself psychologically instead of pacing oneself as one must, as an athlete does, in order to deal with these enormously demanding issues. The writing and work of journalist Chris Hedges is very important in all this because he wrote in his 2002 book, "War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning" about the deep attraction of war for many journalists. War can attract because it's a form of transcendence. With killing or dying you transcend the banality of ordinary existence. That



An allied correspondent stands before the shell of a movie theater in Hiroshima in September 1945, a month after the United States dropped an atomic bomb on the city to hasten Japan's surrender. *Photo by Stanley Troutman/The Associated Press.*

can have enormous appeal. But all that has to be observed self-critically and its appeal recognized and contested.

**Drew Gilpin Faust:** Robert E. Lee, watching the slaughter at Fredericksburg, said, "It is good that war is so horrible, or we might grow to like it."

Earlier, Jacki, you observed that there are so many people whose stories aren't in print or who aren't able to tell their stories and we're not paying attention to all these stories. One of the things that strikes me is that trauma and silence often speak to me together. So how do you tell stories when people are silent or unable to express what a trauma means? I've seen often in the Civil War that soldiers would write home and say, "Words cannot express ...," "There is no language that can grasp ...," "I could not possibly tell you what happened today." The need to acknowledge the inability to speak and the necessity

of silence it seems to me has to be overcome to deal with trauma the way you journalists want to.

**Robert Jay Lifton:** The deeply traumatized person is caught between wishing to talk about nothing but his or her trauma and being unable to talk about it. Therefore, one can be completely stilled. That requires a process of opening out, of two human beings in dialogue who are exchanging ideas both being in some way vulnerable. Some people have to stay silent for a long period of time, then eventually—and this happens with many Holocaust survivors—years later, perhaps decades later, they can begin to speak. It should be emphasized that it is impossible to describe the most extreme kind of experience. Words are not adequate to it. Sometimes images do a little better.

As journalists and scholars we can translate the words that people begin



to tell us into images. When I heard descriptions of what happened in Hiroshima, I had never seen or experienced anything like it. I found myself trying to create pictures in my mind of the words people were telling me so that I could take in and get closer to what they were describing. It's a constant effort to be able to take in this extreme trauma and to be able to connect with people who go through it. We need to have a little humility in recognizing that they know things that we don't know. Gradually that unmentionable or unknowable kind of experience takes on some kind of form, even though imperfect and scattered and skewed. Then, we play a role by recreating it in our own narrative that gives it more form. We do best when we reach deeply into the pain from which to make that narrative.

### Journalists: Opening Out

**Jacki Lyden:** Something I think has been done well in human rights reporting is when someone can go back and find out what that victim was doing two years later, three years later, five years later. Some of this only comes with time. That would change the nature of trauma reporting not just in war zones but in school killings and other violent events. We need a dimensionality of time other than get it on by five o'clock tonight and make it four minutes long.

**Robert Jay Lifton:** Journalists have a crucial role because they're at the traumatized environment more quickly than scholars or philosophers. In that way, they mediate. They bring the narrative to us. There's no getting away from that role of the journalist being there, being the early responders, and having this crucial function of making this narrative, and the narratives determine how we go about things.

The war on terror was the given official narrative as a survivor mission from 9/11. This survivor mission became the narrative of a war on terror, which was to eliminate evil in

the world. Think how important the building of that narrative is and how important the role is of journalists in either acquiescing to that narrative or, better, contesting it.

Drew Faust brings out in her book how in the middle of the 19th century the idea of a good death was very strong. People were to die in a good way; one tried to arrange that good death. We've pretty much lost that in the 21st century but also because of the wars. I can't help but remember the story told me by one veteran

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**There's no getting away from that role of the journalist being there, being the early responders, and having this crucial function of making this narrative, and the narratives determine how we go about things.**

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about dying in Vietnam. It's the very antithesis of anything we might call a good death. He told how he was in a helicopter flying as a passenger, and in that same helicopter was an enormous portable toilet. He said, "What I thought is the way to die would be for this plane to crash and then I'd die in the middle of shit; and that's the only way to die in Vietnam." It was the very extreme of a good death, but it says something about what that war meant or was falsified and didn't mean to the people fighting in it.

Psychic numbing is a diminished capacity or inclination to feel. It's much easier to involve oneself or to become numbed where people are different and especially if they're considered the enemy. Psychic numbing is something that can afflict any of us and all of us.

There's always an imperfect balance between how much feeling one cuts off and how much one remains vulnerable.

As a recorder of these events, journalist or scholar, one has to still remain vulnerable and not numb oneself in an exaggerated way. Psychic numbing, a degree of it, occurs to the victim; it occurs in the perpetrator from a distance in another way; and it also occurs in the would-be narrator of that experience.

The narrator opens things out by entering into it and then telling the story to the larger population. In entering into it, since you're not a victim of that particular disaster, you do have greater freedom and less numbing to contend with so you take advantage of that position in forming our narrative. Everything that happens from then on should be in the direction of that opening out: the journalist entering in and telling his or her story; performers in writing and creating art in relation to extreme trauma; scholars immersing into that death-haunted realm; and all of us. All of that is a process of opening out. I think one humanizes the larger society in the very process of doing it.

It's extremely demanding to get close to extreme pain. Society will use every mechanism to distance itself or distance its people from that pain. Different societies in different times of history will do it in different ways. Yet it's always there. I think that has to be recognized as a kind of limitation of the human condition. Our task, as people who address these issues, is to get a little closer and to form narratives that enable people to connect.

Extreme trauma transcends cultural differences. I've worked with American trauma of an extreme kind, with trauma in Japan with Hiroshima, and in Germany and Europe with the Holocaust. There's a commonality of pain and of the whole survivor experience, even though you must immerse yourself in these cultures to get at it: you must be sensitive to the cultural nuances in order to understand what's happened to people in that culture. But when you do there's that final common pathway of extreme suffering



Negative by T. H. O'SULLIVAN. Entered according to act of Congress, in the year 1861, by A. GARDNER, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Columbia. Positive by A. GARDNER, 311 7th St., Washington.

*Incidents of the War.*

A HARVEST OF DEATH.

Gettysburg, July, 1863.

The soldiers who gave their lives in the Civil War, above at the Battle at Gettysburg, gradually became The Dead, a singular political force and shared loss, according to historian Drew Gilpin Faust. Photo courtesy of Library of Congress.

real and it involved bodies. If you saw a body, you were much more able to realize because you had a real piece of evidence of that loss. So this suggested all kinds of aspects of trauma and loss. How do you come to grips with what is real about it, what is tangible, what is transforming, what is enduring? How does it go from your head to your actuality and how does it go from the actuality to your head, and how do those things interact?

**Robert Jay Lifton:** That very word anticipates a lot of psychoanalytic thought. There is even a prominent defense mechanism of de-realization—the process of preventing, resisting making it real—which is what many people you wrote about suffered from and wanted to overcome; and there are other defense mechanisms, like repression or isolation or denial, all of which represent a form of what I am calling psychic numbing. There's usefulness in recognizing that all of these things are related to feeling or not feeling. You need to feel that death and that loss to make it real so that you can go on with your life.

and of survivor struggles.

The degree to which war reverberates from the individual to the family to the whole social system and how its messages always break down, we often are distanced from this because it's happening to the other rather than to our own troops, which are tightly knit and retain their structure and their institutional integrity. The breakdown of the alleged enemy and what's happening in the other culture on a mass level is something that we should tell about in our stories about Iraq.

**Making Real: Death and War**

**Drew Gilpin Faust:** One of my book's chapters is called "Realizing." I used that as a chapter title because I was

so struck, as I was reading letters and diaries, by the use of a word that was very familiar to me—realize—in a way that was quite unlike any use of that word that I think we're accustomed to in our time. It was used in the context of war in a very literal way: realizing, to make real. Individuals would talk about how they couldn't realize a death: They couldn't realize their brother or their husband had been killed. They couldn't realize that this person was gone. What they meant was make that death a reality in my life. Make me understand that my life has been changed because some person that was so important to it is now absent from it.

For me there was a kind of materiality about this notion of making it

There is another thing I would like to say about this issue of numbers. I think it was Arthur Koestler who said this: "Statistics don't bleed." That's true. If you say a hundred thousand or a million it doesn't register; but the way in what was almost the last chapter of your book, "Accounting," depicted numbers, the overwhelming numbers and then the building of numbers gave me a new understanding of what it meant for all those numbers of deaths to be recorded in Vietnam and, more recently, the very small numbers of deaths in Iraq as they were broadcast one at a time. They had a powerful impact on each of us, especially when you question that war with each number building. So statistics can bleed when we take the time and the

energy to enter into what they really are, what they constitute.

*Audience members had an opportunity to ask questions of the speakers.*

**Question:** Can you tell us a little bit about comparisons between the death rituals from the Civil War and what you're seeing from Iraq today?

**Faust:** One very dramatic difference is the visibility of the Civil War dead, the numbers of funerals, the Lincoln death processions, Stonewall Jackson—very public, weeklong death rites, and the invisibility of the Iraq dead. Today the Pentagon announced that at last the coffins of the military dead from Iraq and Afghanistan can be photographed. It's a big contrast, not simply that the numbers of Civil War dead were so great—that there were just funerals all the time—but also the willingness and, in fact, the eagerness to make these deaths visible. I think it's a very important contrast.

**Lifton:** There's also the element of the technological distancing from death. Somebody in Vietnam did a very informal survey that's very illuminating. He talked to helicopter pilots, to the pilots of medium bombers, and to the pilots of high-level bombers in terms

of their emotions. The helicopter pilots had all the emotions of ground troops: all the conflicts and pain. The pilots of medium bombers just saw little figures on the ground and didn't really feel too much, but felt a little. And the pilots of the high-altitude bombers saw nothing, were totally on instruments, and it really took an act of moral imagination for them to even think about what happened on the ground. That's an example of technological distancing in warfare and, of course, even more so for civilian populations.

**Question:** President Faust, the chapter that comes after "Dying" is called "Killing" and it's about what it was like for Civil War soldiers to kill another human being. Do either of you have thoughts on that side of the trauma issue?

**Lifton:** The Vietnam veterans I spoke with were very concerned about killing as well as dying. It was either killing or the death of a buddy—witnessing dying—that began their journey from war supporters or at least obedient warriors into being opponents of the war. It was that death encounter.

On the one hand, it's difficult to kill enemies. One military psychiatrist did a study in which he found that most

soldiers in most wars didn't fire their guns. You had to really train them to distance themselves from the target and not see it as human in order for them to kill that person. When you get hand-to-hand warfare as sometimes happened in Vietnam those barriers are no longer there and you really suffer the pain. Anybody I came upon who killed somebody in Vietnam had all kinds of emotions and difficulties about it.

There is something else that has to be questioned. It's often said that it doesn't matter whether or not you support a war or what the war's purposes are, you're just there in a combat unit and that's all that matters. That isn't true. In World War II—and to some extent in the Civil War as Drew Faust described it—when people really believed in their mission they could feel terrible about killing somebody, but then come out and think, "This is a dreadful thing, even an atrocity, but it had to happen and, in the end, it was for a good purpose. We did defeat evil." With Vietnam and Iraq that last part is missing: it was a terrible thing, it was an atrocity, and I can find no justification for it. That's where the killing of another person becomes extremely traumatizing and a source of self-condemnation and guilt. ■

## In Search of an 'Inside Narrative'

'Very often, as journalists, we end up telling these kinds of outside narratives when we go to official sources for the most difficult and intimate stories.'

*In thinking about why journalists gather to discuss storytelling about trauma, Bruce Shapiro, executive director of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, recalled a book he'd read in a college class while he was learning how to be a reporter. It was Herman Melville's "Billy Budd" and Shapiro used this novel as a way to talk about the concept of "inside narrative." Edited excerpts of his remarks follow:*

Set on a battleship in a time of war, the atmosphere is thick with fear of mutiny and subversion. "Billy Budd" tells the story of how a much-beloved sailor is provoked by an authoritarian malignant officer into lashing out in violence and everything that flows from that event culminating in the sailor's hanging. Interestingly, Melville called his book an "inside narrative."

Near the end of this very short novel

there is a newspaper account of the killing of the officer and of Billy's hanging. What's relevant is that this news story, reported from official sources, misses everything and gets everything wrong: the facts of the murder, the manner in which the killing happened, who the bad guy was, the good guy, how it was perceived by the crew, and what it meant politically. Melville makes clear that those reading that

news story would perceive the events on this ship as something they were not. Melville says this is the ultimate outside narrative.

Very often, as journalists, we end up telling these kinds of outside narratives when we go to official sources for the most difficult and intimate stories. Why is this important? Melville's answer is that the reader of that article would think that there was about to be a mutiny on the ship and might arrive at some political conclusions. Melville wants us to see the story differently. That's why he calls his an "inside narrative"—the attempt to grapple with evil and violence and sorrow and with the ineffable lingering suffering from terrible events that leave no one unscarred.

Some journalists have lived inside narratives by being part of communities, families or neighborhoods where they've known intimately the lives and stories of the people they've reported on, whether their stories were about community catastrophes of civil conflict and disorder or intimate sorrows of tragedy that struck families in close-knit towns. Some have sought inside narratives after landing in a strange and complicated place where they have encountered acts of violence that demanded accountability or explanation.

Journalists learn ways of telling true stories by gaining a kind of humility in recognizing that there are other deep roads to truthful storytelling. Here, too, I think Melville's little fable has something to teach: In "Billy Budd,"

that news story—the corrupt outside narrative—appears in the second to last chapter. The novel ends not with that news story, not even with one of Melville's wonderful cascading paragraphs, but with a folk ballad. It's a poem of an anonymous sailor who imagines Billy on his final night and captures the weight and sorrow of that occasion in a way that's beyond prose.

Melville's book issues a double warning to us as journalists about the danger of relying on official stories to tell unofficial truths and about the inadequacy of prose itself to tell the truth about these kinds of events. He is telling us and himself that we need to put our conventional toolbox aside and learn from others, such as poets and singers, artists and filmmakers. ■

## Reporting the Iraq War: Whose Truth Is Being Told?

'... I used to tell the American correspondent, "You know what, you're writing my story. I'm writing my story. When we cover a car bomb, it's my neighborhood." For an American correspondent, it's a story.'

*Hannah Allam, a 2009 Nieman Fellow, covers the Middle East as Cairo bureau chief for McClatchy Newspapers. From 2003 to 2006, she was McClatchy's Baghdad bureau chief. In her talk, she focused on her experience in managing McClatchy's largest foreign bureau and in reporting in Iraq; this was Allam's first experience covering a war zone and in overseeing a bureau. Her remarks that follow, and those of the other panel members, appear as edited excerpts:*

When I accepted the job of running the Baghdad bureau at the age of 25, I envisioned my role as producing thorough and accurate stories that would keep us competitive with the larger news organizations, staying on top of expenses and other administrative duties, and cultivating sources within the military, state department, and Iraqi government and society. All of that proved to be part of the job, but Iraq came with a whole host of challenges I never saw coming. Within

months, I was resolving tribal disputes among the drivers, picking out armored cars, making embarrassing requests for specially designed flak vests that didn't crush the chests of our female correspondents, and generally trying to find my groove in a mostly male, almost exclusively white, and very hard living Baghdad press corps that I must say wasn't always welcoming to the rookie Muslim girl from Oklahoma.

Still the biggest challenges were to come. The hardest task was putting this fledgling bureau back together after insurgents killed a staff member's entire family in spring 2004, and once we sort of recovered doing it all again in summer 2005 after a U.S. sniper killed another one of our Iraqi staff members at a checkpoint. As the violence expanded in both its scale and targets, my chief concern was making sure that each of the 18 lives I supervised—each of those people made it home safely each night. The question became should we continue

to operate in a place where the story has become secondary to security. The answer, unanimous from both the Iraqis and Americans on staff, was that we had to.

We got some things right. To build trust, I promised every reporter and driver on staff that I would never send them on an assignment unless I was willing to go myself. We were the first bureau to have set working hours and paid days off to recognize the sacrifices of our Iraqi colleagues. Before it became the norm in the press corps, we gave Iraqi colleagues full bylines and also their own blog, *Inside Iraq*, which became a forum readers loved because it was an uncensored, large unedited space where you could just feel what it was like to live every day in this war zone.

We also got some things wrong. I mistakenly thought that our little sanctuary in the heart of Baghdad was immune to the sectarian tensions that came to a boil in 2005 and 2006.

Well, of course, the sectarian strife outside the newsroom wormed its way inside, and to this day we have to remain vigilant to prevent sectarian unrest and to ensure representation of all of Iraq's groups in our staff and in our coverage. This was especially sensitive because I and the two subsequent bureau chiefs in Baghdad are all Arab-American Muslims, two Sunnis and a Shi'ite.

Sometimes I became so caught up in the lives and concerns of our own staff members that I lost sight of our audience, American readers, and filed reports that were too insider baseball. Other times I didn't pay enough attention to the lives of our Iraqi staff members. As early as 2003 they were telling us about relatives who'd been tortured inside U.S.-run prisons, and I dismissed those accounts as exaggerated hearsay as, when the Abu Ghraib scandal eventually showed us, that wasn't necessarily the case.

I turned 26, 27 and 28 in Baghdad, and each year there brought deeper understanding of Iraq's power structure, sponsors of violence, and the U.S. military and civilian command. Yet in those three years, Iraq also became what I call the incredible shrinking country. Right after the fall of Saddam Hussein, we could travel relatively easily from the mountains of the north to the marshes of the south. Then as security worsened, we became confined to Baghdad and the surrounding provinces, then to the city itself, then to our neighborhood, and finally, at the height of the civil war, to our hotel.

Kidnappings, bombings and beheadings made huge swaths of the country off limits to all Western reporters and to many Iraqis. And no news organization could claim to be providing a comprehensive picture of the war to readers, listeners and viewers. It was

only through the unspeakable courage of our Iraqi colleagues, such as Abdul Razzaq al-Saiedi, that we were able to dispatch even parts of the story.

Iraqi women are first among the unsung heroes of this war. When it became too dangerous for Iraqi men to file police reports, identify bodies at the morgue, or venture out for food and provisions, Iraqi women filled this role. Every day car bombings killed dozens of men, and that in turn produced dozens of new widows, dozens of new female heads of households. That was every day. The Iraqi women in our bureau stepped up to the plate, going out to interview other women and men, talking their way through illegal checkpoints, and risking their lives to bring us stories of sectarian killings, accurate body counts, and on-the-scene reporting from explosions.

In 2007 six Iraqi women from the McClatchy bureau won the International Women's Media Foundation Courage in Journalism Award. They were celebrated in New York and Los Angeles where Angelina Jolie and Meg Ryan shook their hands and congratulated them. But where are they now? Three have political asylum in the

United States after receiving death threats. One fled with her family to Syria after she was forced out of her home by a militia. And two remain at the bureau in Baghdad, one whose oldest son was killed in crossfire, the other living a double life in which not even her relatives know she works for American journalists.

Did we manage to coax award-winning stories from a bloody, anarchic landscape? Yes. But at a cost so high I still grapple with the question of whether it was worth it. I haven't made up my mind, but gatherings like this remind me that these doubts aren't unique to Iraq, that we must work harder and be more creative in finding healthier ways to cover tragedies that not only leave behind devastated populations but also scars on the souls of the reporters who cover them.

**Abdul Razzaq al-Saiedi**, a 2008 Nieman Fellow, worked for *The New York Times* in Baghdad for four years, covering the war, the trial of Saddam Hussein, and the political transition in Iraq. He spoke about the path he took to becoming a journalist and the enormous toll the war has taken on Iraqis.



The shattered window of a car outside the Imam Ali shrine in Najaf, Iraq after a nearly three-week battle between American military forces and Moktada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army. Photo by Thorne Anderson/Corbis.

I lived all my life with Saddam from school till I left Iraq in 2007. And no one exactly wrote about our suffering or tragedy. Always the Iraqi tragedy or the Iraqi trauma has been told in a political context. When Saddam fought against Iran from the Western side, he was a good guy who was supported by the American administrations and Western governments. But Saddam committed horrendous crimes against us during that war. In 1987 he used chemical weapons. In just a few minutes he killed 5,000 people, mostly children. No one wrote about this tragedy. No one said Saddam is a criminal.

Saddam became a criminal in the Western world when he invaded Kuwait, when the issue became oil. From that time everyone said, "Oh, Saddam used the chemical weapons in 1987. Saddam killed thousands of people in 1985. Saddam, Saddam, Saddam." But the United States helped Saddam to have these chemical weapons.

So what about us who care about our tragedy? Is Saddam a criminal or not a criminal? It doesn't matter the name. It's about the truth telling. And no one told the truth because we were not being able to tell the truth.

For me The New York Times was just a name before the American invasion. I never read the paper because we didn't have access to it. After I started reporting for the Times, I went with John Burns, my bureau chief, to Kufa where there were big clashes between the Mahdi Army and the American forces. We were taken as hostages, and I was sitting in the room thinking about my life, and then I said, "I survived Saddam's regime, but I will not survive now. It's my people." On the day before that, I was in Fallujah doing some reporting and by chance I saw four American contractors when they were ambushed and killed. And the mobs burned their bodies, dragged them for about one mile, and then hung them on the bridge. I looked at all these scenes. I was so scared. It was frightening. And the question came in my mind, "Who is the victim and who is the betrayer? And when

will this trauma be ended?"

During my work with the Times when we'd go out to a story, I used to tell the American correspondent, "You know what, you're writing my story. I'm writing my story. When we cover a car bomb, it's my neighborhood." For an American correspondent, it's a story. It's a good story or bad story, it depends on how big the story. Some of the time we said, "We got a report. There's a car bomb. Three were killed, 10 injured. This is not story. We will not cover it." But we get another report, someone called and said, "There's a huge car bomb. One hundred were killed and 300 injured." That's the story. That's the good story. We will write about it. It will be front page.

But it's my story because this bomb, this car went off in my neighborhood. My friends were killed in that accident. So I chose to title my talk "The Story of My Story." It's really very difficult to write about yourself, your neighborhood, your family, and your friends in a story because at the end of the day it's a story, it's a business, it's a commercial thing. As a journalist, this is our profession. We are selling stories. But at the end of the day also someone should write a story about our story. And someone should contribute it to telling the truth.

When I was reporting the Saddam trial, the judge and the prosecutor would talk about crimes he committed between 1986 until 2003. The crimes were genocide or crimes against humanity or war crimes, and then somebody said, "What about current crimes? What about the crimes committed by government people, some of them militia, some of them resistance." Different groups and different agendas. Different aims and different goals. But the victims are the same—always innocent Iraqi people, they pay.

So where are we now as Iraqis? We have new trauma and more victims. And we have more stories unfortunately. Especially when we talk about the trauma journalism, I focus on the uncertainty. The uncertainty of families when they miss their sibling. Uncertainty of a wife who missed

her husband and waited for years to know what's happened to him. That's exactly what happened to my family. We looked for my brother who disappeared in 1993 for 10 years, and we didn't know what happened to him. So with his kids, with his wife, with my mom, there is the trauma of the uncertainty.

After 2003, we have the same thing. Thousands of people, in fact dozens of thousands of people were kidnapped and were killed. So I hope we'll have a better future since we've been freed. And I hope our trauma and our tragedy will be ended. And I hope our story will have a different narrative.

» At [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org), listen to Hannah Allam and Abdul Razzaq al-Saiedi describe what it was like for them and their colleagues to report stories about the murder of an Iraqi colleague who worked in the bureau.

**Daniel Rothenberg** is the managing director of international projects for the International Human Rights Law Institute at DePaul University College of Law. He also works on transitional justice issues. He spoke about his work on the Iraq History Project, which has gathered stories of the trauma Iraqis have suffered through several decades.

Trauma is something that presses meaning beyond easy description and the easy use of words. So when we talk about human rights crises, there are different discourses to name the truth. There's a classic human rights profession in Iraq that is managed by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), a special human rights unit. Then the journalists, both foreign journalists and local contacts, who are the way that most of the world understands the daily reality in Iraq and in all of these conflict zones. Each of these discourses has a commitment to truth and each crafts the truth in different ways. How they do this affects the truth, and there are advantages and disadvantages in their presentation of truth.

For the last couple of years I've

been running a project in Iraq called the Iraq History Project. In the social sciences, we work quite a bit differently than journalists, which is to say that we often collect our information quietly and tend to wait a period of time before we present our information publicly, sometimes too much time. At times we have safety questions and we have institutional review boards. If journalists had to go through an institutional review board, they wouldn't write one story.

The severity of the trauma that Iraqis have experienced is extraordinary just in sheer numbers, if you want to count trauma in numbers. It's extraordinary in the impact on people's lives, and I don't know how you want to count that. It's so profound to the experience of Iraqis and it's something that's very difficult to tell. There isn't only one way to tell this and at some level there is no right way to tell any of it because it's so big. Every choice made in the telling has its implications, both positive and negative.

We started the Iraq History Project using the basic concept of a truth commission. Even though truth commissions in their true sense are formal bodies—constructed by a state or through a peace accord—we are not. We're a nongovernmental organization with some knowledge in the field, contacts and maybe some skills. And we began by gathering information about past violations committed—violations committed by the government from 1968 to 2003.

People told us that no Iraqi would want to talk because it was too dangerous and there were too many barriers to moving forward. So we trained a group of interviewers and developed a methodology which turned out to be key to gathering information. In all, we gathered 8,911 testimonies from witnesses, victims, victims' families, and perpetrators, which accounts for about 55,000 pages of testimony and material. This turns out to be one of the largest human rights data collection and analysis projects in the world and certainly the largest project of this kind in Iraq.

The key to this functioning was something you know as journalists; Have the work be run by Iraqis. This isn't common but, as you know from your efforts, if you want to get good stories you work with locals quite extensively. You depend on them. In our case we had an entire Iraq staff which made us an atypical foreign organization in Iraq. Once trained, they went out to speak with people in their communities using their social networks and chain referral systems. In other words, they talked to people they knew and got from them the names of other people to talk with.

The testimonies they heard are profound and engaging and amazingly disturbing; they are also powerful stories. And I can say we had absolutely no problem with finding people to tell strikingly personal stories about the most traumatic events in their lives when there appeared to be no evident benefit to the telling of their story. And this raises a difficult question—why? Similarly we found people commonly saying they'd never told their story to anyone before this. Why? We were explicit in telling every person who we interviewed that there would be no express benefit from this; they wouldn't get anything other than that we would do our best to take their story seriously and put it in some report, though we did have some general idea that we were collecting this for the benefit of Iraqi society.

We also found stories that were surprising. Particularly among the more conservative religious folks, but really anyone, you would not think you'd get many women talking about their experience of having been raped. Yet we have probably the largest rape database maybe in the world, or at least of these kinds of projects. Many women who had nothing to gain told personal stories about what they'd suffered, including stories that devastated their lives. In many, many ways, there are individual stories and yet, by gathering so many, they are patterned and systematic.

One of the interesting stories about all of this is that we know that people

need to tell their stories; we don't know why. It's something very profound. Another question is what is the truth of stories and testimonies? And you wrestle with this every day because you have to deal with the truth of sources. One fascinating thing about gathering narratives as narratives, as testimony, is it speaks different kinds of truth. From the human rights community, it speaks a very rich truth because we get away from the classic case-based system of a court or of a traditional human rights report where you say, "Here is a case of torture. Perpetrators, victim, date, place." We try to let people tell their story with all of the attendant complexities and interpretations.

We did this project to do documentation—to do fundamental truth telling for the value of Iraqi society and the value of the world—so that there exists a body of stories. And we have 1,929 stories of violations after 2003 that recount all of this stuff from the position of Mahdi Army perpetrators as well as victims of the multiplicity of armed groups. And secondarily, we did this project to engage in analysis. We've learned certain things about patterns of violations that, interestingly, journalists can't access. This is the social science benefit because with thousands of something collected in a consistent way, there is a way to play off of those many experiences. And finally, we have a policy component which is really something to learn for the world, and for Iraq, about things that can be done in relation to the suffering.

»» At [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org), listen to Rothenberg talk in greater detail about the steps taken in gathering personal stories of trauma from Iraqis. Their effort began in Kurdistan because it was felt to be relatively safe to do so there. When the project proved to be successful, it spread to other parts of Iraq where the interviewers found Iraqis willing to tell what had happened to them and their families. ■

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AN ESSAY IN WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

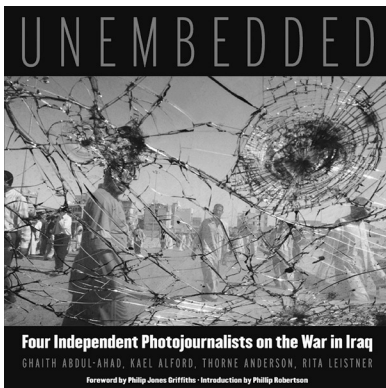
# Telling Untold Stories of What Happened in Iraq

BY KAEL ALFORD



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This is where civilians were killed at a chicken restaurant. People were eating on the streets when a U.S. missile went astray and killed more than a dozen.



*Kael Alford is a documentary photographer, photojournalist and teacher whose work has been published globally in magazines and is featured in the book, "Unembedded: Four Independent Photojournalists on the War in Iraq." From 1996 to 2003 she worked in the Balkans covering Yugoslavia's disintegration, the war in Kosovo, and the conflict in Macedonia. In the West Bank in 2002, she photographed the Israeli forces' incursion into the Jenin refugee camp. A 2009 Nieman Fellow, she focused her talk at the "Aftermath" conference on her work as a photojournalist in Iraq. Edited excerpts follow:*

These photographs are from 2003 to 2004, some from when I was in Iraq for about three weeks before the invasion and stayed throughout the bombing in Baghdad, which was where I really wanted to be to show what it looked like under the guns of the most powerful military in the world. I didn't think that was the story that Americans were largely going to hear. My photographs from 2004 will show the beginning of the Iraqi resistance movements. I worked in Iraq as a freelance photographer who was not embedded with military troops. The San Francisco Chronicle gave me a small advance to go to Iraq, so I had






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This marketplace is another of the bombing sites where U.S. missiles went astray, and this time killed some 50 people, many of them children, in a suburb of Baghdad. By the time I could get there it was already dark and people were burying their dead. This is a funeral procession.

some money and some support of a couple of colleagues to make this work.

Much of the time I was in Iraq I felt as though I was living in sort of this parallel universe where I was telling stories that weren't the major stories being reported for audiences in the United States.

There are a huge number of refugees from and displaced people in Iraq. Now, one refugee agency says five million people have been displaced by the war, both internally and externally. That's just a phenomenal figure, so it's hard for me to understand why that isn't one of the leading headlines we see every

day since this is the consequence of a war that this country is responsible for. And there's another million or so dead. Those numbers are disputed, but I think they are reasonable figures.

Early on in the war, I felt that the consequence of this U.S. bombing and this invasion on Iraqi civilians was going to be missing from the dominant news narrative in the United States. So whenever I could I would go to bombing sites where I'd spend lots of time in hospitals covering the wounded as they came in. Then I would try to get to the truth of what I was seeing. We were very closely controlled by the

Mukhabarat so we were not allowed to see everything and we could go to bombing sites when they allowed us or took us there.

It was important that these photographs made it to the U.S. media and the Chronicle would publish them. I was working with a writer, and the paper also had a writer embedded and a photographer embedded so its coverage was being told in these two threads, from two sides, which I thought was important. Not every U.S. media outlet had the opportunity to do that.

*Photo and text by Kael Alford.*



An eight-year-old Iraqi girl, killed in a U.S. bombing raid, is being washed before burial.

As soon as Baghdad fell in April 2003, I went to Ramadi and Fallujah and Anbar province. This is an interesting place culturally for Iraq and I wanted to see what would happen there. I spent as much time as I could there and got to know a couple of local families and the sheik sort of let us stay at his house just outside of Ramadi. We'd stay for a week at a time and get to know his family and learn the social fabric of this place. It was interesting to watch community leaders get together and discuss questions such as, "How do we respond when a family member gets killed or when something goes wrong? How should we respond to the Americans? Should we fight back? Should we ask them to leave? Should we talk to the generals?" There was so much discussion on their side of how reasonably

they should react to these events. That was really striking to me. They decided they'd let the Americans arrive in their community and wait and see what happened. They weren't going to fight. So it was a very deliberate decision on their part not to fight.

In 2004 when I went back to Iraq, I went back to this place and spent time with resistance fighters because I had made some inroads with this family. They trusted us well enough to let us interview them and spend a lot of time with them. And they would take us to the sites of attacks after they occurred and they would tell us why they were fighting. At this time, I was working with another freelancer who was trying to work for The New York Times Magazine. They killed the story because no one believed us that these were actual fighters and that

they were telling us the reasons why they were fighting. The story then got killed by major magazines, and finally got published in Harper's Magazine in 2004. It was called "Beyond Fallujah: A Year with the Iraqi Resistance" and won an Overseas Press Club Award.

By August 2004 we went to Najaf and with these Mahdi Army fighters who we'd gotten to know through contacts we'd made earlier in Iraq, we were able to go inside the front-line between the U.S. forces and the fighters and cover it from the side of the resistance fighters.

»» At [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org), Alford talks in greater detail about what she was hearing and observing at the beginning of the Sunni resistance in Anbar province.

Photo and text by Kael Alford.



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These men stood in the center of Najaf while it was completely occupied by the Mahdi Army. Most of the civilians had left of their own accord. It was incredible to see these guys in flip-flops with these guns and no body armor take on the most powerful military in the world. They didn't have much food. They came from all over the country, many from Sadr City and Baghdad and some came from Iran.

*Photo and text by Kael Alford.*



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This is a family who decided to stay on the outskirts of Najaf through most of the fighting. Then this little boy was losing his mind so this man is crossing a frontline between American snipers at one end and the Iraqi snipers on the other to try to get out of the city. That's why he raised his hand in the air. And this is how we would travel every day. We'd cross this frontline with our hands in the air.

»» At [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org), Alford explains how she and her colleagues negotiated with American and Mahdi commanders so they could move around Najaf with some degree of safety, especially when tensions were rising as word came of a possible plan to bomb the shrine of Imam Ali.

*Photo and text by Kael Alford.*



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These children were re-enacting the death of the first martyr—the first Iraqi member of the Mahdi Army to die at the hands of the U.S. soldiers. In re-enacting this martyrdom, they were celebrating their struggle against American occupation. This is the legacy that goes forward. ■

*Photo and text by Kael Alford.*

## Art and Literature: Guiding Journalists in Trauma's Portrayal

'... Nieman Fellows who'd been in the Balkans wanted to take courses in music, art, poetry, and other kinds of literature. I don't think this happens arbitrarily.'

**E. Ann Kaplan** is a distinguished professor of English and comparative literary and cultural studies at Stony Brook University. A literary and film scholar, she has written several books and papers about how trauma is portrayed in various media, including *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*. "In this presentation her focus was on 'art that addresses the ethical and aesthetic challenges of representing trauma.'" In opening her remarks, she asked, "If trauma is not cognitively accessible or available in memory, how can we make art about it?" She observed that the artistic process of representing trauma is about "finding ways to preserve its horror while organizing the aesthetic experience so that spectators can take it in and grow from what is shown."

The difficulty lies in finding aesthetic strategies appropriate to constructing a position for the viewer—and this is very important—that enables the viewer to take responsibility, and secondly, for creating a witness where there was none before. Yet in some representations of trauma there is a danger of what I call "empty empathy." On the other hand, there is the danger of sensationalizing trauma so that audiences are vicariously traumatized—that is, they experience secondary trauma—and turn away in shock. So if the danger is what one critic calls "unwanted beauty" in works dealing with catastrophes, then trivializing through a too-easy aesthetic access is another.

In some works of art one finds an element of trauma's elusiveness and subversion of reality. These works arguably position the viewer as a witness to trauma in an elusive, disturbing,

perhaps haunting way, but nevertheless provoke in the viewer a need to take responsibility. These pieces, each in its own way, explore the structure of an injustice and its accompanying rage. [See box on next page.]

A main characteristic of the witnessing position is the deliberate refusal of identification only with the specificity of the individuals involved. I'm arguing that for true witnessing to take place, a certain distancing from the subject is necessary to enable the interviewer or the viewer to take in and respond to the traumatic situation. When art constructs that sort of position for the spectator, it enables attention to be drawn to the *situation*, rather than merely to the subject's *individual* suffering. This opens out to embrace larger social and political meanings.

**Rose Moss** is a writer, poet and teacher who, in her fiction and nonfiction writing, tells stories about exile, disruption, faith, reconciliation and justice. Moss began her "Aftermath" remarks by talking about the process of koshering by "exposing raw meat to salt, and the salt draws out the blood and then the meat is, relatively speaking, bloodless and suitable for Jews to eat. ... Koshering struck me as one example of how people in almost every culture I know curb raw experience by making it something in the culture, by marking it."

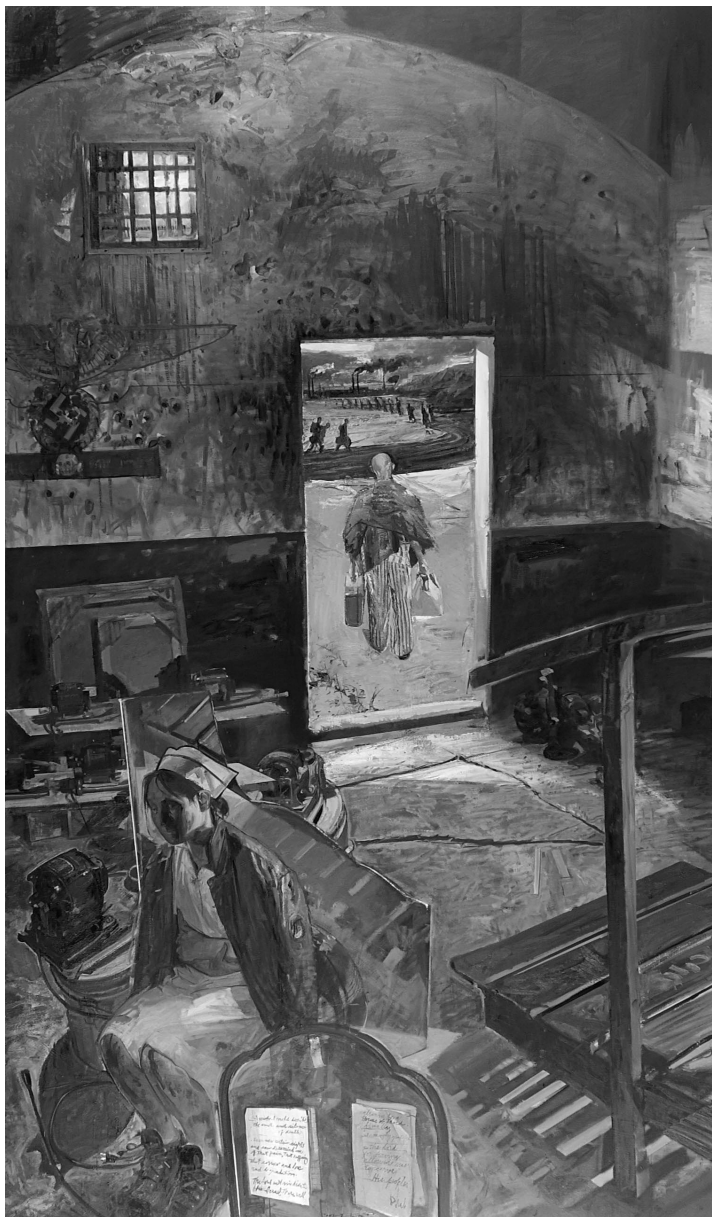
One of the characteristics of trauma as I have heard about it—and, to a tiny extent, experienced it—is that that civilizing separation of withdrawing of blood doesn't happen, can't happen, when people are traumatized. It's just one raw thing after another; one is overwhelmed by the experience and

that is followed by this feeling of "I can't explain it. No one has experienced anything like this." Of course, most of us know that if you're not going to give up on the traumatized person, or if the traumatized person is not to give up on himself, there has to be work to make this experience relatively communicable and communicated because that's the nature of being human: we speak, we are understood, we understand one another, and we come together. And without that, we lose our humanity. People intuitively know that this re-humanizing can be accomplished through the arts.

Several years ago a number of Nieman Fellows came here after working in the Balkans, where they had been exposed to all sorts of traumas. The first desire of one of them, an Albanian who lives in the continuing trauma of the Balkans, was to read Dante in full—not just the "Inferno" but the whole thing—in Italian. Other Nieman Fellows who'd been in the Balkans wanted to take courses in music, art, poetry and other kinds of literature. I don't think this happens arbitrarily.

In "King Lear," Shakespeare shows us someone who undergoes trauma. First, he is deprived of his status—treated like a nothing when he didn't expect that and has no defenses against it. Then he is cast out of every society he thinks he knows. He is exposed to weather. He is utterly poor. He realizes that he can't do anything to protect himself or change his situation and he is ready to go mad. And at that moment, he sees who he takes to be a beggar on a dark, stormy heath and he looks at this beggar and asks, "Is man no more than

*continued on page 86*



## ‘Entering Darkness’

Depicting an individual’s story leads viewers to awareness of a ‘generalized horror.’

Jerome Witkin’s painting “Entering Darkness” was inspired by an account of a Red Cross nurse, Dorothy Wahlstrom, published in “Witnesses to the Holocaust” in 1990. At once, it offers the viewer identification with the protagonist—the nurse entering Dachau—but at the same time renders in these other panels mythic, allegorical and surreal images of the Holocaust, including some images of bodies cut apart by Josef Mengele in his experiments. So the painting partly expresses the horror through the nurse, but the images also move beyond her purview.

Obviously, the allegorical levels gesture toward a common trope of revulsion at violence, at human devastation of other humans. That the focus is on the individual brings the viewer in, and perhaps it’s very necessary for a subjective identification, particularly for empathy to take place. But at the same time we have a generalized horror beyond the specificity of this camp, a horror of this catastrophe. So arguably, one has to think in larger terms of justice. ■—E. Ann Kaplan

“Entering Darkness: Dorothy Wahlstrom, Nurse at Dachau, 1945” is a 130-inch-by-387-inch oil painting by Jerome Witkin. The six panels of the 2001 work shown below are to be read in Hebraic order from right to left. Detail at left is panel 6. *Courtesy of Jack Rutberg Fine Arts, Los Angeles.*



this? ... Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. ... Thou art the thing itself: unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art.” And he starts to tear off his own clothes to make himself also a bare, forked animal. And that is the moment in the center of the play, in Act Three of a five-act play, when things begin to approach the amount of healing that he is capable of getting in this play.

So what is Shakespeare showing us? He’s showing us that it’s in human connectedness that we have a chance of regaining our humanity. Seeing Lear, we understand that we can do the same as Lear; that is, we can connect with other people without tearing off our clothes in a storm. We can feel with Lear without being Lear, look at his madness with understanding and remain sane in ourselves. We can know Lear as our story and as not our story. I don’t know that this kind of complexity is available to most with reporting. Maybe it takes the artifice of art to be able to listen to Lear rant in iambic pentameter, for example, instead of just ranting.

I do know that journalism sometimes constrains journalists to deny those things that art would allow them. I’m thinking of a Nieman Fellow who had done a lot of extremely courageous, dazzlingly good reporting on FARC in Colombia. And she wrote a fictional story in which she describes being by a river and seeing beautiful snails floating downstream on a branch. It wasn’t a branch, but a human body—but they were beautiful snails. In journalism, she could not have mentioned the way she felt. It’s not permitted for her to recognize that beauty at the same time as she recognized that horror. But that’s the full human response, I think, that things don’t come to us clearly labeled. They get mixed up, especially in traumatic situations.

**Roya Hakakian** is the author of *Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran.* In introducing her as a speaker, modera-

*tor Alicia Anstead said that “when a reporter asked her why she wrote her book, she said, ‘I wanted all readers to fall in love with Iran.’ As a poet, an essayist, a filmmaker and reporter, Roya has access to many avenues of artistic expression, all of which she employs to tell stories of her homeland. She, too, ventures into the world of psychic openness—and I would argue that all artists and all art does—to bring the rest of us insight. Provocatively, today, she asks, ‘Trauma? What trauma?’” Anstead continues: “Her question reminds me of a South Vietnamese man I met several years ago who was a boy during the American war in Vietnam, and he told me that when he was a little boy and guns were going off and bombs were being dropped, he climbed a tree so that he could get a better view of it and he felt like it was his own private adventure story going on in front of him, not being traumatized in the way that others were in the city around him. And it makes me wonder, is violence so wily that it destroys one person and entertains another?”*

I am just beginning to discover that what I’ve considered simply as literature, poetry or a work of nonfiction now falls into the genre of trauma. I didn’t know it until I received the e-mail inviting me to participate in this conference. And so my difficulty in saying what I have to say has to do with the fact that I never knew I was writing about trauma. I thought I was just writing. Now, I’ve had to think why I have never considered my experiences as traumatic experiences.

I was born and raised in Iran and lived through the Iranian Revolution and the war with Iraq. I was a Jew at a time of rising tides of governmental bigotry. And I was forced into exile. I suppose all of that falls into the broader category of trauma, but in writing about it I never really thought that these added up to a traumatic experience, at least not until I came to America in 1985. It was in the process of looking and casting life back in Iran into American terms [of how childhood lives are led here] years after my traumatic experiences

had occurred that I realized so maybe it was trauma. I’m not trying to say that trauma is relative, far from it. But what I’m trying to say is that, for me, it was a grand process of shifting perspectives, not so much from the Middle East or Iranian perspective to American or Western perspective, but rather from the communal and collective perspective to a very individualistic and personal perspective. Suddenly what I knew not to have been a traumatic experience began to look like a traumatic experience.

There is a poem, “Public Love,” by Iran’s greatest revolutionary poet, Ahmad Shamlu, whom all of us loved and looked up to and who, contrary to popular belief was the leader of the Iranian Revolution at least for the secular classes, and its first two stanzas go like this:

Tear is a mystery. Smile is a mystery. Love is a mystery.  
Not a tale to be told, not a song to be sung, not a sound to be heard, something to be seen or something to be known.  
I am the common suffering.  
Shout me.

In my time, all of us knew this poem by heart, not simply as a call to action but as an invitation to cross the threshold between victimhood and being masters of our destinies. “Public Love” was about a collective predicament: Our common suffering was something we ourselves had to remedy. We thought that there was a problem and we were all in it together. And trauma wasn’t so much trauma, but it was life and art and the imperfection of our life, just like a clubfooted sibling or someone with a minor affliction that we had to try to deal with. That we had to find the poetry—and that it was the literature in all these earth-shattering experiences was really uplifting and very, very important for us. ■

*In the Summer 2009 issue of Nieman Reports, Hakakian wrote an essay entitled “When Eyes Get Averted: The Consequences of Misplaced Reporting.”*



## Art and Trauma—And Journalist as Observer

‘We have to be inside of the circle to understand the conversation, to get down and dirty with the people who are making art, and still keep that distance by preserving our personal and professional space apart from them. That’s very important.’

*Journalists at the “Aftermath” conference talked about the intersection of trauma and art. Leading the conversation were Chris Vognar, a movie critic at The Dallas Morning News and a 2009 Nieman Fellow, and Alicia Anstead, a 2008 Nieman Fellow who for two decades covered arts and culture for the Bangor Daily News and edits Inside Arts magazine. Glenda Carpio, an associate professor of African studies and African-American studies at Harvard University and author of “Laughing Fit to Kill: Black Humor in the Fictions of Slavery,” was the moderator. Edited excerpts of their remarks follow:*

**Vognar:** I’m primarily interested in examining the safe distance that a critic can have from her obligation, when it comes to covering trauma and art. It’s the idea that we’re bearing witness to this bearing of witness, and we’re supposed to stand there and scratch our chins and write down our analytical thoughts, but at the same time we want to experience that art. We get into doing this hopefully because we feel very passionate about it.

“United 93,” a film about 9/11 that came

out a few years ago, is an example of this. We are supposed to be able to just watch it, observe it, and analyze it. Yet, we are also human beings as well as critics so there’s that tricky balance of

watching, observing and at the same time wanting to give yourself in full to art and to what you’re watching. I bring up “United 93” largely because I was able to see it at the New York

premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival a few years ago. Journalists were writing about whether it was too soon for this movie to come out. “What will people think? Is it appropriate to be showing it at this time?” That’s an easy story for the journalist to cover. But when I went to the movie, I knew 9/11 victims’ families are there and they are sitting above me in the balcony.

The film ends, obviously, with a plane crash. It’s a very loud cataclysmic ending to the film and then there’s just pure silence and then it goes to black, which is a very powerful ending. I had seen the film already with a few critics in a screening room in Dallas which was a very antiseptic way to see any film. It was a much different experience seeing it with victims’ family members.

As soon as the screen went black and the silence descended, there wasn’t even any time to process my thoughts. The first thing I heard was this uncontrollable sobbing and wailing



The World Trade Center towers on September 11, 2001. Photo by Amy Sancetta/The Associated Press.

throughout the theater, and it was a very powerful experience. It was obviously a cathartic experience for these people. It was for me, but nowhere near on the same level. I was staying with a friend in New York and I remember going back to his house afterward and I was going to write my story the next day. I told him, “Every time I think about the sound of the voices of these people, it really does something to me. My response is to not think about it.”

Art can have that kind of impact. We’re not covering wars; we’re not, for the most part, covering crime or crime scenes. But at the same time, we’re often in these situations where we’re covering something that’s both larger than life and smaller at the same time; it’s not the real thing. Art has this very powerful emotion and redemptive force that we are bearing witness to and trying to convey analytically when our emotions tell us it is very hard to convey analytically.

**Glenda Carpio:** The big challenge is how not to make the story about you watching the movie. How do you maneuver your response to the darkness, the cries, and your job as a writer? How do you find some kind of balance between honoring you as a human being in the room but also as someone who has some distance so that the story doesn’t become this thing about you?

**Alicia Anstead:** Glenda, you have written about having the responsibility to not sentimentalize what you’re looking at because it is or can be so powerfully emotional that you’re talking about a chaos of responses. I think it’s very easy to stay in Act I of a response, yet as arts writers and reporters, it’s our obligation to move on to Act II [with the addition of deeper personal reflection and genuine storytelling elements]. As a critic, the big question you get asked, sometimes in the middle of a show, is “what does it mean?” I feel that that’s a question for all of us as journalists, not only in the domain of the arts. That’s the question we should all be grappling

with and sometimes you can’t get to the meaning. Sometimes the meaning may be more elusive.

My dirty little secret about being a journalist and, in particular, writing about the arts is that I do have a lot of passion. The circle that we exist in as journalists—that safe little distance that we establish [for ourselves] outside of the circle—I actually feel that we are inside the circle and that’s where we have to cautiously guard our distance. We have to be inside of the circle to understand the conversation, to get down and dirty with the people who are making art, and still keep that distance by preserving our personal and professional space apart from them. That’s very important.

It’s as important in war correspondence as in arts reporting and covering global health and the economy that our humanity is what drives us. I’d like to see more of that. Not the first person, not *your* story, but stories that come from our shared sense of humanity.

**Carpio:** I am thinking about somebody like Toni Morrison who has been faulted for aestheticizing black pain, even in a text like “Beloved,” which has brought the question of American slavery to countless syllabi. What does it mean to make a horrible story beautiful too? What does it mean to make it strangely funny? To make it both funny, like Richard Pryor, but also suddenly disorienting. I think that those issues about medium and context are important to our conversation.

**Chris Vognar:** I’ve always been puzzled by the idea of aestheticizing pain. I’ve heard other people criticize various works of art for that very thing, but it’s a complaint that I’ve just never quite understood. Maybe it’s the word “aestheticizing.” I always thought of it as a way of processing horrible things. With 9/11, I remember *The New Yorker* cover and some of the stories inside. It was very moving first-person coverage. The next week I picked up *The New Republic* and its literary editor, Leon Wieseltier, was basically saying that you can’t put that stuff into words and it’s irresponsible to even try and it’s

horrible that you’d even think about doing this.

**Carpio:** It’s the nature of trauma to want to keep the chaos as if it were intact. So if you do something with it, it’s as if you’re being disloyal to the very people who went through it.

*The conversation shifted to hip-hop, a subject Vognar often writes about.*

**Carpio:** The trouble about talking about popular culture is that sometimes critics and journalists dealing with historical records tend to romanticize this popular culture that seeps out. I think the challenge is how to talk about how the power of popular culture, giving it its due power without saying “hip-hop will save the world.” Although it can have the power, right, Chris?

**Vognar:** Hip-hop has managed to give voice to a lot of traumatic experiences, in black communities especially. Geto Boys is a Houston gangster rap group from before gangster rap became a marketing label. They have a song called “My Mind Playing Tricks On Me,” which is basically about post-traumatic stress syndrome. It’s not about the Iraq War. It’s about gang wars; it’s about living on the streets, the things that one sees when doing that and how they create a sense of constant paranoia, not being able to sleep, hearing things, seeing things, always wondering who’s behind you, what they might be holding to your head. These are the kinds of things that hip-hop has a great power to do. In that sense, it is very much a people’s art form and yet at the same time, it’s very much made into a commodity and commercialized.

**Carpio:** I was thinking about a Lil Wayne song about New Orleans and Katrina and there’s a line, and I’m paraphrasing, when he says, “I’m a refugee in my own country.” Just that little line, which he repeats maybe four or five times throughout the song, is really potent and it’s a testament to living under long traumatic legacy. ■

## Media Criticism: Journalism vs. Advocacy

‘... press analysts who back up their judgments with reporting, research, style and wit’ earn praise, but it’s advocacy groups from both sides of the political spectrum who receive much of the attention.

BY DAN KENNEDY

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### Press Critics Are the Fifth Estate: Media Watchdogs in America

Arthur S. Hayes  
Praeger, 208 Pages.

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## PRESS CRITICS ARE THE FIFTH ESTATE

MEDIA WATCHDOGS IN AMERICA

ARTHUR S. HAYES

The news business may be fading, but media criticism is a growth industry. Once relegated mainly to the alternative press, where scraggly anti-establishmentarians would rail against “the Man,” as represented by whatever major metropolitan newspaper was close at hand, these days documenting the sins of the media is a favored activity of cable pundits, think tanks of the left and right, and an ever expanding multitude of bloggers.

Yet surely few children hope to be media critics when they grow up—even those drawn to what they imagine as the glamour and excitement of journalism. The accidental nature of my own experience might be typical. In 1993 when I was working as a mid-level editor at The Boston Phoenix, the political columnist left; I asked for the job and was turned down. The following year the media critic’s position opened up. I asked and, this time, I received, and have been working the beat ever since—though in various media, print first, now online and on television.

As a critic of journalism with a long background in its practice, I admire most the press analysts who back up their judgments with reporting, research, style and wit—from A.J. Liebling to modern practitioners such as Jack Shafer of Slate, David Carr of The New York Times, Howard

Kurtz of The Washington Post, and Eric Alterman of The Nation. Media criticism can take many forms. But the best is still journalistic at its heart.

The rise of blogging has changed media criticism, in some cases for the better, in some cases not. From the time I began blogging in 2002, I’ve found it incredibly liberating to have the material I need instantly at my disposal, and to be able to comment on it in real time. There’s something more honest about linking to the work I am slamming or praising. If I’m off the mark, my readers let me know immediately.

Indeed, much of media criticism today consists of a multi-directional conversation that would have been inconceivable in the early 1990’s. But the fragmentary nature of blogging has taken many of us, including me, away from the long, deeply reported pieces. It’s still journalism, but of a different kind. I hope it’s not of a lesser kind.

But media criticism as journalism is only one means by which it can be carried out. Other means—political activism, outside agitation, and efforts at institutional reform—can be just as, if not more, effective in bringing about change. For journalists, their work is the end of the process; for activists, it’s just the beginning.

## Media Critics as Advocates

This second school of media criticism is the main concern of Arthur S. Hayes in his book “Press Critics Are the Fifth Estate: Media Watchdogs in America.” A media scholar at Fordham University and a former journalist, Hayes rates critics by such criteria as whether they have forced the dismissal of a wayward reporter, a change in content, reform of a news organization’s practices, or public debate.

By adopting effectiveness as his principal criterion, Hayes pays scant attention to any number of highly regarded media critics—including, he pointedly notes, the great Liebling. Instead, he devotes a chapter to Reed Irvine, founder of the right-wing organization Accuracy in Media (AIM). Hayes’s argument is that Irvine warrants such attention because of his success in the early 1980’s at intimidating PBS into adding “balance” to a controversial documentary on the Vietnam War. (Irvine’s tactics, Hayes observes, included “impugning” a specific reporter’s patriotism and making “unfounded accusations.” A disclosure: I have been subjected to precisely such treatment at the hands of Irvine’s successors at AIM so my assessment of Hayes’s take is based in part on personal experience.)

If AIM stands as Hayes’s paradigm of a naughty but effective advocacy group, he balances that with a chapter on Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), whose media criticism, he assures us, is as scrupulously accurate and carefully documented as it is left-leaning.

Yet, something feels odd in the lavish attention Hayes devotes to AIM and FAIR. I’d argue that each has long since given way to newer, more agile groups that are less out of the mainstream ideologically and more effective at capturing the attention of the media. For conservatives, L. Brent Bozell III’s Media Research Center and its various offshoots (most notably NewsBusters.org) have supplanted AIM and are taken far more seriously by fair-minded journalists. For liberals, David Brock’s Media Matters for

The homepage of Dan Kennedy’s Media Nation blog at [www.dankennedy.net](http://www.dankennedy.net).

America is a deep, well-researched source of information on outrageous statements by right-wing pundits such as Rush Limbaugh and Glenn Beck, and it is not nearly as far to the left as FAIR.

To be sure, Hayes shows us how Media Matters helped bring down Don Imus (temporarily) after he referred to the African-American players on the Rutgers’ women’s basketball team as “nappy-headed hos.” But this relatively recent example only partly offsets Hayes’s decision to treat FAIR and AIM as being significant actors.

Elsewhere, Hayes makes better choices. He profiles Ben H. Bagdikian, the godfather of the now-moribund ombudsman movement and author of “The Media Monopoly” and “The New Media Monopoly”—prescient books on the rise of huge media conglomerates in the 1970’s to 90’s. He tells the story of Jay Rosen and the civic journalism movement, a partly successful effort at media reform that has given way to the far more influential citizen journalism revolution, for which Rosen is a leading voice. He recounts the tale of how the blogswarm took down Dan Rather and how Jon Stewart’s on-air critique of CNN’s painfully shallow “Crossfire” may have hastened that program’s demise. (Second disclosure: I pop up briefly, as does Nieman Reports, in Hayes’s chapter on the short-lived magazine Brill’s Content.)

I find Hayes’s dry, academic ap-

proach unsatisfying. By contrast, I opened my yellowed copy of Liebling’s “The Press,” published in 1964, and happened upon this: “As for Mr. Lippmann, perhaps the greatest on-the-one-hand-this writer in the world today, he appeared to be suffering from buck fever when confronted with so magnificent an opportunity for indecision.” It sings, and you don’t even have to know what buck fever is to hear the melody. (My dictionary defines it as “nervous excitement felt by a novice hunter at the first sight of game.”)

At its best, media criticism—like all good journalism—is about digging out uncomfortable facts and telling them fearlessly. It is difficult to do well and, it shouldn’t be the critic’s job to bring about change. Truth is a rare enough commodity that it ought to be valued for its own sake.

Hayes’s book is a worthwhile if idiosyncratic survey of a certain kind of media criticism. But to understand how the journalists who travel in media criticism actually do their work—why they do things the way they do and how that process might be evolving in the digital age—the search for more insightful paths must continue. ■

*Dan Kennedy is an assistant professor of journalism at Northeastern University. He comments on media issues for “Beat the Press” on WGBH-TV in Boston, for The Guardian, and on his blog, Media Nation.*

## Public Interest Policies for the Digital Age

A book-length exploration of digital media's future fails 'to address the core question: Where is the new public square?'

BY CAMERON McWHIRTER

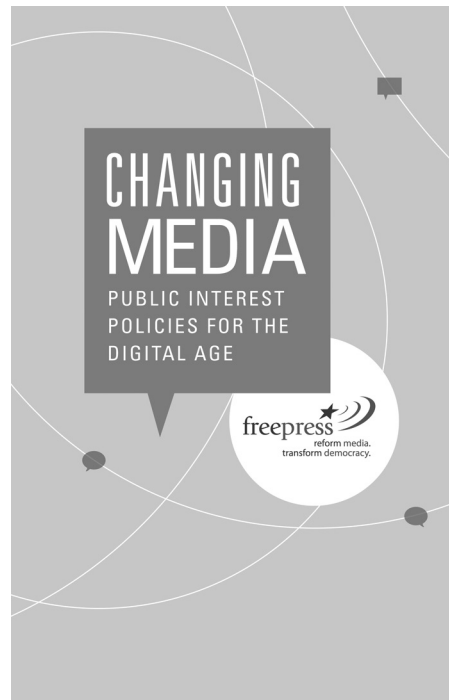
### Changing Media: Public Interest Policies for the Digital Age

A collection of papers, published online by Free Press. 285 Pages.

In the last three years, the news business has been convulsed by cataclysms. After decades of fattening themselves as advertising monopolies, news organizations are starved for resources as the once-profitable financial model has broken and new media platforms emerge to shatter the habitual ways people get news and information. Journalists left to mind the shop are disoriented and dispirited.

Those who care deeply about the vital function the press plays in a free society are trying to figure out how to salvage essential newsgathering in this clamorous, undulating landscape of mobile devices, social networks, and the coming Mac tablet. And we've had no shortage of commentators on this great unraveling. Now comes the Free Press, a Washington lobbying group that defines its broad goal as "reforming the media." It argues this can be achieved by promoting diverse media ownership, public media, and universal access to communications, all the while advocating quality journalism.

Lobbyists and policy analysts for the group have collectively produced a 285-page online book, "Changing Media: Public Interest Policies for the Digital Age," that is available as a free download on the group's Web site ([www.freepress.net/resources](http://www.freepress.net/resources)). Its august title offers promise to anxious journalists. Certainly "Changing Media" is more forward thinking than most recent works on the crisis, which amount to morbid laments for what is being lost. Free Press is searching for solutions and eager to explore what the



future can or should look like. That said, "Changing Media" is a missed opportunity. While some sections contain important and interesting ideas, it is an unfocused mess of a book and a slapdash monster of wonkish, straining position papers that bury ideas under an avalanche of jargon.

At first glance, the authors, and there are many, seem to be presenting "Changing Media" as a unified book about the contemporary media landscape for a broad audience. Yet the book's actual audience—given its content and presentation—appears to be much narrower: Obama administration policymakers.

The book contains three distinct white papers, each written by a separate group of Free Press staffers and consultants. The first and largest section (at 186 pages) spotlights issues involved with federal regulation of broadband services. Here, the au-

thors argue that since broadband has become the "central nervous system of our economy, society and government" it should be regulated as a utility to guarantee universal access. This concept has taken hold in some European countries, and in the United States the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) expresses support for universal access as a way of helping the poor and those living in rural areas have access to the Internet.

In the interest of full disclosure, I work for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, which is owned by Cox Enterprises. Cox has a large cable operation among its other companies. However, I hadn't closely followed the broadband debate and my difficulty with the way this argument is presented has nothing to do with any personal interest. The problem with this section is that, like the rest of the book, it is poorly written. It's repetitive and, in many parts, mewling in tone.

Two sentences—selected because of their resemblance to so many more—make this point clearly:

OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries with line-sharing policies have DSL penetration levels nearly twice those of countries that do not require line sharing. We see a similar result for the "bitstream access" policy, (a policy that is essentially wholesale/resale like that required under Section 251(c)(4) of the Act).

To be fair, the authors' animus stems in large part from fighting a devil-in-the-details war for years against a larger, better-financed army of corporate lobbyists. But they spend a great many words reviewing the FCC's

arcane rules and regulations, which they argue were contrived to benefit big business. The authors, especially the Free Press's FCC lobbyist S. Derek Turner, have it in for Michael Powell, FCC chairman under the Bush administration, who, in their words, led the commission on a "radical pro-business, anti-consumer regulatory path." And in dozens of pages companies are attacked in clunky, ineffective ways for trying to control the flow of information and restrict copyright violations. All of this dense and badly sifted material has little or nothing to do with preserving journalism—either in producing or in distributing news as a sustainable for-profit or nonprofit enterprise.

The second part of the book is far more interesting, reasonable and better organized. The authors of these papers present some interesting models for possible journalistic enterprises, including looks at "low-profit alternatives" such as nonprofits, foundation-supported efforts, endowed companies, and even municipal ownership. However, given their background as academics and writers for small nonprofit publications, the authors' experiences are far removed from the harsh realities of the marketplace. Each of these ideas—in fact, all of them—can be tried and are being tried as vital experiments, some of which will doubtless help us find future paths.

## Digital Media's Public Square

But all of these partial responses to the crisis fail to address the core question: Where is the new public square? Media fragmentation into infinite shards allows for unprecedented exploration and freedom. People can look at everything, whenever and wherever they choose to, using an array of digital devices. It's also easy to avoid with a keystroke what we find unpleasant or distasteful. These technological gifts, however, effectively implode any notion of weaving together the threads of our broader community.

Even a decade ago, news of importance to a community would "go viral" by being on a newspaper's front page. Now every Web site is a front

page, and even then many of these pages are not the route that a lot of people travel to get information. So the value of that front page has been profoundly diminished. The Internet is an ocean of information and images; it is not a mass medium. In fact, it has destroyed our understanding of mass communication.

Philanthropy is at work right now setting up nonprofit digital news operations in mid-sized cities. Often the funding goes to support a small investigative team and a handful of other journalists, often former newspaper reporters, to watchdog local government. But if few people regularly check the site or follow the Twitter feed, is anyone hearing the tree falling in this forest? Similarly, an endowment can fund a tax-free news operation, but if people don't purchase the product or go to the site, does anyone notice?

People chatter about news that "goes viral," yet I am amazed at what doesn't go viral—all of the reporting that sits fallow in the infinite field of everywhere that is the Internet. Can it be surprising that the value of Internet advertising is dropping when it's hard to increase value in an infinite space? It seems clear that we've embarked on a middle passage between what was and what will be and this diffuse experience of news distribution will not survive in its current shape.

The promise these new models hold is tentative and speculative, and the authors of "Changing Media" are cautious in hedging their bets about the future. The result, however, is that what they say seems more summation than revelation, and the expert voices they cite (including blogger Jeff Jarvis, among others) don't have much of lasting significance to add to this discussion. Again, words slip too often into clichés, such as when talk turns to the issue of public subsidies for media organizations; such an option, they write, "is as American as apple pie, and it deserves a healthy booster shot now."

In the final section of the book, a persuasive argument (though still lacking in intellectual rigor) is made for the federal government increasing its

funding of public media. They model their ideas on public media in Britain and Canada (the BBC and CBC). Yet they don't dig very deep into the issue of how the acceptance of public funding can also leave a news organization vulnerable to political forces and budget cutbacks.

Arguments in this book are made from exclusively liberal positions. For example, offered as evidence of high-quality public radio news is "Democracy Now!" Amy Goodman's show that won an award from a left-leaning organization. Of course, the importance of diverse voices is stressed, but not so much diversity of opinion. Conservative perspectives are presented with disdain, yet to ignore the impact and influence of such voices in a serious discussion of media reform is myopic.

Journalists are unlikely to learn much in "Changing Media" that is going to help them navigate the shifting terrain and have their work be paid. They also have an abiding interest in how it will be distributed with regularity to as large an audience as possible. On these points, the authors don't present any clear idea. What they believe—and advocate for—is that everybody should be able to have broadband access, and they think nonprofits and similar "new" models might work out. And they like public radio and public television.

This self-proclaimed manifesto of a journalistic digital revolution falls flat. My hope is that someone with writing skills and a penchant for coherence will pick up on this impulse and move us closer to a sustainable future. Certainly, there is no shortage of such ideas percolating on the Internet. Yet, like everything else there, they are presented only in fragments. The longing is for someone to summon us together in the public square with deft argument, assembled evidence, and the sincere conviction to offer us a workable vision. ■

*Cameron McWhirter, a 2007 Nieman Fellow, is an investigative reporter for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. He is writing a book about the "Red Summer" race riots of 1919.*

## The Important History News Organizations Have to Tell

By creating archives of company records ‘we can learn how the paper developed and organized itself, how editors and reporters approached stories, and how community leaders and ordinary citizens responded to them.’

BY JOHN MAXWELL HAMILTON AND VALERIE KOMOR

**N**ewspapers, once treated like members of the family, welcomed at breakfast tables and at Sunday brunch, are increasingly estranged. In Denver, the venerable Rocky Mountain News has ceased publication. In Seattle, the Post-Intelligencer has gone, replaced online by a shadow of its former self, although no one knows how long that will last. As months and years roll by, more newspapers surely will disappear.

This realization leads us to raise a related issue: Who, if anyone, is going to save our newspapers’ archives? With each closure or merger, new ownership or online experiment, archival records are imperiled. News librarians, who are typically custodians of “the morgue” and the digital text files, are often among the first to be laid off as ailing papers cut staff. When the last tear is shed and the lights turned off in a just-laid-to-rest newsroom, little is likely to be done to save what’s been filed away. Lost, as a result, will be the back story to the first draft of a community’s history.

Local news media are to their communities—and national media are to the nation—what mortar is to bricks. We chiefly think of this as the impact daily news reporting has on citizens’ conversations about politics, sports, business or whatever matters to them. “To read a newspaper is to know what town you’re in,” Michael Sokolove observed in his August 2009 New York Times Magazine article, “What’s a Big City Without a Newspaper?”

In this vein, it’s reassuring to know that every back issue of the Rocky Mountain News is housed at the Denver Public Library, long a renowned repository for historical Colorado newspapers. But past is-

ues of a newspaper are not the only things worth preserving. The company records are important as well—and for similar reasons. Such files—archivists describe them as “corporate archives”—document a newspaper’s history in financial and legal records, through editorial memoranda and correspondence, photographs and other materials. In reading these, we can learn how the paper developed and organized itself, how editors and reporters approached stories, and how community leaders and ordinary citizens responded to them.

To read the behind-the-scenes story of a newspaper in these files is to peek behind the curtain and see the bumps and bruises, along with the joy and anguish, of our community conversation.

### News Archives

Allan Nevins, a leading historian of his day who had a special interest in the press, placed a high value on newspaper archives. In 1956 he made a suggestion over lunch with Arthur Sulzberger and some editors at The New York Times. “I called their attention to the value of an archive preserving confidential materials,” Nevins recalled in a speech several years later. “Mr. Sulzberger then and there gave instructions to have such an archive formed; but whether these directions were ever carried out I do not know.”

Sulzberger’s wishes were, in fact, realized. Before the Times moved to its new quarters on Eighth Avenue in 2007, one could consult a vast collec-



One of 400 boxes of files recovered in 2003 from the basement of 50 Rockefeller Plaza in New York City. The building housed The Associated Press from 1938 to 2004. Photograph by Valerie Komor/Courtesy of AP Corporate Archives.

tion of files in the basement of the old building on 43rd Street—a dark ink-stained cavern that is central to a recent hilarious roman à clef mystery by Times reporter John Darnton, “Black and White and Dead All Over.” In June 2007, the Times donated a large portion of this material—78 linear feet in all—to the New York Public Library, where the now-titled Adolph S. Ochs Papers (1853-2006) have since been catalogued by archivists.

Other troves of material have been similarly saved. The Newberry Library in Chicago has an extraordinary collection of the personal and business papers of Chicago Daily News journalists, thanks to the generosity of newspaper owners and their heirs in Chicago through the years. In 2006, the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded the Newberry funding to preserve 39 discrete journalism collections and make them accessible. The archivists there, led by Martha Briggs, have largely completed their work. As one of us learned while conducting research in these collections for the book, “Journalism’s Roving Eye: A History of American Foreign Reporting,” the Daily News is more responsible for creating modern American journalism than any other newspaper—a story that has never been told in full, but now can be.

Two of those with papers at the

Newberry—Melville Stone, who created the Chicago Daily News, and Victor Lawson, who took the paper to the heights of journalism—were leaders in establishing the modern Associated Press. Stone became the general manager of The Associated Press (AP) of Illinois in 1893. Lawson served as The AP’s president from 1894 to 1900, the year The AP moved to New York, where the corporation laws were more favorable to cooperatives. AP records piled up over the next century. When Tom Curley became its president and CEO in 2003, thousands of documents lay unattended in filing cabinets in the basement of The AP’s headquarters at 50 Rockefeller Plaza. As one of his first decisions, Curley arranged for this trove to be preserved, organized and made available to researchers—and an archivist (the author, Valerie Komor) was hired in 2003 to oversee this effort.

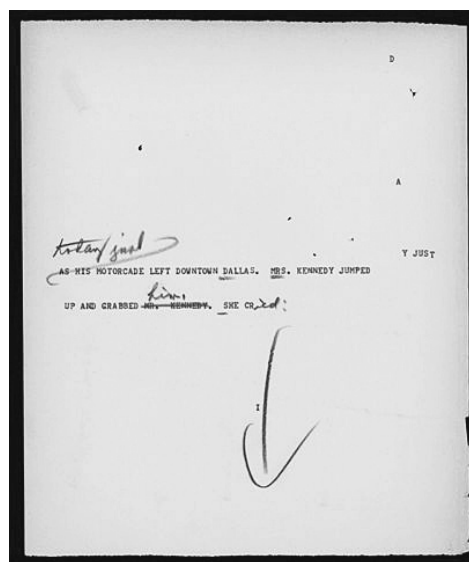
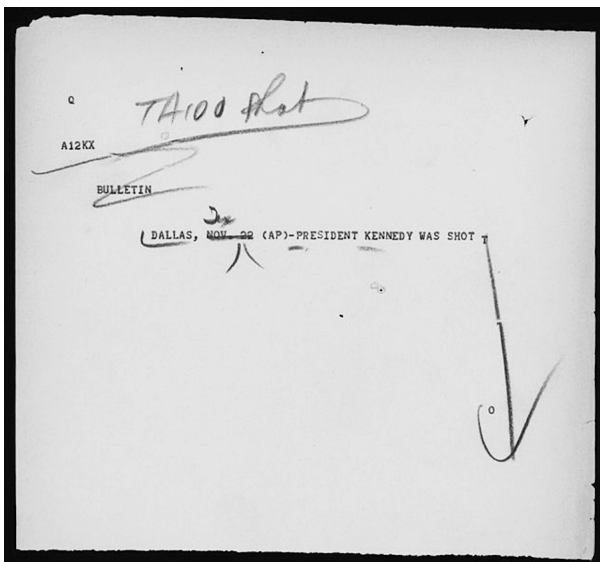
Minutes from a 1945 meeting of the AP board—found among the materials retrieved from storage—reveal how easily material can be lost without such foresight. By that time, AP’s offices had simply run out of space, forcing an unpleasant choice on the board, which it acknowledged, while announcing its drastic solution: To secure needed storage room, segregation had been made in the files covering the first 20 years, namely the files of

the Illinois Corporation 1893-1900 and of the New York Corporation from 1900-1913. From these early files all the corporate records had been segregated. The Board approved the preservation of the segregated corporate records, and directed that the balance of the old files be destroyed.

What a pity—and a reminder that for every successful instance of archival preservation, there are many more failures. Here is another. When James Hoge Jr. was the publisher of the (New York) Daily News, he directed staff to send the corporate archives to the library at Princeton University for preservation. It never happened. The corporate records of the Rocky Mountain News (financial, legal, human resources, and other executive records) have gone to the Scripps headquarters offices in Cincinnati; let’s hope they are preserved and maintained by an archivist and eventually made available to researchers.

Think of your favorite dead newspaper and see what you can find looking at WorldCat, the largest online union catalog of research library holdings. Here are some hints:

- Columbia University’s Rare Book and Manuscript Library holds the records (95 linear feet) of the New York World.
- Temple University holds a complete



The first two sheets of “A” wire copy announcing the shooting of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas on November 22, 1963 were edited in pencil before being distributed worldwide. *Kennedy Wire Copy Collection/Courtesy of AP Corporate Archives.*



run of the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin as well as the papers of Bulletin editors and reporters. (When newspapers were owned by individuals, not large corporations, personal files were virtually corporate files.)

- There is no archive with records from the New York Herald, though the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress hold relatively small collections of the papers of Herald founder James Gordon Bennett.

The same uneven pattern applies to broadcasting:

- Splendid NBC corporate records can be found at the Library of Congress and the Wisconsin State Historical Society, which has one of the best collections of journalists' papers anywhere. (NBC also sent broadcast discs—150,000 16-inch lacquer discs spanning the years 1935 to 1971—to the Library of Congress's Recorded Sound section.)
- To our knowledge, no centralized collection of CBS corporate archives exists, although each CBS department maintains its own files. Over the years, individual CBS journalists (many with Texas connections) have given their papers to the University of Texas at Austin, as the late Walter Cronkite has done. Today, the university's Dolph Briscoe Center for American History holds an impressive number of collections of CBS broadcasters, and they have just added to their photojournalism collections with the Eddie Adams archive.
- Local broadcasting records are even harder to find. They are difficult to preserve because the materials produced are generally too costly and voluminous for a single institution to care for long term.

## Path Toward Preservation

So what is to be done to follow Nevins' advice on a large, systematic scale? No simple one-size-fits-all answer exists, but some approaches suggest themselves as potential partial solu-

tions. An obvious first step—to set into motion a range of solutions—is to put preservation of archival records high on journalists' agenda. (Though the desire to do this is already high on the agenda of librarians and archivists at both local and national levels, their voices are unlikely to have the force necessary to make this happen.)

Although the accelerating rate in the demise of newspapers and other traditional news media drives our concerns about creating such archives, the best place to start is with healthy media operations, as happened with the Times, The AP, and NBC. Thoughtful approaches there led to preserving materials in an orderly way and to long-term planning for their use and safe disposition. Thus, owners, corporate executives, and editors need to be educated on why this is important.

Such discussions should be on the meeting agenda of the Newspaper Association of America, made up of publishers and owners, and the broadcast equivalent, the National Association of Broadcasters. Ditto for the American Society of News Editors, and the Radio Television Digital News Association (formerly the Radio Television News Directors Association). A few industry leaders—Belo Corporation, for instance, which donated its print and broadcast archives to Southern Methodist University this fall—could lead the way in such discussion. Meanwhile, archivists at the state and local level can be active in their own educational outreach by approaching local media executives.

When demise is imminent—and such planning has not taken place—more urgent steps need to be taken. It would help if national organizations such as the National Endowment for the Humanities or foundations such as Knight, Pew or even Mellon had emergency funds to help save these valuable files.

One promising idea comes from Bernard Reilly, president of the Center for Research Libraries in Chicago. “The historical record of our society that major newspapers create and maintain is a public good,” he says. “So, would it be possible, for example, to write

into the federal tax code incentives for media organizations to provide for their archives?” He is envisioning the government giving full market-value deductibility as donations for making investments in the maintenance of back files.

Something else would help too. While it is important to work on the supply side of preservation, much more can be done to improve the demand side. Many historians are not aware of what is available. This is because the materials that have been preserved are spread out in libraries and archives across the country and not always found in logical places. Why, for instance, would the papers of Negley Farson, one of the great Chicago Daily News correspondents, be at the University of Wyoming's American Heritage Center? Farson traveled widely in his journalism career, but Wyoming held no particular importance in his career as far as his various memoirs relate.

Almost 20 years ago the Freedom Forum published “Untapped Sources: America's Newspaper Archives and Histories.” This slim publication was not close to complete then and is entirely out of date today. But it remains useful because nothing else exists. The Library of Congress or the Newseum, created by the Freedom Forum, could build on this concept by developing and maintaining an up-to-date and thorough online listing. By letting historians know where these records reside, collections will receive greater use. In turn, this will make it easier to argue for the value of preserving the colorful, meaningful histories that lie in the files of our news organizations. After all, the experiences and insights contained in their files collectively constitute one of our country's vital contributions to the workings of a functioning democracy. ■

*John Maxwell Hamilton is Hopkins P. Breazeale professor and dean at theanship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University. In 2003, Valerie Komor became the founding director of The Associated Press's Corporate Archives.*

## Bringing the Wit and Wisdom of Molly Ivins to the Stage

Two journalists turned playwrights mine a mother lode of material in the writings of the acerbic political observer.

BY MARGARET ENGEL AND ALLISON ENGEL

**J**ournalists can cut compelling figures on the stage. Think Mark Twain, as portrayed by Hal Holbrook. Or Will Rogers. Who better to entertain and

provoke audiences now but Molly Ivins, the red hot rose of Texas who was syndicated in nearly 400 newspapers dispensing wit and wisdom? And who better to play Molly than celebrated actress Kathleen Turner who bears a strong resemblance to Molly and shares her deep commitment to the First Amendment?

Molly, a 6-foot, red-haired force of nature, has been deeply missed since she died in 2007 at the age of 62. As journalists (and twin sisters) who appreciate the tough slog of those women who paved the way, we decided to write a play about her.

Even though this was our first play, it didn't seem far-fetched for us to undertake the effort. Our father, who had an M.A. in playwriting from Columbia University and once worked for Helen Hayes, made sure that we attended theater classes and as many plays as possible. One of us was the president of a vener-

able community theater and just finished an M.A. in screenwriting. The other serves on the board of the Helen Hayes Awards.

And there was no shortage of people who loved and worked with Molly who were willing to share their stories, both hilarious and poignant.

She was a true American original. She brought her dog and bare feet into the newsroom of The New York Times, from which she was fired after describing a chicken cleaning festival as a "gang pluck." She retreated from the power corridor of New York and Washington to Texas. From that perch she attracted a national audience, including bylines in influential magazines, a commentator's spot on "60 Minutes," and even being spoofed on "Saturday Night Live." She felt she had a clearer picture of national politics sitting in the Lone Star State.

And she was right. From an eagle-eye view of the savings and loan crisis to the rise of Bush 41 and 43 (whom she named "Shrub"), Molly supplied barbed observations that are still quoted today.

Molly was Smith-educated and spoke fluent French, but grabbed readers by using "the piss and vinegar" idioms of plain Texas speech.

We felt this voice was a natural for the stage. "Red Hot Patriot: The Kick-Ass Wit of Molly Ivins"



Molly Ivins in the 1970's worked at The Texas Observer before moving to The New York Times, and in short time she was home again. Photo by Alan Pogue/[www.documentaryphotographs.com](http://www.documentaryphotographs.com).

was born after we re-read all of Molly's columns and books and analyzed the scripts of many one-person plays. We finished an early draft in spring 2008 and Molly's longtime agent, Dan Green, arranged permission from The Texas Observer and the American Civil Liberties Union, her literary beneficiaries.

We were lucky to find the sympathetic ear of Molly Smith, the artistic director of Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. This Molly has a long history of incubating new plays and she arranged a staged reading in August 2009. Writer and editor Jim Autry, a personal friend from our days at The Des Moines Register & Tribune and Meredith Publishing, got the script to Kathleen Turner, a fellow member of the board of People For the American Way Foundation. The actress brought Molly to life in that staged reading.

Turner's schedule had an unexpected opening for spring 2010 and the Philadelphia Theatre Company was able to find an available slot. We're happy to report that the play will run from March 19 to April 18 at the company's new theater on the Avenue of the Arts on Broad Street in downtown Philadelphia (visit [www.philadelphiatheatrecompany.org](http://www.philadelphiatheatrecompany.org) for updated information).



Kathleen Turner will bring the life of Molly Ivins to the stage of the Philadelphia Theatre Company. *Photo by Richard Drew/The Associated Press.*

There's been a long link between journalism and the stage. During the Depression, the Work Projects Administration financed The Living Newspaper, a multi-year series of plays based on news ripped from the headlines. More recently, "The

Exonerated," a play taken from court transcripts and journalism about unfairly convicted persons, has toured the country. In the aftermath of 9/11, a journalist wrote "The Guys," about a New York City fire captain. And, of course, there's "The Front Page."

Molly, who died of breast cancer far too young, deserves a second act. We saw a play as the way to do it.

There's other new attention focused on her. "Molly Ivins: A Rebel Life," by Bill Minutaglio and W. Michael Smith, was published recently by a longtime friend of Molly's, Peter Osnos of PublicAffairs.

We've learned many things about the difference between journalism and playwriting. One happy discovery is that the playwright's words rule—actors and directors only suggest changes and there are no ad libs. Another discovery is the number of rewrites required. We're past 38 and counting. ■

*Margaret Engel, a 1979 Nieman Fellow, is the director of the Alicia Patterson Journalism Foundation in Washington, D.C. Allison Engel, who was a 1980 Knight Journalism Fellow at Stanford University, is director of communications at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles.*

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## 1957

**Bob Campbell**, a longtime editor at The (Gainesville, Ga.) Times, died on November 8th at his home in Asheville, North Carolina. He was 88.

Campbell began his career as a reporter and city editor at his hometown paper, the Asheville Citizen. He later served as editorial page editor at the Winston-Salem (N. Carolina) Journal-Sentinel and director of the Southern Education Reporting Service in Nashville, Tennessee. He worked at the Times from 1971 until his retirement in 1986, first as executive editor and then as editorial page editor for the final two years. In 1981, he was one of 55 Pulitzer Prize nominating jurors.

A Navy veteran of World War II,

Campbell is survived by his wife, **Anne**, three children, six grandchildren, and a great-granddaughter.

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## 1985

**Pam Spaulding's** new book, a photographic study of middle-class life in small-town Kentucky, is "An American Family: Three Decades with the McGarveys," published by National Geographic.

Spaulding was working as a photographer for The (Louisville, Ky.) Courier-Journal when she began the project in 1977 with the intention of following John and Judy McGarvey for one year after the birth of their first child. She took more than 5,000

pictures that first year and kept going for three decades, documenting the family on vacation, at school, work and play.

Colleague and fellow photographer Sam Abell writes in an essay about Spaulding at the back of "American Family" that he enjoyed watching the project grow and evolve over the years. He notes that Spaulding's photographs during and after her Nieman year became "more complex and sociological. She stepped back and included more."

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## 1993

**Rick Bragg's** new book is "The Most They Ever Had," published by MacAdam/Cage. His sixth book focuses

## Veteran Reporter Jon Alpert Is Recognized With the I.F. Stone Medal

Jon Alpert, a veteran investigative reporter, producer and documentary filmmaker, has been awarded the 2009 I.F. Stone Medal for Journalistic Independence.

In a career that has spanned more than 35 years, Alpert has covered many important social issues and international stories, from homelessness and health care in the U.S. to the killing fields of Cambodia and the hostage crisis in Iran. Along the way, he has gained exclusive access to some of the world's most elusive leaders, including Fidel Castro and Saddam Hussein.

The award was presented to Alpert during a ceremony on October 1st at American University in Washington, D.C. During his remarks, Alpert talked about the pressures he has faced and the risks he has taken in the pursuit of important stories. At one point, he snuck into factories to test the air. "We broke the law. We trespassed," he said.

After his reports about unhealthy working conditions aired, he received death threats. The company closed its factories in the United States and Canada and moved them to Mexico. Alpert stuck with the story. Eventually, the safety director went to jail for poisoning workers. A federal prosecutor credited Alpert's reports as the impetus for bringing the case and enabling the conviction.

In announcing the award, Nieman Curator **Bob Giles**, NF '66, said, "Jon Alpert embodies everything we think of when it comes to independent reporting today. In his work, he has been fearless, whether traveling the globe or searching in his own back yard to uncover hidden truths and shed light on important news developments. He not only deserves this award but our



Bob Giles, curator of the Nieman Foundation, congratulates Jon Alpert, who was selected to receive the 2009 I.F. Stone Medal for Journalistic Independence.

thanks for so consistently asking difficult questions, tackling topics that others feared to cover, and reporting on matters crucial to our society and the international community."

The award recognizes Alpert not only for his impressive body of work but also the use of new technology in his reporting and his commitment to media access and education for all. Through his Downtown Community Television Center (DCTV), the non-profit community media center that he co-founded with his wife, Keiko Tsuno, in New York in 1972 and where he serves as co-director, he has helped thousands tell their own stories by offering courses that teach the basics of electronic media.

In 1974, Alpert became the first American journalist in 10 years to produce a television program inside Cuba. In 1977, he made the first American television program in Vietnam since the end of the war. From 1979 to 1991, while working as an independent journalist for NBC News, he covered the Mariel boatlift in Cuba, the Mujahideen in Afghanistan, corruption in the Philippines, glasnost and perestroika in the Soviet Union, and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. In

1991, he filmed scenes of the devastation caused by U.S. bombing in Iraq during Operation Desert Storm, becoming the only reporter to leave the country with uncensored footage.

In recent years, Alpert has produced documentaries for HBO about the prisoners of Rikers Island, street gangs in New York, crack use in Lowell, Massachusetts, his own aging father, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In addition to HBO and NBC, Alpert's work has aired on PBS and he has received a wide range of journalism honors that include 15 Emmys and four duPont-Columbia Awards.

The 2009 I.F. Stone Medal selection committee was chaired by John R. (Rick) MacArthur, president and publisher of Harper's Magazine, and included Pulitzer Prize winner Roger Wilkins and **Patricia O'Brien**, NF '74.

"He has taken on the toughest issues, local to global, personal to political, with integrity and determination," Alpert's nominator wrote. "He has exposed the failures of government and corporate policies and given voice to those whose stories have been neglected or excluded from mainstream media. ... Alpert has remained grounded in the vision of media that is made by and for the people he serves."

Established last year, the I.F. Stone Medal rewards journalistic independence and honors the life of investigative journalist I.F. Stone. The award is administered by the Nieman Foundation and its Nieman Watchdog Project and is presented annually to a journalist whose work captures the spirit of independence, integrity and courage that characterized I.F. Stone's Weekly, published from 1953 to 1971. ■

on the individual stories of the workers in one of the South's last cotton mills, which operated in Jacksonville, Alabama until 2001. In the mill, workers lost fingers, hands, arms and years of their lives in exchange for as little as, in the early days, \$2.50 per week. Since 2005 Bragg has been a writing professor at the University of Alabama College of Communication and Information Sciences.

#### 1994

**Christina Lamb** received the Bayeux-Calvados Award for War Correspondents in honor of her reporting on Afghanistan for The Sunday Times of London. According to the award announcement, Lamb's "Mission Impossible" article in October 2008 "concludes that talks with the Taliban would have to be part of any resolution. The view is now widely held in diplomatic and military circles." Lamb

was chosen by an international jury and was honored in Bayeux, France, the first town liberated by the Allies in 1944.

#### 1995

**Lorie Hearn** has launched an investigative reporting venture, the Watchdog Institute (<http://watchdoginstitute.org>). Most recently she was a senior editor at the San Diego Union-Tribune. Based at San Diego State University's School of Journalism and Media Studies, the nonprofit institute partners with media outlets in the San Diego area—including Hearn's former employer—to produce quality investigative journalism. Another goal of the institute is to mentor the investigative journalists of the future.

"What is threatened these days is not people's access to information," Hearn said in an interview with American Journalism Review. "There's plenty

of that. What is threatened is the investigative work that brings people substantial knowledge that helps them make decisions in a democracy."

#### 2001

**Ken Armstrong** received the 2009 John Chancellor Award for Excellence in Journalism for producing investigative reports over the past 20 years that have had an impact.

Armstrong works on the investigative team for The Seattle Times, where he has written about illegally sealed court records and the community's complicity in protecting wayward athletes, among other subjects. He previously worked at the Chicago Tribune, where, with Steve Mills, he wrote a five-part series, "The Failure of the Death Penalty in Illinois," that exposed fault lines radiating through the state's system of capital punishment.

"Citing the Tribune series, Illinois Governor George Ryan declared a moratorium on executions in January 2000. Three years later he emptied Death Row, commuting 164 death sentences to life in prison. Ryan also granted full pardons to four Death Row inmates based on their innocence. Each had been profiled in the Tribune series.

## Reynolds Foundation Funds New Nieman Fellowship in Business Reporting

The Donald W. Reynolds Foundation has awarded the Nieman Foundation a grant of \$918,000 to support Nieman Fellowships over five years in business reporting and community journalism.

The fellowship in business reporting is a new fellowship that will begin with the class of 2011. The community journalism fellowship is a renewal of a grant originally awarded by the Reynolds Foundation in 2005. The application deadline for each fellowship is January 31, 2010.

Bob Giles, NF '66, curator of the Nieman Foundation, said the need for experienced journalists who can provide authoritative in-depth coverage of public and private institutions at the core of the global economy is paramount. The Reynolds Fellow will have access to the extensive resources across Harvard and a network of

university programs in business journalism that are funded by the Reynolds Foundation.

The five community journalists who have been Reynolds Fellows since 2005 have reinforced the value of distinctive local voices in print and online in carrying out the important role of informing citizens in American communities. U.S. journalists at local daily newspapers with a circulation of less than 50,000 and affiliated Web sites are eligible to apply.

The Donald W. Reynolds Foundation is a national philanthropic organization founded in 1954 by the late media entrepreneur for whom it is named. Headquartered in Las Vegas, Nevada, it is one of the 50 largest private foundations in the United States and has invested \$100 million in its National Journalism Initiative. ■

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A fifth inmate featured in the series had already been cleared,” Armstrong wrote in an e-mail.

Nicholas Lemann, dean of Columbia University’s Journalism School and chairman of the award’s selection committee, said, “Armstrong’s stories on capital punishment in Illinois exposed wrongdoing and saved lives. He has consistently taken important local issues and brought them to national attention. This kind of tireless reporting performs a critical public service and embodies the spirit of the John Chancellor Award.”

The nine-person selection committee—which included NBC’s Tom Brokaw, NPR’s Michele Norris, and ABC’s Lynn Sherr—looks “across the media landscape to identify a reporter who may not be widely known by the public, but who is highly respected within the profession for the caliber of his or her work,” according to the award’s Web site.

In a press release announcing the award, Seattle Times Executive Editor David Boardman said Armstrong “writes with force about people with power and writes with sensitivity about people journalists tend to dismiss.”

Before moving to Seattle, Armstrong was the McGraw Professor of Writing at Princeton University. He is a four-time finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, in the categories of public service, investigative, national and explanatory reporting. His wife, **Ramona Hattendorf**, does volunteer work and is president of the PTA in Seattle.

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### 2003

**Bryan Monroe** has joined the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University as a visiting professor. He will focus on technology and innovation in the newsroom for undergraduate and graduate students.

Monroe, who has held numerous positions in the news business, was named by Folio as one of the magazine industry’s 40 most influential innovators. In 2005, he helped lead the team at the (Biloxi, Miss.) Sun Herald that was a co-winner of the 2006 Pulitzer

Prize for Public Service for coverage of Hurricane Katrina. Later, as vice president and editorial director of *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines, he landed the first interview with Barack Obama after the presidential election and the last major interview with Michael Jackson before the singer’s death.

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### 2006

**David Heath** has taken a position as the senior reporter for the Huffington Post Investigative Fund, a nonprofit investigative spinoff of The Huffington Post. The fund focuses on corruption and government waste in Washington, D.C. It now has a special emphasis on the causes of and fallout from the economic crisis.

Heath is a three-time Pulitzer finalist, all for his work with The Seattle Times over the last decade. One of those stories was an investigation of conflicts of interest in clinical cancer research at a Seattle area hospital. It won the Harvard University Goldsmith Prize for Investigative Reporting, the George Polk Award for Medical Reporting, the Gerald Loeb Award, and the Associated Press Managing Editors’ public service award, among others.

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### 2007

**Juanita León’s** 2005 book “Country of Bullets: Chronicles of War” is now available in English from University of New Mexico Press, in a translation by Guillermo Bleichmar.

The book details more than a decade of León’s reporting in Colombia, where she worked as an editor and reporter for *El Tiempo* and *Semana*, but leaves out “the most infamous scenes of the war,” she writes in the book’s introduction. “I was interested not so much in the large events of the war as in its everyday reality.”

The book received third-place honors in the 2006 Lettre Ulysses Award for the Art of Reportage when it was published in Colombia under the title “País de Plomo: Crónicas de Guerra.”

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### 2008

**Dean Miller** has been named director of the Center for News Literacy at Stony Brook University’s School of Journalism in Stony Brook, New York. The center, which opened in 2007, focuses on teaching students to assess the credibility of news media. In March 2009, the center hosted its inaugural conference, “News Literacy: Setting a National Agenda.”

In a press release announcing his hiring, Miller said, “I am delighted to join the Center for News Literacy, preparing students to be empowered and thoughtful citizens in this rapidly expanding information age. I am eager to lead the charge for the rising demand for news literacy education in colleges and universities across the country.”

Miller was a reporter and editor in the Northern Rockies for 25 years, 14 of them with the *Post Register* of Idaho Falls, Idaho, as managing editor and executive editor. In 2006, the paper received the E.W. Scripps Distinguished Service to the First Amendment award for an investigation into the Boy Scouts’ refusal to release records about molestation at camps. ■

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## Jack Nelson, 1929-2009; Noted for His Reporting on Civil Rights Movement and Watergate

**Jack Nelson**, NF '62, the Pulitzer Prize winner who helped bring the Los Angeles Times to national prominence with decades of hard-nosed reporting—from the civil rights movement in the South to the Watergate scandal in Washington—died at his home in Maryland on October 21st of pancreatic cancer. He was 80.

A native of Alabama, Nelson cut his teeth with The (Biloxi, Miss.) Daily Herald in the late 1940's, joining The Atlanta Constitution in 1952. There, he earned a reputation as a muckraker. He won the 1960 Pulitzer Prize for Local Reporting for a series of articles that exposed patient abuse and staff misconduct at a Georgia state mental hospital.

By 1965, Nelson had attracted the attention of the Los Angeles Times. It was shortly before "Bloody Sunday" on March 7, 1965 in Selma, Alabama that the paper hired him to open a bureau in Atlanta and cover the civil rights movement.

His work in the South drew the ire of Alabama Governor George Wallace and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, among others. Nelson's groundbreaking reporting continued after he arrived in Washington in 1970.

In 1972, he delivered a major scoop after obtaining an exclusive interview with ex-FBI agent Alfred C. Baldwin III, an eyewitness to and lookout for the Watergate break-in. Subsequent stories were the first to link the break-in to President Richard M. Nixon's re-election campaign. David Halberstam, in his 1979 book "The Powers that Be," called it "perhaps the most important Watergate story so far, because ... it brought Watergate to the very door of the White House."

Nelson was named chief of the Washington bureau in 1975 and led it for 21 years. During his tenure, Time magazine called the bureau

"one of the two or three best" in the nation's capital. He served as a correspondent after stepping down in 1996 until his retirement in 2001.

He wrote several books that expanded on his reporting, including "Terror in the Night," about the Ku Klux Klan's shift toward anti-Semitism in the 1970's. He wrote "The Censors and the Schools" in 1963 with Nieman classmate **Gene Roberts**.

Nelson was one of the founding members of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, taught

journalism at the University of Southern California, and in 2005 served on the independent Commission on Federal Election Reform with former President Jimmy Carter and former Secretary of State James A. Baker III. In 2002 he was a Shorenstein Fellow at Harvard.

Nelson is survived by his wife, journalist **Barbara Matusow**, two children from a previous marriage, six grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. ■

### Fondly Remembering a '62 Nieman Classmate

By John Hughes

Jack Nelson and I had a lot in common during our Nieman year. Jack had been covering segregation and race relations in the American South. I had just come from South Africa, as a correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor, covering apartheid and black resistance.

Jack had been pushed around by the cops and white supremacists. I had been pushed around by the white South African cops and hassled by their "special branch." We shared a lot of war stories.

Jack told a funny story about covering Alabama Governor George Wallace, who was outraged by Jack's reporting. The governor used to throw red meat to his white audiences by pointing at Jack and singling him out as one of those out-of-state reporters trying to tell Alabamians how to run their state. Jack got a little testy about that and confronted the governor with trying to get the crowd to beat him up. Governor Wallace laughed, and said: "Jack, do you know those burly white guys sitting in the row behind

you? They're plain-clothes Alabama troopers assigned to see nothing happens you."

It was Jack who also told me a funny story about Louis Lyons, the Nieman curator during our time. A Nieman Fellow who had just finished his year was asked by an incoming Nieman what kind of a guy Louis was. The rookie Nieman had heard that Louis was a little withdrawn. "Not really," replied the veteran Nieman Fellow. "When you first get to Harvard, Louis will conduct an interview with you, looking down all the time at his shoes. But by year's end, when he's really gotten to know you, he'll conduct your farewell interview looking down all the time at your shoes." Enigmatic or not, we all loved Louis Lyons.

In the post-Nieman years, Jack remained a good friend. Always a reporter, I thought he was a little saddened in later years by his rise to executive power at the Los Angeles Times. I felt he always yearned to be out on the barricades. ■

## Join the Online Nieman Community

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**Where:** [www.niemanfellows.harvard.edu](http://www.niemanfellows.harvard.edu)

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## The Murrey and Frances Marder Fund

The Murrey and Frances Marder Fund supports the Nieman Foundation's Watchdog Project, which is aimed at encouraging independent, aggressive reporting on regional, national and international policy issues. The Project's Web site, [www.niemanwatchdog.org](http://www.niemanwatchdog.org), has existed since 2004. It includes articles by academic experts, journalists and activists in various fields, or interviews with them, pointing reporters and editors to important lines of inquiry and sources. In 2009 special focus was given to unresolved issues of torture and other questionable government activities and to the reporting of the national and worldwide economic collapse and ongoing crisis.

In addition to promoting better press coverage, Nieman Watchdog showcases excellent journalism and hosts a blog in which journalists take part. **Murrey Marder** is a 1950 Nieman Fellow.

The following is an accounting of expenditures for the fund from November 1, 2008-October 31, 2009.

<b>Beginning Balance at 11/1/08</b>	<b>\$160,890</b>
<b>Income</b>	
Interest on balance at end of FY09	\$1,445
Endowment Distribution for FY09	\$143,155
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$144,600</b>
<b>Expense</b>	
Editor's, Writers' and Interns' Fees	\$173,824
Travel/Lodging/Meals	\$1,163
Web site hosting and maintenance	\$2,138
Miscellaneous	\$462
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$177,587</b>
<b>Ending Balance at October 31, 2009</b>	<b>\$127,903</b>

## New Nieman Site Aids Journalists Covering Pandemic Flu

Just one day before President Obama declared the H1N1 flu outbreak a national emergency in October, the Nieman Foundation introduced a comprehensive online guide to covering pandemic flu. Written by and for journalists, [www.coveringflu.org](http://www.coveringflu.org) offers guidance and best practices for reporting on the topic and is a one-stop resource for reporters, editors, producers and other media professionals seeking to understand the complexities of the flu story.

Visitors to the site can learn how to maintain their independence and continue to exercise rigorous journalistic inquiry when called on by the government and/or public health officials to share messages with the public in times of crisis.

In explaining the importance of the guide, the Nieman Foundation's special projects manager and site editor **Stefanie Friedhoff**, NF '01, said, "We believe that understanding the subject matter well and knowing where to turn for accurate information is the best way for journalists to avoid the pitfalls of both pandemic hype and pandemic fatigue. Our guide will help these journalists—whether seasoned health correspondents or general assignment reporters—provide nuanced reporting on topics that are too often painted in black and white terms. In the process, they will perform a vital public service."

The guide follows up on the 2006 Nieman conference "The Next Big Health Crisis—And How to Cover It," which was featured in the Spring 2007 issue of Nieman Reports.

Topics covered on [www.coveringflu.org](http://www.coveringflu.org) include:

- The Science of Influenza
- Pandemic Preparedness
- Pandemic Reporting
- Crisis Communication
- A History of Pandemics. ■



## Taking Issue with Jerry Kammer's 'Struggle to Be Heard' on Immigration

To the Editor:

I'm writing to set the record straight and correct some troubling misperceptions created by Jerry Kammer's article, "An Opposing Viewpoint: The Struggle to Be Heard," printed in the Fall 2009 issue of Nieman Reports.

The gist of Kammer's piece: that he can't get published on The Washington Post op-ed page, and that's unfair because I've appeared there and elsewhere in the Post several times in recent years—evidence, in his view, of an ideological bias on the part of the editors.

I'm sorry, but this is nothing more than a personal gripe dressed up as a high-minded political argument.

I couldn't agree more with Kammer's premise. The media should air—robustly and fairly—all sides of any contentious political debate. A complex issue like immigration, even

more than others, needs thorough treatment from a variety of viewpoints. And as the paper of record in the nation's capital, the Post has a special obligation to make space for many opinions.

What I don't agree with: Kammer's claim that the Post, paper or op-ed page, has taken my side in the debate.

Consider the organization Kammer works for, the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS)—a group, as he points out, with views very different from my own. In the six-year period he considers, CIS, its executive director Mark Krikorian and director of research Steven Camarota were mentioned or quoted in 113 Post stories. (For what it's worth, I was mentioned in 25.)

Or consider the other writers published on the Post's opinion pages in those years. Reading Kammer's article, you'd think I was the only one given space to weigh in on immigration. In

fact, by my count, the paper published more than 190 opinion pieces (op-eds, columns, Sunday essays) on the topic. Authors included conservative reformers like myself, progressive reformers like Janet Murguia of the National Council of La Raza and reform opponents as varied (and vigorous) as Charles Krauthammer, Robert Samuelson, Byron York—and Kammer's colleague, Steven Camarota.

In short, I have been one voice among many, one argument in a robust debate—just as it should be.

As for Jerry Kammer, I can't help wondering if his op-ed submission was based on the same kind of selective facts and skewed reporting as his piece in Nieman Reports. If so, no wonder he had trouble getting published. ■

**Tamar Jacoby**

President

ImmigrationWorks USA

**Jerry Kammer**, *NF '94*, who works at the Center for Immigration Studies in Washington, D.C., responds:

Tamar Jacoby is a graceful writer and able advocate of the proposition that Congress should provide low-wage employers easy access to deep international pools of low-skilled workers. But her letter confuses the discussion initiated by Nieman Reports with its publication of my claim of bias in The Washington Post. It is interesting that Jacoby, so often published by the Post, now emerges as its defender, while the Post remains silent.

I made my claim against the Post's opinion pages. But Jacoby tries to change the subject. She takes a diversionary tour to the Post's news coverage of immigration. She notes that Post reporters quoted or mentioned my colleagues 113 times, while she received similar treatment only 25 times.

The stories Jacoby cites involved straight reporting that balanced opposing views. So Jacoby mixes the apples of opinion with the oranges of straight news. Moreover, I'd suggest that if Post reporters seek out my colleagues' expertise so often, then editorial page editor Fred Hiatt should take note. Mr. Hiatt, tear down that fire wall! Let in those opposing views!

It is understandable that Hiatt, who has written in favor of the "comprehensive" approach, would be receptive to Jacoby's views. Human nature inclines us all toward those with whom we agree. But when that inclination tilts a newspaper's opinion pages as far as the Post's have tilted, journalistic responsibility requires a correction of the imbalance. That is the gist of my argument.

The Post's discourtesy to me, per se, is trivial. I cited it only because I believe it reflects a systematic bias

against would-be op-ed contributors who believe that Jacoby's proposals would not serve the national interest.

Jacoby's brief for the Post avoids that point. Instead, she refers to in-house columnists Charles Krauthammer and Robert Samuelson, who write on a broad range of issues and whose immigration opinions are balanced by other inside voices, such as Harold Meyerson and Hiatt himself. She correctly notes that my colleague Steven Camarota wrote a piece for the Post, making the point that immigration is the principal factor in the rapid growth of the U.S. population. It is telling that she fails to cite other outside contributors on our side of the argument.

I fully agree that the Post may have had excellent reasons for rejecting my submission. There are many others who can express concerns about our immigration policies more eloquently

than I. One of them is Harvard professor Christopher Jencks, who wrote this for *The New York Review of Books*:

America's current immigration policy is a vast social experiment. ... It involves two gambles. First, we are betting that rapid population growth will have no significant adverse effect on the quality of our descendants' lives. Second, we are betting that we can admit millions of unskilled immigrants to do our dirty work without creating a second generation whose members will have the same problems as the children of the American-born workers who do such jobs.

The United States may be able to double its population without lowering the quality of its citizens' lives, but the odds of its doing

so would surely be better if it proceeded more slowly.

Such a voice would help the Post balance the views of Tamar Jacoby.

As a postscript, I'd like to note that after *Nieman Reports* was published, I received an e-mail from Autumn Brewington, who graciously apologized for not sending me a turn-down notification, adding: "We do make a good-faith effort to publish views on all sides, and in this instance published a response on July 23 in reference to the July 21 op-ed."

In reply, I thanked her and pointed out that the published response, far from a rebuttal, was "more of a qualified endorsement." I added this:

I would also point out that the low-wage employers Tamar represents are one of the big

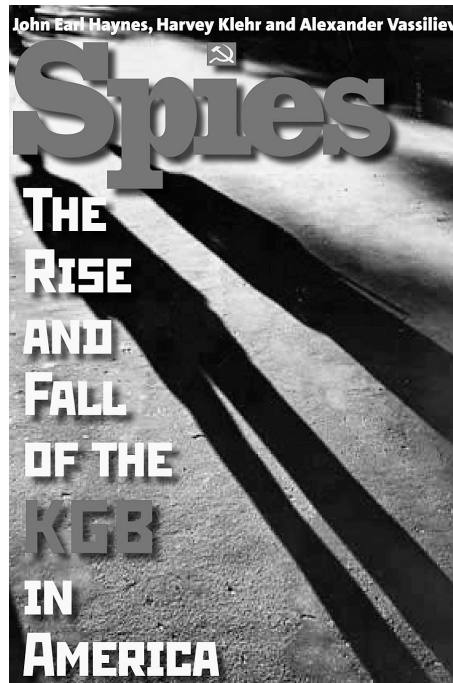
winners in the mass immigration. Among the big losers are low-wage Americans, including other recent immigrants. A few years ago I wrote a story about an immigrant from Mexico who came to the U.S. in the 1980's and was upset that wages for drywall hangers had not risen in 20 years because of the constant arrival of young men willing to work for less. Great for the contractors, terrible for the working class. We should not become a country of winners and losers, of rich and poor, of gated communities and troubled urban neighborhoods. We are moving in that direction. The Post is a great paper, but its editorial attention to immigration is seriously imbalanced. ■

## Two Opposing Viewpoints—and Responses—on 'Spies' and I.F. Stone

To the Editor:

The review published in the Fall 2009 issue of *Nieman Reports* of "Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America," by John Earl Haynes, Harvey Klehr and Alexander Vassiliev leaves open the question of how long "dear old Izzy," as I.F. Stone was known, was paid to spy for Soviet intelligence. Since Stone has a medal for investigative journalism named after him and awarded by the Nieman Foundation annually in his honor it is important to the credibility and integrity of the foundation and its fellows to get Stone's story right. For the words of Stone's hagiographer Myra MacPherson dismissing Stone's actions with the phrase "being misled and naïve does not make one a spy" to be offered as countervailing evidence is an example of what it means to get the story wrong.

The documented record on I.F. Stone's ties to Soviet intelligence goes back to 1936. The pattern of his writing, especially his book, "The Hidden History of the Korean War 1950-1951," in which he falsely charged that the U.S. conspired with South Korea to start the war, documents his obeisance



to the Soviet propaganda line at a critical juncture. Former KGB Major General Oleg Kalugin in his 2009 memoir, "Spymaster," recalls a meeting with Washington Post editors where he was angrily attacked for slandering "one of the best and most respected journalists in America."

Kalugin replied: "I never said that Stone was a Soviet agent, but now I'll tell you the truth. He was a KGB agent since 1938. His code name was 'Blin.' When I resumed relations with him in 1966, it was on Moscow's instructions. Stone was a devoted Communist. But he changed in the course of time like most of us."

The review ["Spies and Journalists: Taking a Look at Their Intersections" by Murray Seeger] never really comes to grips with the issue of what constitutes being a spy other than to suggest that if a journalist is paid for information that makes him one. Vassiliev's notes from the KGB archives and decrypted Soviet intelligence messages make it clear that Stone was a paid agent and Soviet propagandist. He broke with the Soviet Union in 1956 after the Soviet invasion of Hungary, but was convinced to resume work by Kalugin in 1966, and then made a final break in 1968 after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Stone told Kalugin, then based under cover in the Soviet embassy in Washington as a press officer, that he would never again take money from the Soviet Union. The testimony of Stone's former control

officer (Kalugin) is solid evidence that he was a paid agent.

The references to Stone's code name Blin, or pancake, in the Venona messages decoded by the National Security Agency, and in Vasiliev's notes, demonstrate a pattern of activity far more extensive than professional contacts between a journalist and Soviet sources. As Haynes and Klehr conclude: "It is clear that Stone consciously cooperated with Soviet intelligence from 1936 through 1938—that is to say, he was a Soviet spy—but it is unclear if he re-established that relationship in 1944-45. That Stone chose never to reveal this part of his life strongly suggests that he knew just how incompatible it would be with his public image as a courageous and independent journalist. His admirers who have so strenuously denied even the possibility of such an alliance, need to re-evaluate his life and reconsider some of the choices he made." It is unfortunate that the Nieman Founda-

tion has ignored this aspect of Stone's career in its efforts to position him as a role model for fearless investigative journalism.

It is apparent to me, as a former Moscow bureau chief for Time magazine (1968-70) who later wrote extensively on Cold War espionage, that there are still blank spots in the career of I.F. Stone as a Soviet agent that need to be filled in, especially KGB financial support for his publications. So, too, are there unanswered questions about the role of Robert Oppenheimer, a friendly, but unpaid Soviet intelligence asset, who was an unlisted or secret member of the American Communist Party. According to an internal Soviet intelligence document, Oppenheimer provided "cooperation in access to research for several of our tested sources, including a relative of Comrade [Earl] Browder [head of the American Communist Party]." Haynes and Klehr ignore this material to reach the unsubstantiated

and premature verdict, ostensibly supported by Nieman Reports, that the Oppenheimer case is closed.

However, their coauthor Vasiliev acknowledges that he had no access to the files of department "S" (illegal intelligence) and "T" (scientific technical intelligence), where the facts can be found. The unbreakable rule of Soviet intelligence is never to expose its own agents or assets, living or dead, and especially if their children are alive. Evidence on Stone and Oppenheimer is still carefully buried in sealed Soviet intelligence and presidential archives. The full, compelling story remains to be told. ■

**Jerrold L. Schecter**, NF '64

*He is coauthor of "Special Tasks, The Memoirs of An Unwanted Witness—A Soviet Spymaster" and "Sacred Secrets: How Soviet Intelligence Operations Changed American History."*

**Bob Giles**, NF '66, curator of the Nieman Foundation, responds:

In my role as publisher of Nieman Reports, I read each issue of Nieman Reports in its final proofs before it is published. Given my work in establishing the I.F. Stone Medal for Journalistic Independence at the

Nieman Foundation, I'd followed the controversy over Stone's history with the KGB in biographies written by Myra MacPherson and D.D. Guttenplan and in the reviews of "Spies." My own reading of the portions of "Spies" dealing with whether Stone was paid to spy for Soviet intelligence suggested to me that there continue to be unanswered

questions about his relationship with the KGB, and thus I felt that the authors' conclusion was not supported by compelling evidence. I asked that changes be made in Murray Seeger's article to indicate that Stone's defenders believe that the evidence now available does not support the conclusion that Stone acted as a spy for the Soviets. ■

To the Editor:

I.F. Stone used to say "Establishment reporters undoubtedly know a lot of things I don't. But a lot of what they know isn't true." Murray Seeger's essay "Spies and Journalists: Taking a Look at Their Intersections" in the Fall 2009 issue of Nieman Reports illustrates his point nicely.

Let's start with basic factual errors: neither Helen Bentley nor Whittaker Chambers ever worked for PM (though I.F. Stone did). Though they do claim Stone assisted the Soviets in 1936, not even the authors of "Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB in America"

suggest that Stone "kept close contact with Soviet intelligence for at least six more years." Apart from a single episode in 1936, "Spies" offers "only one additional reference" (page 151) even purporting to link Stone to the KGB in the 1930's. Nor do the authors of "Spies" ever claim Stone was "a paid Soviet agent." In 1944 Vladimir Pravdin's role as a KGB agent might have been well-known to Murray Seeger, but there is absolutely no evidence that it was known to either I.F. Stone or Walter Lippmann, both of whom often met with Pravdin in his official capacity as TASS's New York bureau chief. (Pravdin, whose real name was

Roland Abbiate, was born in London, raised in Monaco, and spoke perfect "British" English—a far cry from the Boris Badenov character depicted in "Spies" and certainly plausible enough as a journalist to fool Walter Lippmann, who turned out to be a far more productive source than I.F. Stone.) It's true, by the way, that some Soviet cables used "Imperialist" as a cover name for Lippmann. However in others, which Seeger never mentions, Lippmann is called "Bumblebee"—a distinction he shared with David Greenglass, Ethel Rosenberg's brother. And speaking of the Rosenbergs, Seeger mistakenly credits "Spies" with closing

a case that hasn't been open for years. I.F. Stone never accepted their claims to innocence, but for those who did, and who persisted even after Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton's convincing 1983 book "The Rosenberg File," the release of the Venona material by the National Security Agency in 1996 removed all doubt. After New York Times reporter Sam Roberts' dogged brilliance in getting Morton Sobell to admit his own guilt in September 2008 there was no case left to close.

Frankly I can't tell whether Seeger's failure to provide context is deliberate or inadvertent. Alexander Vassiliev's career in the KGB had nothing to do with the fortunes of "reform" in the former Soviet Union; Vassiliev makes no effort to hide his disdain for glasnost and Gorbachev, who "didn't care about the ... recommendations provided by the KGB" (p. xxxi). His separation from Russian intelligence had even less to do with the presence of "former Communists" in the SVR, since Vassiliev was one himself. Since Seeger does cite the passage where Vassiliev boasts of the lack of Jewish ancestry in his or his wife's family (considerably softened in Seeger's paraphrase), his decision to

omit Vassiliev's declaration, in the same sentence, of his Communist affiliation is difficult to explain. A conscientious reviewer would also have mentioned Vassiliev's own credibility gap: In 2003 he lost a libel trial in Britain—where the law is notoriously stacked in favor of plaintiffs—after a jury found that a reviewer's characterization of Vassiliev as "an unreliable author whose identification of persons who worked for the KGB is in part wrong, in part based on out-of-context information, and in part mere guesswork" was perfectly reasonable. And as the historian Amy Knight pointed out in the Times Literary Supplement (June 26, 2009) Vassiliev's most recent account of his note taking in "Spies" contradicts his sworn testimony from that 2003 trial.

Finally there is the question of what "Spies" actually does claim, namely that in 1936 Stone exchanged information with a TASS correspondent, whom he knew to be a Soviet agent, and also offered to introduce William Dodd, Jr., son of the U.S. ambassador to Berlin, to "anti-fascist" contacts. Also that "Blin" [Pancake] appears on a list of supposed agents in 1938. The only source for these allegations are

Vassiliev's notebooks, whose authority a less credulous reporter might at least want to query given Vassiliev's record. And the only evidence that Stone was "witting"—i.e. that he knew his TASS contact was an intelligence officer—is the phrase "the channel of normal operational work" which Seeger claims "was reserved for paid agents." If he has a shred of evidence for this assertion—rather than, for example, possibly referring to a professional relationship consisting of regular meetings between politically sympathetic journalists—it would be nice to see it. The authors of "Spies" may well share Seeger's belief, but since they don't have any evidence to support it either they prudently refrain from making such a bald claim.

I.F. Stone has been dead for 20 years so Seeger's sloppy slanders can't do him any harm. But your journal, and your readers, deserve better. ■

#### D.D. Guttenplan

*He writes from The Nation's London bureau and is the author of "American Radical: The Life and Times of I.F. Stone."*

**Murray Seeger**, *NF '62*, author of *"Spies and Journalists: Taking a Look at Their Intersections" in the Fall 2009 issue of Nieman Reports*, responds to D.D. Guttenplan's letter:

Ordinarily I would ignore the letter received from D.D. Guttenplan as another example of the I.F. Stone Protective Society rallying around their hero when his reputation has been challenged. The contemporary Leftists have so few heroes that they have to elevate Izzy Stone to a pinnacle he never attained in real life. I do respond only because the writer accused me of "sloppy slanders." My name had not been associated with that slander since I worked in Moscow 35 years ago and the KGB took umbrage over my reporting.

I refer those interested to the book "Spies: The Rise and Fall of the KGB

in America" that I reviewed to Guttenplan's discomfort. One quote from that book, by John Haynes, Harvey Klehr and Alexander Vassiliev (page 152): "It is clear that Stone consciously cooperated with Soviet intelligence from 1936 through 1938—that is to say, he was a Soviet spy—but it is unclear if he re-established that relationship in 1944-45." I agreed with that conclusion and I believe the evidence is clear that Stone dallied with the KGB in the later years. An even more thorough analysis by Max Holland appeared earlier in 2009 in the *Journal of Cold War Studies*, published at Harvard.

I did not attempt greater context because I do not feel Izzy Stone was that important. I did not know Stone but I admired his unique reporting about the Vietnam era and admired his independence. But he was neither the first nor the greatest investigative

reporter, as Guttenplan argues. Nor does Guttenplan point out that "Spies" put a big black mark on the remarkably hortatory, long "American Radical: The Life and Times of I.F. Stone" that he published in the same season.

When Stone's defenders confront irrefutable negative evidence about their hero, they attack the critics or excuse Izzy as "naïve." Now, that would be slander. There is an interesting incestuous circle spinning here: Guttenplan, who writes for *The Nation* from London, wrote a scathing review of "Spies" for that magazine. Jonathan Mirsky, the first I.F. Stone Teaching Fellow at University of California, Berkeley, wrote an enthusiastic review of Guttenplan's book for *The New York Review of Books* (NYRB). Stone wrote for both *The Nation* and NYRB. The NYRB has not published a review of "Spies." ■

## A Laid-off Journalist Charts a New Course via Social Media

Traveling the country, she and her family were inspired by hearing people's stories of resilience in hard times.

BY ANDREA MCCARREN

Three days after covering the Obama inauguration, I was part of an unexpected mass layoff at WJLA-TV, the ABC affiliate in Washington, D.C.

I was among 26 journalists who lost their jobs that winter day. So I simply did what comes naturally in the 21st century. I updated my Facebook status.

"Andrea McCarren was just laid off," I wrote, "and is enormously grateful for her 26-year run in television news."

Like many random postings on the Internet, this one had

unintended consequences. It was how my husband, Bill McCarren, learned of my job loss. A friend, who happens to be a newspaper reporter, phoned him and said, "What's this news about Andrea?" To which Bill, replied, "Huh?" She said, "There was something on Facebook and it looks like she was laid off." Bill fell silent.

"You're telling me something I don't know," he said. "Let me find out and I'll call you back." As the general manager of the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., Bill had been in a

series of meetings that morning and hadn't even had the chance to check his e-mail or voice mail. I'd left messages on both.

Social media, I learned that day, was like a wildfire, spreading rapidly across the Internet, with little possibility of containment. My Facebook posting immediately led to a flood of phone calls, condolence e-mails, and job leads. A Facebook friend I'd met in person just one time introduced me to a high-profile CEO and entrepreneur who flew me to California for a job interview the next week. Former colleagues and even several interns I'd mentored in the past spoke to their bosses and paved my way into their news operations within days. No one was hiring but it boosted my spirits to make so many contacts.

I'd never lost a job before so this was all new territory for me. And I had no idea what it meant to be laid off in the public eye. Since my bio was immediately removed from my former television station's Web site and I had to turn in the cell phone (and number) I'd had for more than a decade, loyal viewers and longtime sources looked for me online. A simple Google search turned up my Facebook page so hundreds of people friended me and wrote remarkably kind notes of support and encouragement.

Unbeknownst to me, colleagues, friends and viewers had also started tweeting the news



Andrea McCarren, husband Bill, and, from left, Olivia, Blake and Callaway pose for a family picture in the Badlands National Park in South Dakota.

of my layoff. My social media family grew exponentially, not just on Facebook and Twitter, but with a sea of new invitations to connect through LinkedIn.

And that was just the beginning. An editor at The Washington Post tracked me down through Facebook and asked me to write about what it was like to cover the tumultuous economy and then become part of the story. In addition, Howard Kurtz, the longtime media critic for the Post and the host of CNN's "Reliable Sources," found me through Facebook and asked if I would be a guest on his upcoming show about the battered journalism industry.

My essay in that Sunday's Outlook section of the Post and subsequent appearance on CNN prompted more than 2,000 e-mails and letters from around the world. The leading Dutch newspaper wrote a column about me in the context of the troubled American economy. A crew from Taiwan Television came to my home to shoot a similar piece. I had suddenly become a poster child for the financial crisis in the United States.

## On the Road With Social Media

My family and I were awed by the compassion and kindness of Americans who wrote to me, most of whom I'd never met. They shared their own heart-wrenching experiences with layoffs and other catastrophic events and, importantly, they offered advice on how they got back on their feet.

I felt empowered and grateful, and we all knew we had to do something with this valuable material. So in August, with an idea and a rented RV, my husband, three children, and I hit the road.

Our plan was to travel across the United States and learn how others faced economic hardship, often reinvented themselves, and bounced back.

I did what I'd done my entire career—interviewed strangers, wrote about them, and took photographs—and posted our progress and location daily on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter.

By now, we knew the power of social media so I'd only set up a few stories



Brothers Luke, left, and Matthew Jaeger helped save the family farm by cooking up their own biodiesel in the kitchen. *Photo by Andrea McCarren.*

in advance of our trip. We had a file full of leads and relied on Facebook and other social media for the rest.

Aside from food and clothing, we packed one computer, lots of road maps, still and video camera gear, and an abundance of faith that this would work.

It did. The stories we found stretch for miles and generations. We dubbed our journey "Project Bounce Back" and traveled through 21 states.

A Facebook friend suggested we visit Manistee, Michigan and look into the story of an auto parts plant that collapsed under the weight of

the economy. Somehow the plant had reopened its doors to a new industry: building small wind turbines. The general manager, who had to lay off his entire staff, was thrilled to rehire and retrain many of those workers. We all donned safety glasses as he proudly showed us around his recrafted facility.

Social media contacts led us to towns that impressed us with their ability not just to survive hardship but to thrive. The residents of Greensburg, Kansas lost everything but their spirit in a deadly tornado. They vowed to rebuild better than before and emerged as a model of sustainable energy for the United States and the world.

Just down the road, we found ourselves standing in a field of the grain milo with the Jaeger brothers, Luke and Matthew. With their father, the Jaegers cooked up a batch of biodiesel in their kitchen and found a homemade solution to the skyrocketing cost of gas. That discovery also helped them save their family farm.

Facebook friends guided us across South Dakota to the tiny town of Lead. There, the economy had forced the closure of its major employer, a gold mine. Refusing to accept financial defeat, the resilient folks of Lead are now preparing to open the nation's first underground

science laboratory in the old mine, a move that is attracting worldwide attention.

That story allowed us to spend the night a few hours south in the Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary, where we awoke at sunrise to the sounds of whinnying.

"You're looking at the bare bones of an old cowboy's dream," the sanctuary's 84-year-old founder, Dayton Hyde, told us. With 750 wild mustangs to feed and a dramatic drop in donations and grant money, the aging cowboy was a portrait of resilience, sheer grit, and determination. "It's an awesome

responsibility,” he said, “Buying 1,000 tons of hay for the winter. There’s no getting around it.”

Throughout our journey Facebook friends and LinkedIn contacts, most of whom were strangers, offered us their homes, the use of their cars, and home-cooked meals.

Two weeks into the trip, my husband announced, “This is like going on vacation with 1,000 friends!” I’m sure he meant it in a good way.

Social media provided the majority of our story leads as well as suggestions for some wonderful side trips including Oxford, Mississippi and Sun Studios in Memphis. After posting an update noting that we were handed Pepcid tablets upon entering the Iowa State Fair, we received an urgent Facebook message sending us to a friend’s brother who was exhibiting Belgian horses there.

Along the way, our RV rolled past breathtaking and meaningful landscapes. In southwest Minnesota, we were awed by the sight of hundreds of wind turbines against a Maxfield Parish sunset—a field of white pinwheels, each punctuated by a bright red light at its center. And we parked our RV and slept in countless Wal-Mart parking lots, chatting with greeters and shelf stockers on the overnight shift.

On the third week of our trip, my 12-year-old daughter announced that the RV smelled “like one giant sock.” Social media postings allowed us to keep it real, too.

On the back roads of America, we found inspiration and hope and changed our family forever. We now feel confident and optimistic about the future, but what will I do next? Just check my Facebook status. ■

*Andrea McCarren, a 2007 Nieman Fellow and veteran television reporter, most recently covered immigration issues and the economy. She and her family launched [www.projectbounceback.com](http://www.projectbounceback.com) to document their travels and the stories of hope and resilience that emerged along the way. Andrea is on Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter (<http://twitter.com/ProjBounceBack>).*



The Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary in Hot Springs, South Dakota is home to 750 wild mustangs. Owner Dayton Hyde calls it “the bare bones of an old cowboy’s dream.” *Photo by Callaway McCarren.*



This turbine in Lamar, Colorado is part of the fifth largest wind farm in the world. *Photo by Andrea McCarren.*

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TRAUMA IN THE AFTERMATH

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