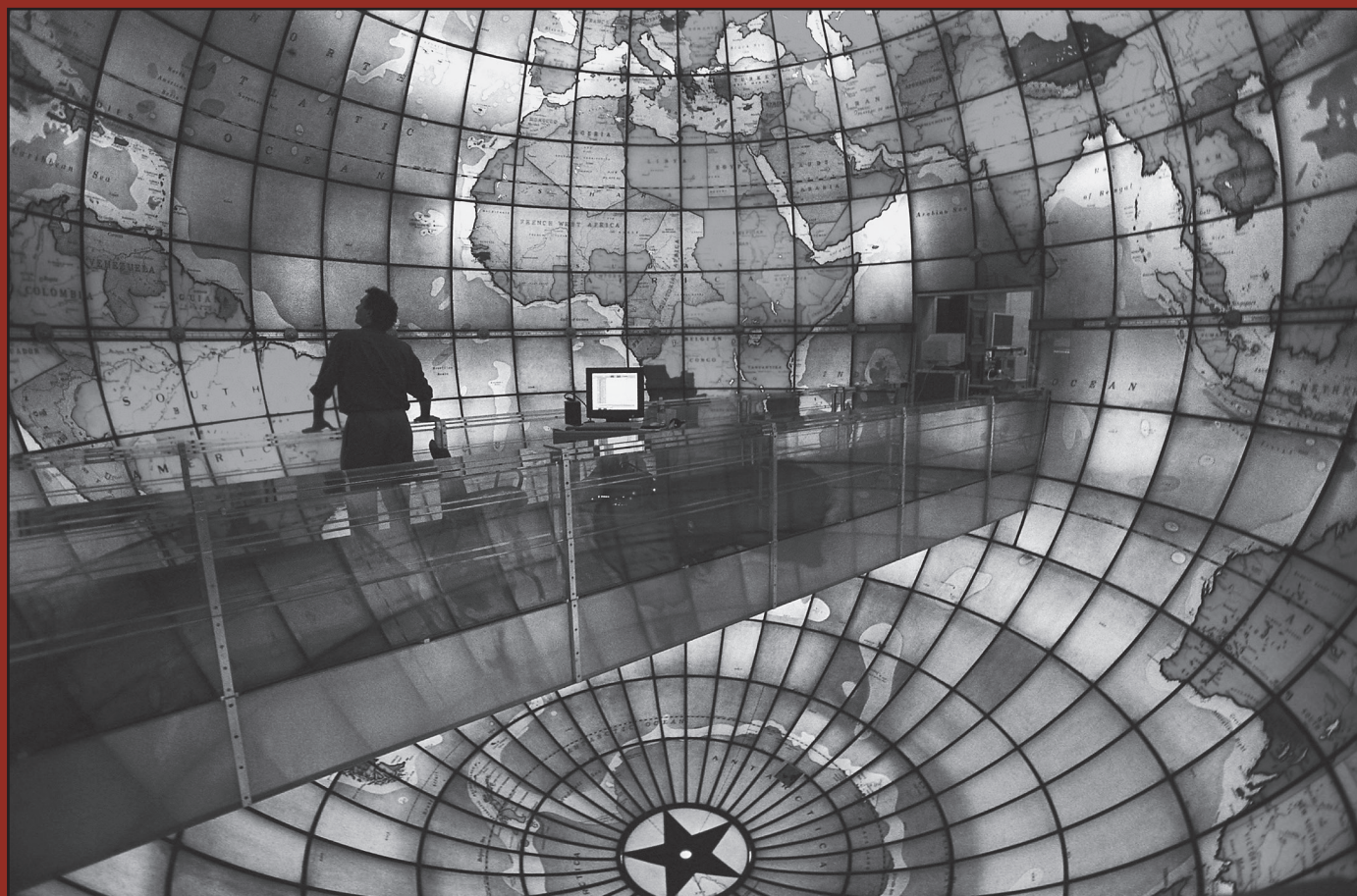


# Nieman Reports

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

VOL. 64 NO. 3 FALL 2010

## Reporting From Faraway Places Who Does It and How?



# 'to promote and elevate the standards of journalism'

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Cover: *The Mapparium at the Mary Baker Eddy Library in Boston. Photo by and courtesy of Suzanne Kreiter/The Boston Globe.*

# Overcoming the U.S. Visa Denial of a Colombian Nieman Fellow

A collaborative effort reverses a 'permanent' decision by the State Department and enables investigative reporter Hollman Morris to join his classmates at Harvard.

BY BOB GILES

The e-mail message from Hollman Morris was unexpected. It was “urgent,” he said. “Please call immediately on Skype.” I reached him and his brother, Juan Pablo, in Bogota. His image on the computer screen revealed a stricken man at pains to say that he had just been told by the United States Embassy in Bogota that it had denied his application for a visa to travel to Cambridge for his Nieman Fellowship.

Hollman said the denial was based on accusations by the Colombian government linking him to the leftist guerrilla group FARC. His probing television reports had disclosed abuses by the country’s intelligence agency, angering the Colombian government. Particularly, he said, his travel to southern Colombia to interview senior FARC leaders for a documentary on kidnappings had raised suspicions.

He shared his fears that these serious allegations would endanger his life. As I said goodbye, I repeated our assurance that the Nieman Foundation would do all it could to reverse the U.S. State Department’s decision. At that moment, on June 18, it seemed like an empty promise.

What a paradox. The government of the United States, with its longstanding commitment to press freedom worldwide, was turning away a journalist whose groundbreaking work had exposed him to persecution by his own government and the grave possibility of personal violence. Colombian officials have accused Morris of being “close to the guerrillas” and “an accomplice of terrorism,” but the State Department’s denial made little sense against its own history of granting him visas to enter the U.S. to accept awards and make speeches. Could this decision be an unintended consequence of our national obsession with terrorism?

The task of trying to reverse the decision seemed daunting. I turned first to the Committee to Protect Journalists whose mission it is to protect journalists worldwide. Joel Simon, the executive director, knows Hollman and the prominence of his work and moved quickly to build a coalition that would explore how to undo the decision. In a series of conference calls, we decided first to gather as much information as we could and to quietly reach out to sources in the State Department and in Congress.

I called Scott Renner at the U.S. Embassy in Bogota to ask for a clarification of the reasons for the visa denial. He said that Hollman was ineligible for a visa under a provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act covering “terrorist

activities.” He said the denial was permanent and that the federal Privacy Act restricted him from saying more.

With guidance from Harvard’s general counsel, I wrote to the State Department’s office of consular affairs with details of Hollman’s exemplary work as a journalist and asked for a review of his case for a visa. The story became public on July 9 in a dispatch from Frank Bajak, The Associated Press’s bureau chief in Bogota. Juan Forero followed the next day with a piece in The Washington Post. I was asked to write an op-ed for the Los Angeles Times, and soon news spread widely via Twitter and Facebook.

Stories, columns and editorials followed. Thoughtful, persuasive letters to the State Department, the White House, and Alvaro Uribe, then president of Colombia, were written by Human Rights Watch, Committee to Protect Journalists, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Organization of American States, American Civil Liberties Union, International Federation of Journalists, Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, National Association of Hispanic Journalists, International Press Institute, North American Congress on Latin America, the journalism school faculty at the University of Texas, and other organizations.

Nieman Fellows wrote to express outrage and ask what they might do. I called on members of the Nieman class of 1988 to contact their classmate, Juan Manuel Santos, who was to become president of Colombia on August 7.

As efforts continued, documents were disclosed revealing that the Colombian intelligence agency had conducted a systematic campaign to discredit and harass Hollman.

A number of separate back channel contacts reaching into the White House and the highest levels of the State Department gave us hope that the visa decision might be reconsidered. As a security measure, Hollman took his family to Spain where, on July 22, he sent an e-mail saying, “There is good news that I hope to share with you in full detail as soon as I return to my country and have a new conversation with the consulate.”

A week later Hollman called with a joy in his voice to say that he and his family had their visas and would join his Nieman classmates. Over and over, he said how happy he felt and thankful he was to have friends and colleagues who supported him. Overcoming the improbable odds of persuading the State Department to change its mind was made possible by an inspiring community effort. ■

# Reporting From Faraway Places: Who Does It and How?

BY JOHN MAXWELL HAMILTON

In trying to figure out the future of foreign newsgathering, let's start with this unpleasant truth: Few people really care much about news from abroad. They tell pollsters that they do, of course, but they are fibbing. They know that they *should* care—after all, everyone knows foreign news is important—or they are embarrassed to admit that events overseas just don't seem that urgent when they are rushing to gulp down news.

Nor does serious international news sell. Just ask newsmagazine editors: When a foreign news story goes on the cover, newsstand sales head down. Or ask online publishers of international news about the stories people decide to click on. **GlobalPost's** cofounder Charles Sennott shared with a New York Times Magazine reporter that two of the most popular stories during his Web site's first year of operation were about a racy cartoon in India and cat costumes designed in Tokyo.

I do not raise these unhappy truths to suggest we must resign ourselves to news media that ignore the rest of the world. Thinking realistically about foreign news can help us fashion good solutions. So can a little historical perspective showing why finding new ways to do this has become so urgent.

The mass media system that piled up profits for owners in the 20<sup>th</sup> century served foreign news relatively well. A handful of prestige media with public-spirited owners and relatively elite customers—the New York Herald Tribune, The New York Times, and the Chicago Daily News, and CBS, when it was described as the Tiffany network—excelled at foreign news. Others gave their audiences less, but still something, largely by drawing on wire services. This helped them attract a mass audience, which pulled in advertisers.

This system is sputtering. Foreign correspondence as a standalone business proposition is at a huge disadvantage. It is one of the most expensive kinds of reporting to do, and because of its relatively small audience, advertisers generally are not keen to finance it. The obvious conclusion: We need new ways to subsidize foreign news coverage.

**The Christian Science Monitor**, with its long tradition of outstanding foreign reporting, points us in one direction. The mother church sustained the paper for decades and still does as the Monitor has moved online. This philanthropic approach is spreading. A good example of the nonprofit model is the **Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting**. After selling all their news properties in 2005, Pulitzer family members gave more than \$1 million to **Jon Sawyer**, a former St. Louis Post-Dispatch Washington bureau chief, to start the independent center, which now has multiple donors to help it support journalists as they cover overlooked foreign stories.

One sign of the viability of such a strategy is that old-line news organizations air and publish these stories. Traditional media organizations, however, are often unwilling to pay much for the material they use. There also is the worry that foundations will lose interest as they generally like to move from one intriguing idea to another.

Another way to subsidize foreign news is to charge the consumer more for the reporting than a news organization does. This works especially well with financial news, and it's a model that The Wall Street Journal adopted early in the digital news era. Bloomberg News, which also charges for

some of its financial news, has 105 bureaus overseas, staffed by close to 1,300 reporters, editors, TV technicians, and support staff.

Government support also can help. This is not as heretical as it sounds. For more than two centuries the federal government has supported the news through reduced postal rates and exemptions from unfair trade practices. In the future it could, among other things, grant tax breaks to offset the expense of foreign correspondents or foreign bureaus in the way it provides incentives to encourage private investment.

We are also seeing creative ways to reduce costs. One way is to use technology more efficiently, bypassing costly presses that use expensive newsprint. Another is to make more use of indigenous correspondents, as **Global Voices Online** does by harnessing the work of bloggers. Yet another is to rely on non-news organizations, such as **Human Rights Watch**, which chase down facts to make their cases. Former journalists often do this work.

Finally, correspondents are becoming more entrepreneurial. Consider the approach used by former Washington Post correspondent **Doug Struck**, now a journalism professor. He raised funds for a foreign story idea, starting with the Deer Creek Foundation in St. Louis, then worked on an ad hoc basis with The Christian Science Monitor and the New England Center for Investigative Reporting brought on board journalism students, a source of reporting that has become more important for newsgathering of all kinds. As we are reminded by **Kevin Sites**, who chased news about conflicts with a technology-laden kit in tow for Yahoo! News and is reporting again from Afghanistan, “freelance operators like me are the rule, not the exception.”

What is clear in this experimentation is that foreign news coverage and correspondents no longer conform to a single elite model such as dominated the profession in the last century. Given the dedication and daring of innovators, new methods for gathering and delivering foreign news will continue to emerge.

As we think of the proliferation in the types of foreign correspondents, let’s keep in mind the entrance of another actor, the scholar. It is a great pity that so few political scientists have seriously studied news in general, let alone foreign news. Fortunately this is changing, one reason being the wild and woolly—and not well-understood—media that new technologies are enabling. **Matthew A. Baum’s** essay on how audiences respond to foreign news is an excellent example of the analysis being done more often these days. Such scholarship can improve the quality of coverage and suggest ways to engage readers. Freelance journalist **Monica Campbell** shows, too, how partnerships between journalists and academics can work as she reported from Mexico on the drug wars for a conference hosted by Harvard University’s Carr Center for Human Rights Policy.

While there are limits on public interest in foreign news, I agree with former BBC news editor **Maria Balinska** that one of the best ways to enlarge audiences for foreign news is to show how events abroad connect with our own lives. But which approaches will work well remains to be seen. As we’ve learned by now, no model lasts forever. Foreign news always has been a work—really a struggle—in progress. Yet, what has counted most are the extraordinary efforts of those journalists who courageously gather news at great personal risk, as the inspiring stories of **Fatima Tlisova** and **Anne Nivat** attest. ■

*John Maxwell Hamilton, former dean of the Manship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University, is LSU’s executive vice chancellor and provost. He reported at home and abroad for ABC Radio, The Christian Science Monitor, and others. His latest book, “Journalism’s Roving Eye: A History of American Foreign Reporting,” received the Goldsmith Book Prize this year.*

## Even in Digital Age, ‘Being There’ Still Matters In Foreign Reporting

‘The textile workers’ strike was into its 19th day, and it appeared that we were the first journalists to arrive.’

BY BILL SCHILLER

“There’s a textile workers’ strike in Henan province.”

It’s Monday morning in Beijing, shortly before noon, and my Chinese assistant has just spotted a reference to a strike in the Chinese heartland posted on the Web site of a Hong Kong nongovernmental organization.

“How many workers?” I ask.

“More than 5,000.”

“Who’s reporting on it?”

“No one that I can see.”

Two hours later we’re boarding a train at Beijing West Railway Station. I estimate we’ll be in Henan’s capital Zhengzhou by sundown, grab an early morning bus to Pingdingshan—the site of the strike, about 1,000 kilometers

south of Beijing—and be in the thick of it by midmorning.

This is, after all, why my newspaper, The Toronto Star, pays for me to be here: To try as much as possible to go deep into the culture and the countryside, to try to bring back an understanding of a complex country that is changing, virtually, at warp



Uniformed police march in the central Chinese city of Pingdingshan during a workers’ strike that local journalists were barred from covering but became front-page news in The Toronto Star. *Photo by A. Zhang.*



speed. I cannot do that from my desk in Beijing, equipped as it is with all the wondrous tools of the digital age. Nor can I tell this story in bursts of 140 characters. And I can't rely on Google—since Google, as we all know, isn't at such places.

It's really up to us. And it's reporting—notebook in hand, on the ground, verifiable reporting—that remains at the core of our craft, especially for foreign reporting, where coming to grips with a different culture is never an easy task.

In our anxiety-stricken, content-driven age, when the predominant goal seems to be to upload content to the Web site as soon as possible, I'm fortunate to work for a paper that still believes in foreign reporting, still pays for it, and still understands that it takes time and a measure of money—spent prudently—to go deep. If we ever hope to explain what Lyndon Johnson's late presidential adviser Jack Valenti once called a foreign culture's "ancestral rhythms," we have to go to where those rhythms play out—and watch as they are rearranged on a daily basis.

We've got to get close enough to listen—and understand what we are hearing.

At a time when many American newspapers are closing foreign bureaus, relying on wires or on reporters surfing the Web and working social networks, there isn't a day that goes by that I don't consider myself lucky to work for a paper that still gets it. Sure, it's possible to parachute into a breaking news event and pull down content and contacts by making efficient use of the Net. But on a broad-based, developing story like China—which continues to change our world in profound ways daily—you have to commit: You've got to be here for the long haul. Make no mistake: The Star has closed bureaus, too, paring back to a precious few, to what might be called "the once and future powers"—Washington, Beijing and New Delhi. In those bureaus, correspondents are keenly aware of their need to stay focused on story and deliver content that not only amuses, when appropriate, but also always matters.

They also need to make ample use of fast new technologies, but not become obsessed by them. These are, after all, tools meant to help us tell stories in ever more captivating ways. But the stories we report are why we're here and, in the end, it's why readers will turn to us for news and information.

## Shoe-Leather Reporting

In the spring of 2006, Tom Friedman wrote a tribute to his early mentor in United Press International's London office, the late Leon Daniel. I read it during my Nieman year and it still resonates with me—even more so as we speed forward through our digital age. Daniel had taught him the fundamental fact of all good journalism, memorable advice that stuck with him, just as it does now with me: "If it isn't based on shoe-leather reporting, it isn't worth a bucket of beans."

Today I fear we risk producing a generation of journalists who are coming to consider on-the-ground reporting as a quaint endeavor from another era—the snail mail equivalent of newsgathering: slow, time-consuming and with delayed delivery. After all, with the retrieval of information and opinion from social networking sites making it possible to provide near-instant content ready for upload to the Web, why bother to board a plane, train or even take a taxi across town?

Editors and journalism educators I speak to share my worry. Some speak of a generation of nascent journalists who are supremely tech-savvy—but a segment of whom are becoming less interested in leaving the newsroom, and equally wary of picking up a telephone. "I really believe a good number are actually afraid to interview people," one professor told me recently.

Most good journalists I know would still travel 1,000 kilometers at a moment's notice for a good lede, as would I. So off my assistant and I went that day.

In Pingdingshan, we landed on a breathtaking scene: 1,000 police officers—with guns, batons, helmets and riot shields—3,000 striking workers, and an armada of police vehicles

that had sealed off the road where the factory was located.

Our arrival sparked a sensation: Police swept in on us demanding papers. The crowd swept in on them to make sure we stayed. With papers in hand and the people behind us—a few shoving the police—the police finally backed off. Then, something extraordinary happened: The people applauded us.

The textile workers' strike was into its 19th day, and it appeared that we were the first journalists to arrive. We learned later that a brave young Chinese journalist from Hong Kong was also working her way through the crowd. Journalists from a newspaper with offices located on the same street as the strike were banned by the government from reporting on the strike.

Yes, here in a nation of 1.3 billion people in 2010, Pingdingshan was a great story—but one contained to within a few city blocks, with news of it passed on mainly by word of mouth. No wonder people were pleased we'd come. Two local bloggers had done their best to get the news out. But in a country with more than 50 million blogs, Pingdingshan's plight was lost in cyberspace, a plaintive note in the hum of informational muzak swirling about China every day.

That evening, over tea in a private apartment, four workers with 100 years of experience among them told us stories of hellish working conditions: a punishing cycle of two-day rotating shifts, harsh and arbitrary fines, and workers fainting in 105-degree heat. Many earned about 65 cents per hour.

This story went on our front page, and then The New York Times graciously cited it in an editorial on July 5th.

The strike was ultimately suppressed, the workers forced back to their workstations, and we returned to Beijing.

But only, I assure you, for a little while. ■

*Bill Schiller, a 2006 Nieman Fellow, is based in Beijing as the Asia bureau chief for The Toronto Star.*

# Correspondents: They Come in Different Shapes And Sizes

A BBC correspondent describes the benefits of three approaches to foreign news coverage—with caveats accompanying each one.

BY JAMES REYNOLDS

*In May, BBC News correspondent James Reynolds delivered the Bernard D. Nossiter '47 Lecture at Dartmouth College. Reynolds, a 2010 Nieman Fellow, has been based in South America, China, the United States, and Great Britain as well as the Middle East. Here is an edited version of his talk, entitled "Stuff Them or Shoot Them? The Future of the Foreign Correspondent."*

**F**oreign correspondents. We are basically a pain in the neck. We cause our editors endless amounts of grief with our annoying habit of getting arrested and kidnapped. Foreign governments would prefer us to pack up and go home. Many people—perhaps some of you—think that we spend our time lounging by the pool in safari suits drinking gin and tonics, relics of an antiquated era. But I want to argue that it's worth keeping us around for a while longer.

Journalism is unlike law or medicine. No one is required to pass an exam before doing the job and there is no such thing as a license for foreign correspondents. Wake up one morning and buy a plane ticket, pack a computer, and become one. Or write home from a trip abroad and you're doing a basic form of foreign corresponding. So if all of us can do this,

then those of us who do it for a living need to explain clearly the benefit that derives from having a special tribe of paid foreign correspondents.

Put simply, we need foreign correspondents for reasons similar to why we journalists are essential—so that we don't live in the dark. Foreign correspondents help us understand the world by shedding light on places where our fellow citizens are engaged in wars and on people and governments whose decisions absolutely affect our lives.

But here's the problem. This job costs money, and in the old way of doing it, the cost to news organizations was

considerable. I'm told that a foreign bureau for a U.S. newspaper costs around a quarter of a million dollars a year to maintain—much more if it's in a war zone. Consequently, many U.S. newspapers, including *The (Baltimore) Sun* and *The Boston Globe* no longer have any foreign bureaus.

The BBC, where I work, has seven large foreign news bureaus and many smaller ones. Yet we are also under pressure to cut our costs so editors there have come up with new, cheaper ways of getting stories from abroad. In this spirit, I'm going to take a look at three alternatives—the local reporter,



Before he was sent to Gaza for the BBC, correspondent James Reynolds underwent training for reporters working in hostile environments. *Photo courtesy of the BBC.*

the unsupported freelancer, and the multiskilled staffer, as well as some variations on these possibilities.

## Local Reporters

Why deploy one of your own home reporters at great cost when you can hire a local reporter in a foreign country to do the same job? After all, local reporters know the story, and they're much cheaper.

In many ways, this can be an exciting step; local reporters as foreign correspondents are often spectacularly successful. In Gaza, Rushdi Abu Alouf and Hamada Abu Qammar have worked behind the scenes for the BBC as a producer and organizer helping incoming teams arrange interviews. In December 2008, Israel carried out an offensive into Gaza to stop Palestinian rocket fire, and its government closed the border so that most foreign correspondents were unable to get into Gaza. Rushdi and Hamada were there so they filed the reports that BBC correspondents would normally file. For the next few weeks they provided clear, lucid and fair-minded coverage of Israel's offensive in Gaza. They helped me to see the role of a foreign correspondent in a different way.

In Latin America, the BBC has three foreign correspondents: in Sao Paulo, Mexico City, and Buenos Aires. For years, it mostly sent British reporters from London to do these jobs, as they once sent me a decade ago. Now the BBC has hired local correspondents for these posts. I welcome them as colleagues who will give us a fresh perspective on the news from their countries.

In so many ways, it is important for a people to tell their history and their stories. For centuries, many societies and cultures were denied this basic right. Now many see the advent of local reporters as a welcome step toward a post-colonial reporting world.

But there remains enormous value in the view of the outsider. Often, outsiders tell us things about ourselves that we don't know or fail to notice. Alexis de Tocqueville, a 25-year-old Frenchman, wandered through

America and left behind among the most penetrating observations ever made about her people. And while I've been in America, I've learned a lot about my country, Great Britain, by reading the recent election coverage of reporters such as Anthony Faiola and Dan Balz of The Washington Post who wrote about the campaign for prime minister. I enjoyed their outsiders' perspective, in particular their comparison of United Kingdom election rallies with American election rallies. Here's what Balz wrote:

Obama would often speak for 30 or 45 minutes. [Nick] Clegg [the Liberal Democrat leader]'s prepared remarks lasted little more than six minutes. His closing argument was a clarion call for change, but what was most striking was the reserve of the polite audience. Though they whooped at his arrival and when he finished, his best lines were greeted with virtual silence.

Had I been asked to write this article, there's a very good chance that I would have missed observing the crowd's reserve; I simply wouldn't have noticed it because it was so familiar. Catching what the insider takes for granted is one of the ways in which an outsider can provide a fresh perspective.

I want Chinese reporters and Indian reporters to be able to go and report critically on what happens in Britain. I don't want reporting to be restricted by nationality. I want as many different perspectives as possible. It makes for good journalism and it also makes for a stronger society.

There's another point to consider: There are some places in which we simply cannot rely on local reporters to get us the story, however much we might want them to. In places where the government firmly controls the media, a person who carries a foreign passport usually has more freedom to tell the story.

From 2006 until 2009, I was the BBC's China correspondent. When an earthquake in Sichuan province killed as many as 90,000 people, many of

them children crushed under collapsed schools, authorities at first allowed all reporters to cover the story. Then things began to get more difficult when parents of these children began to ask tough questions of the government. Soon the Chinese authorities banned coverage by the domestic media of the parents' campaign. At that point, foreign journalists were the only ones able to continue covering this story. Our Chinese colleagues could not report for their own publications, nor could they report for ours given that a law prevents Chinese citizens from having bylined reports in foreign news publications.

To return to Gaza, though local reporters do much of the finest reporting in that region (Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, and Israelis in Israel), Israeli restrictions mean that Palestinian reporters in Gaza are not allowed to cover the Israeli side of the story nor are Israeli reporters allowed into Gaza to report. The only reporters who can routinely tell both sides of the story are foreign correspondents, who can compare an Israeli air strike in Gaza City one day to a Hamas rocket strike on an Israeli town another day. This ability to be on the ground on either side allows us to report from various perspectives, and this adds immeasurably to the depth of coverage we can provide.

While I welcome the advent of more local reporters providing foreign news coverage, there is still a need for the outsider as foreign correspondent.

## Unsupported Freelancers

Why should news organizations send staff correspondents when unsupported freelancers will do the same job for a lot less money?

There is a great attraction to having freelancers gather foreign news. At the core of every reporter is that instinct to get up and go and to try to make a name by taking risks and being bold. To some extent, it's always been this way but never has the opportunity been there as it is today. A young journalist with a laptop, mobile phone, and a camera can pick a country and start

to ask questions and take photos and there's a strong chance that in time news organizations will take those reports.

Despite the appeal this has, we should be careful about going too far down this path. News organizations have a responsibility of care for those whose work they publish. This duty costs money. The BBC takes this responsibility very seriously. Before the BBC deploys any of its reporters to a conflict zone, it pays for us to go on a six-day hostile-environment training course, usually held in the British countryside. Former soldiers teach basic battlefield first aid, how to deal with gunfire, and what to do if kidnapped. We go on refresher courses every three years. Whenever we come back from a war zone, we're offered free trauma counseling. This all costs money. But it means that when I go into Baghdad or Gaza, I'm prepared, well protected, and well cared for if anything goes wrong.

In 2007, a local militia in Gaza City kidnapped Alan Johnston, the BBC's Gaza correspondent. During his captivity the BBC supported his family, negotiated with various governments, and organized a successful public and private campaign for his release. David Rohde, a correspondent with The New York Times, was kidnapped in Afghanistan in 2008; The Times supported his family and kept lines of communication open with Afghan and American officials until he escaped and came home safely.

Johnston and Rohde received comprehensive support from their organizations. What would have happened had either of them been a freelance contributor?

We need to be wary of allowing the creation of two classes of foreign correspondents—on the one hand staff correspondents who receive proper training and support from their news organizations and on the other hand an army of young freelancers, stringers and guest contributors who are asked to do the same job but without the same level of support.

A friend of mine is a foreign correspondent in Mexico. She has freelance

colleagues who routinely report on the drug war in the north of the country, one of the most dangerous assignments in the world.

"How does it work before they go?" I asked her. "Do they speak on the phone to people at the organizations they're going to file for to clarify what happens if they get injured or what kind of risks they should take?"

"That conversation almost never happens," my friend told me. "It is a gray area."

It shouldn't be. We should not be quietly allowing dangerous news stories to be gathered by those with no support—simply because it's cheaper to do it that way. There is plenty of need for daring, talented reporters who want to work as foreign correspondents and who are intrepid enough to do the job on their own. But all of us need to think through the consequences of what it means to take that reporter's work without offering proper training and protection.

### Multiskilled Staffer

So far the choice seems to be between the lumbering, expensive staff correspondent and the cheap, mobile-enhanced freelancer. But there is an alternative combining the best of each—the training and support of a staff correspondent and the agility of a freelancer into what I call the multiskilled staffer.

Given my BBC orientation, I believe strongly that foreign correspondents, both staffers and freelancers, should know at least the basics of camera work, editing and radio recording. To have all of these skills is now essential to get a job as a foreign correspondent—and to keep it. I ought to know, since even in my first foreign posting in South America, my bureau was so small that I was it. The deal I made with my bosses was that I would have to do pretty much everything myself; it was cheaper this way. So if I wanted to do a TV story, I would have to go and film it myself.

I'll never forget an interview I did with the Chilean foreign minister at the rather grand Foreign Ministry building

in Santiago, Chile. The minister came in and sat down, and when he saw me setting up the camera he assumed that I was the cameraman.

"Where's the correspondent?" he asked me.

"I'm the correspondent," I replied.

His expression showed his shock; he'd never heard of a cameraman/correspondent before. He didn't know how it would work. Nor did I. So I sat next to the camera, and when I asked him a question and he started to respond, I would jump out of my chair to look through the viewfinder to be sure his face was still in the shot. I'd call this a reasonably stressful way of carrying out an interview, but we got it done.

Today this is how it works in the BBC's many smaller foreign bureaus; one person does everything. During my years as the BBC's South America correspondent, I often went with a video camera in one hand, a minidisc radio recorder in the other, and a digital stills camera round my neck. Sometimes, when I was travelling, I would hire a taxi driver for the day and then recruit him as my camera assistant; I'd ask him to shoot what we call the piece-to-camera, the bit when I'd speak to the camera. Many of these drivers really enjoyed doing this, and we did some good work together.

In taking this approach, the BBC has plenty of company. In 2007, ABC News set up seven one-person foreign bureaus from South America to Southeast Asia. A lot less expensive than what bureaus used to be, the news organizations get to cover more foreign stories.

But this also comes with a word of caution. Multiskilling has its limits so there are times when having more than one person in a bureau is critical, and here are three reasons why:

**Breaking News:** Sometimes when the news breaks, there's simply too much to do on your own. At any one time, the BBC may have five or six news shows broadcasting. At the busiest times, all of them will want stories, features and news updates. The best way to divide the workload is still the

old-fashioned one—a reporter writes the scripts, a camera operator does the filming, and a producer does the organizing. It can be the only way to get the job done.

**Quality:** Someone who is a great writer and reporter is not always a great cameraman, just as the person who takes remarkable photographs is not always going to be able to write a compelling article. If we strive for excellence in our industry, then we need to reserve space at the top of our profession for such specialists—those people whose work takes our breath away.

**Safety:** In a conflict zone, reporters are safer when they have someone with them; being with someone else can save your life.

### Paying for Foreign News

So how is this paid for? Since I'm not the one paying (as neither an editor nor publisher, entrepreneur or venture capitalist), I can't pretend to know the answers about money. I do know that some news organizations remain committed to foreign news coverage, and I am fortunate that the BBC is among them. Earlier in May, Mark

Thompson, BBC director-general, gave a speech about the organization's international role and when he spoke about Afghanistan, for example, he said, "We're in it for the long term. We've been in Afghanistan for decades and intend to be there for decades to come—whether Western forces are still present or not."

Other news organizations, for a variety of reasons, cannot offer that same commitment so I want to point out a few examples of other ways of paying for foreign news coverage:

**Fellowships and Foundations:** Several of these provide vital new ways of funding foreign reporting. The nonprofit International Reporting Project (IRP), founded in 1998, tries to fill the gap left by newspapers and broadcasters. [See story about IRP on page 47.] And the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting funds foreign reporting projects. [See story about the Pulitzer Center on page 45.] In addition, the Overseas Press Club Foundation offers fellowships to students who want to report from abroad.

**Digital Start-ups:** Founded in 2009, the Web-only publication GlobalPost has a network of more than 50 corre-

spondents that provides news coverage from around the world. [See story about GlobalPost, on page 51.] Using a different approach, Global Voices Online conveys to an international audience the words of bloggers and citizen media from around the world. [See story about Global Voices Online on page 14.]

None of us can know what the future holds—or which of these models (or combination of models) will work to sustain foreign news reporting. I believe strongly and passionately that there remains a vital and viable role for the foreign correspondent, just as there is much to be gained from local reporters explaining their country to foreigners. Similarly, I see great promise in the energy and multimedia talent of young reporters as they experiment with telling these stories on digital platforms. Yet through all of these times of transition, my hope remains that we never forget the power words have to transmit across our national boundaries the experiences of a foreign people. ■

## Adding 'Far-Flungs' to a New Kind of Reporting Partnership

An investigative story tests a new model of foreign news reporting—and leaves a lot of valuable lessons in its wake.

BY DOUG STRUCK

**F**oreign news reporting can be married to a new model of journalism. Just be prepared: Planning for this wedding takes an awful lot of time and it is likely to make one nostalgic for a newsroom.

These are among the lessons I learned while working on a project that stretched across 16 months, five

continents, and four institutions and involved more than 22 people and 841 e-mails (mine alone) to produce an investigative series examining the abuses and inefficiencies of the carbon offset marketplace. These stories debuted in an eight-page spread in The Christian Science Monitor's glossy weekly newsmagazine and in

multimedia editions on the Web sites of the Monitor and the New England Center for Investigative Reporting (NECIR). Its publication spawned radio reports, elicited wounded howls from two of its exposed targets, and drew recognition with an award for public service.

Amid all of the chattering about new

models of journalism, there is relatively little talk about foreign reporting. That is because foreign reporting is the most costly, logistically challenging, and time-consuming branch of journalism. Throw an investigative topic into the mix, and it's a formula for a long and expensive endeavor. Yet with a willingness to ignore traditional boundaries, NECIR and The Christian Science Monitor teamed up to produce just such a report.

## An Idea + Money

Here is how it came together: In January 2009 I was chatting with Joe Bergantino, a veteran investigative reporter who left Boston's premier television investigative team to launch a nonprofit investigative center with Maggie Mulvihill, another dogged print and broadcast reporter.<sup>1</sup> When I mentioned my suspicions about the potential for scams in the global marketplace of carbon offsets—offering certificates that promise to offset a buyer's carbon footprint—he seized on it.

But first, he said, go out and raise the money for it.

This was my first rude awakening. For a reporter who had spent all of his 30-plus years in the business on the bankroll of newsrooms, mostly The Washington Post and The (Baltimore) Sun, the idea of having to raise money before I could even start to report was a wholly new concept.

But Joe encouraged me to tackle the unfamiliar realm of nonprofit foundations. I made calls and wrote pitch letters. Six months later, I'd come up with ... nothing. It wasn't fun; I wasn't reporting, and I wasn't paying the rent. When Emerson College offered me a faculty position teaching journalism, I thanked Joe for the interesting experience and said goodbye.

Or so I thought.

A few months later, he called: "One of the grant proposals went through.

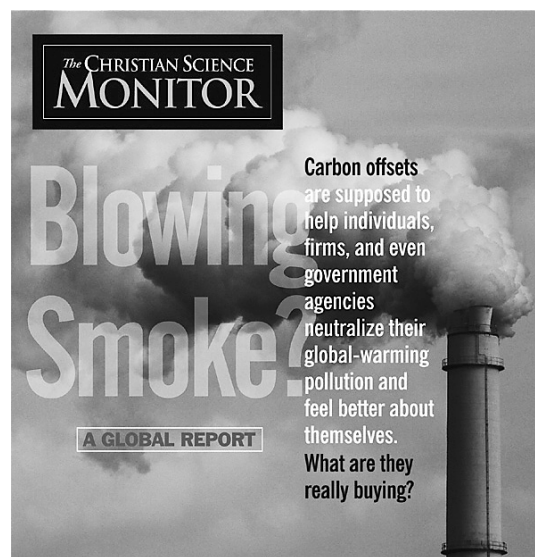
We're getting the money."

"I've got another job. I don't have time now," I protested.

"Can't back out now," he replied.

## Assembling a Reporting Team

This grant from the St. Louis-based Deer Creek Foundation gave us a healthy start. It would pay for the U.S. reporting. Joe and Maggie could marshal help from students at Boston University (BU), where NECIR is based. I enlisted a bright, savvy journalism graduate student at Emerson College, Katy Jordan, for the project.



The Christian Science Monitor magazine published an investigative series for which it partnered with the New England Center for Investigative Reporting. Courtesy of The Christian Science Monitor ([csmonitor.com](http://csmonitor.com)).

I also had invaluable technical help from students and staff at Emerson for the video component.

For the story to work, however, we would need on-the-ground reporting from many international locations. We could squeeze one overseas trip from the budget so I picked the best target for our reporting and headed to Hungary. But we clearly would not have the funds, time or reporters to visit the other locales.

A few blocks away in Boston are the offices of The Christian Science Monitor. This news organization is one of a dwindling few with the valuable asset we needed: a veteran and respected foreign staff. Joe and I knocked on the door of The Monitor's editor, John Yemma, and presented him with a proposal that only a few years ago would have been considered audacious: Can we enlist your foreign staff to partner with our nonprofit organization, two college journalism programs, and reporters who don't work for you, for a story to run in your weekly magazine and on your Web site?

Yemma was comfortable with experimentation. He had taken the Monitor from a daily print newspaper to a weekly print newsmagazine and daily online news operation in March 2009 and no longer sees old boundaries as sacrosanct. He did not flinch.

Our reporting partnership began last December with the Monitor's "far-flungs," as foreign correspondents used to be called. International Editor David Clark Scott and the magazine's Senior Editor Clara Germani embraced the arrangement with impressive collegiality. They gave me direct access to the foreign reporters. We consulted one another at each step as reporters were dispatched to obscure spots to report this story. They also sent photographers Melanie Stetson Freeman and Mary Knox Merrill and, with only some misgivings, equipped them with video cameras. They also tapped their freelance network to fill holes in the coverage.

The stories were constructed out of my reporting and the files received from five other reporters—Sara Miller Llana in Panama, Ilene R. Prusher in Israel, Ben Arnoldy in India, freelancer Kathy Marks in Australia, Jordan in New England, with additional reporting by Peter Ford in China. In a Herculean

<sup>1</sup> See Mulvihill's story about the university-based New England Center for Investigative Reporting in the Summer 2009 issue of Nieman Reports at [www.niemanreports.org](http://www.niemanreports.org).



In Hungary, villagers push bicycles with firewood past where the “Vatican Forest” was supposed to be planted by KlimaFa, which marketed carbon offsets as a way to neutralize CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and lessen global warming. *Photo by Bela Szandelszky.*

sprint of late-night stints, Germani transformed all of this into a smoothly edited package with a main story, five sidebars, graphics, photographs and the video. It ran in the Earth Week issue of the magazine and was posted online on April 20.

### Assessing Our Effort

A success? Yes. We produced an investigative piece that neither the Monitor nor the NECIR would have undertaken on its own. The Deer Creek Foundation’s money helped to make it possible and the assistance we received from the journalism schools at Emerson and BU was vital.

Yet, I realized, too, what a great invention the old newsroom was and how efficient newsrooms could be, despite their chaotic personas. At the Post, I could have done this project—from idea to publication—in two or three months, instead of 16. Once sold on the story, editors would have allocated the funds, summoned help from other correspondents, dispatched photographers, graphic artists, and sewed the thing up with a legion of

editors. Virtually unseen, other gears would have clicked in: lawyers to check it, production people to create and distribute it, and marketers to promote it.

In this case, staff in the Monitor’s newsroom provided a healthy chunk of this kind of support. But the coordination among so many players was strenuous. For example, to protect each responsible entity, we had to run the story through three legal reviews—at the Monitor, at BU, and at the Boston-based NPR radio station that ran part of our report. For the video piece, the diversity of formats used by the Monitor’s photographers, local crews working with NECIR, and a crew I assembled in Hungary proved a technological nightmare. And Joe was in perpetual motion just trying to arrange outlets and cooperative play for the package.

And of course our work was juggled around students’ schedules, teaching calendars, and Joe’s other directing duties at NECIR. Hanging over this project always was the question of whether our budget would be enough. It wasn’t, thus serving, I suppose, as a

valuable lesson for future fund-raising.

This is clearly not a nimble or a fast process. Without trust and cooperation, our effort could have been stopped cold at a number of institutional boundaries. And readership returns for such an effort remain a question, given the ever-present challenge of drawing eyes to stories in a fragmented media environment.

Is all of this worth the result? Ever the optimist, Joe declared the story a success as he plunged into the next one. Perhaps nonprofits like NECIR will one day be flush enough to have their own cadre of far-flung or have a budget big enough to send reporters abroad. Until then, they will have to depend on novel arrangements and cooperative goodwill with news operations that do. ■

*Doug Struck, a 2004 Nieman Fellow, is associate chairman of the journalism department at Emerson College in Boston. For 12 years he was a member of the foreign staffs of The Washington Post and The (Baltimore) Sun and reported from six continents.*

# Should Local Voices Bring Us Foreign News?

‘Depending on who is making the argument, the idea of not having foreign correspondents is either something to fear or look forward to.’

BY SOLANA LARSEN

In the multitude of stories about Iran’s “Twitter revolution,” hardly a mention could be found of pro-Ahmadinejad bloggers writing in Persian. Yet there were plenty of them, and what they were saying about Iran’s president was a critical piece of the story. I get most my international news from local bloggers so I could follow what they were writing (in translation). In my job as managing editor at Global Voices Online, a community of more than 300 volunteers who monitor and translate blogs and online citizen media from their own countries, we make the words of bloggers—from almost everywhere—available for others to read.

As with the Iranian bloggers, Global Voices Online reveals local perspectives that often go unnoticed in mainstream news coverage. The recipe is simple. Our volunteers alert us to important conversations taking place in online media where they live. On one day it’s about gay bloggers in Uganda standing up for their rights. On another day it’s about reactions by South Koreans to North Korea’s World Cup soccer game or the suspicious deaths of several animals in a Ukraine zoo.

It’s a grassroots media newsroom. Our small staff of part-time editors reviews submissions for quality, but we rarely turn down a story. I trust my Chinese colleagues to tell me why something is important rather than arbitrarily deciding whether it’s newsworthy. What we try to do is bring perspectives to the fore that aren’t heard anywhere else. While news stories about the coup last year in Madagascar tended to echo the French foreign ministry rather than the Malagasy people themselves, Global Voices Online helped international journalists reach bloggers from Madagascar who

offered a citizen’s perspective.

Events don’t look the same when they are told from the inside out. I am reminded of this daily as I compare our stories with those I see in newspapers. And I know what we do is special when I hear from foreign news reporters who have to fight with editors to be allowed to tell (or sell) important stories from abroad. If they do not have the luxury of reporting to an international audience, they must also find a local angle so that Western audiences will connect with the story from something other than a human angle.

## Local Knowledge

Imagine the difference if all foreign news was told by reporters who are native to the country where events happen. I am convinced it would change which stories are told, how they are reported, and how audiences respond to them.

A few years ago I suggested during an Internet media conference in Los Angeles that one day soon there would be no foreign correspondents. I argued that foreign reporters who parachute into a country without the language skills to even read a local newspaper are not going to do a better job than native journalists. This was soon after the riots in Tibet, and CNN and other news organizations were experiencing a backlash from Chinese netizens who were furious about the misreporting of several events.

Given our emerging global media environment, I proposed that we have no option but to ask local journalists to help us do a better job. My words triggered responses from the audience in which I was labeled naïve and irresponsible. So it was surprising that

Richard Sambrook, who was then the director of BBC’s global news, stood up and said he agreed with me. Parachute journalism was on the way out, he said, and hundreds of local stringers were already on the job for the BBC.

Depending on who is making the argument, the idea of not having foreign correspondents is either something to fear or look forward to. Many younger people I speak with seem to find the idea obvious. Given the rate at which foreign news coverage is declining, what other alternative do we have? The pool of talent for those who can tell these stories must become bigger and more geographically and linguistically diverse.

My own position is not absolutist. There will always be writers who travel abroad, and there will always be people capable of international analysis. I believe that foreign correspondents do an important job and would never suggest that all local journalists are better. Nor am I making the case that citizen journalists should replace foreign correspondents. Grassroots blogging informs my views and widens my horizons, but I still believe in professional journalism. Finally, where a journalist is born and raised does not necessarily determine that person’s level of knowledge or experience. But intimate knowledge of the language or culture where one is reporting is important—perhaps even more important than intimate knowledge of the audience.

For those who see doom ahead, I have a more optimistic perspective on a future without foreign correspondents. When Global Voices Online is at its best, I feel deeply connected to the people who are telling their stories. They sound like me when they write their blogs, whether they are in China



## The Attention Deficit: Plenty of Content, Yet an Absence of Interest

By Ethan Zuckerman

As news organizations wrestle with the challenge of discovering profitable reporting models for a digital age, at least three types of public service journalism are endangered species—investigative reporting, in-depth statehouse and city government coverage, and foreign coverage. Expensive to produce, they have been subsidized by more profitable facets of news operations. While online news producers like ProPublica and Voice of San Diego offer promising new models to sustain investigative and local government reporting, less experimentation—though some—is being directed at sustaining high-quality international coverage on digital platforms. If greater attention is not paid to this circumstance, we may soon reach a time when the foreign correspondent is a relic from a past age of journalism.

My colleague Solana Larsen offers a provocative suggestion that the end of the foreign correspondent model might be a good thing. Too often, foreign correspondents parachute

into unfamiliar situations and offer a view that's insufficiently informed by the facts on the ground and is overly influenced by the biases of the audience they're speaking to. The rise of participatory media and the flowering of independent press around the world gives us alternatives to the foreign correspondent: We can listen to local journalists (professional and citizen) who report on the situation in their countries through local eyes, relying on local knowledge.

I share Larsen's passion for amplifying independent voices to a global audience. But I am less sanguine than she at the prospect of losing the foreign correspondent. In a digital age we can listen to knowledgeable local voices, but it's unclear that we will. Our experience at Global Voices Online suggests that there is a great appetite for local voices on stories that have made the global radar: the Haitian earthquake, the election protests in Iran. But there's far less interest expressed in stories that

have not cracked the mainstream news narrative, like the coup in Madagascar and its aftermath.

The scarce resource in the age of digital journalism is not high-quality content, but attention. I have no fear of a shortage of quality reporting from Madagascar or Malaysia. Instead, I fear these voices are likely to go unheard. The best foreign correspondents are not just deeply knowledgeable about the countries they write about—they are masters at leading their audiences to a story they might have otherwise ignored. As we move to a time in which we rely more on local voices to report international news, we will need to wrestle with this problem by asking ourselves how we help a U.S. audience pay attention to a Malagasy reporter's dispatch from her own country. ■

*Ethan Zuckerman is a senior researcher at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University and cofounder of Global Voices Online.*

or Iran, and whether they are describing street protests or war or writing about mundane things like rain or a traffic jam or a meeting with a suitor for an arranged marriage. Yet I don't usually feel this kind of personal connection when an embedded journalist sends stories home from Iraq or Afghanistan. During the earthquake in Haiti as dozens of journalists interviewed foreign aid workers about a country some of them barely knew, I wondered what we were learning from their accounts. Not only are too many journalists reporting the same story; too often they are neglecting the local and personal perspectives that matter most.

NBC's Ann Curry says she first figured out how to tell foreign news stories so they really matter to people back home when she was interviewing a woman in Africa about being raped.

She realized halfway through that they were telling her story without the empathy with which they would have told it if it had happened in their own community. Curry then told her team to film the interviews "like it was your sister who had been raped." The lights were softened and the cameras came closer, and the tone of their conversation changed.

At the end of the day, what I am talking about isn't the passport a journalist holds, but how the language, tone and perspective of foreign correspondence can change. We do this by listening to a broader range of voices and recognizing that stories worth telling are not always identical to those told by our competitors. Most importantly, we need to report in ways that are respectful of the culture, opinions and interests of the

people about whom we are writing. I am sure that many Americans would find objectionable representations in European media of them as gun-toting, Christian fanatics. But then there is the superb foreign news reporting of The Guardian's Gary Younge whose insights about Americans inspired U.S. publications to want him to write for them about U.S. culture, too. When foreign reporting works best the subjects and audience learn something they didn't know. But when journalists fumble in the dark to understand a foreign people and culture—and then report on events there—their audiences will fumble too. ■

*Solana Larsen is the managing editor of Global Voices Online. Previously she was an editor with openDemocracy, a global politics Web site.*

## ‘It’s the Audience, Stupid!’

Using a new approach to storytelling ‘we managed to broaden our audience, expand our coverage and—this is critical—not “dumb down” in the process.’

BY MARIA BALINSKA

**A**re Americans interested in international journalism? The usual response is that it’s an elite interest, if it exists at all. Like spinach, it may be good for you, but it’s not intrinsically attractive to a lot of people. I don’t agree. I’m convinced that there is a greater hunger for global information than is usually recognized.

This belief leaves me with two critical questions: What kind of information will entice *and* satisfy this appetite? And are journalists doing enough to provide it?

About 10 years ago I faced a similar conundrum at the BBC. As the editor of World Current Affairs Radio, one of the shows I oversaw was “Euronews,” the United Kingdom’s only daily information program about European affairs on Radio 5 Live, the BBC’s 24-hour news and sports network. As my colleagues liked to remind me, “Euronews” was the ultimate serving of spinach. Despite the fact that the show’s topics ranged from law and justice to culture and sports and well beyond European Union (EU) politics, we were up against the undeniable fact that too often “Europe” seemed synonymous with byzantine political machinations in the EU capital, Brussels—significant yes, but hard to understand and oh so foreign.

Survey after survey showed coverage of Europe stuck stubbornly at the bottom of the list of audience interests. After a while, I got fed up trying to justify the existence of “Euronews.” So one afternoon I slipped out of the office, audio recorder in hand, and engaged with the audience who allegedly weren’t engaging with us. For five hours I stopped people on London streets to ask them what, if anything, they wanted to know about Europe and Europeans.

What I heard was gratifying—and encouraging. They confirmed that EU politics were distant and boring, but then they told me how they wanted more storytelling about the daily lives and concerns of Italians, Germans and Poles. Most striking was their interest—raised repeatedly and without prompting—in what people in other European countries were doing about problems that affected all of us, problems like unemployment, illiteracy and what to do about the mountains of waste we produce.

Admittedly, my approach was unscientific and my sample size small, but what I heard that afternoon informed our editorial agenda from that day forward. Looking back, it was a crude form of crowdsourcing before that word existed. Comparisons between the United Kingdom and the rest of the EU became a regular feature not just of “Euronews,” but also of other programming for which I was responsible. On Radio 4, which is the UK’s leading news, speech and drama network, we launched a series of reports from continental Europe related to issues being debated at home. When there was controversy over “super casino” licenses in the United Kingdom, we went to France to tell the story of one gambling addict’s lawsuit against a casino owner. As British fishermen protested quotas imposed to counter overfishing, we reported how Norway revived its herring industry after overfishing almost killed it.

As we did this, we were breaking stories and broadcasting exclusive interviews. Soon, our colleagues across BBC radio and television were consulting us for our European expertise. Our programs were nominated for awards. Best of all was what the audience was telling us. A night watchman wrote

to let us know that he was following European news for the first time. A Birmingham truck driver called in live to ask a Serb housewife in Belgrade and an Albanian baker refugee in Macedonia questions about the war in Kosovo. He wasn’t alone; when calls kept coming that day, we extended the segment to an hour.

We managed to broaden our audience, expand our coverage and—this is critical—not “dumb down” in the process. Out of this experience three clear lessons emerged:

- It’s the audience, stupid!
- Wider interest in international news exists than much of the mainstream media assume.
- To paraphrase my high school principal, “more humility, ladies and gents of the media!” The public’s lack of interest in international news could (just possibly) reflect the quality of our journalism rather than the topic itself.

### The U.S. Experience

How relevant is any of this to what’s happening in the United States? At the very least it is ironic that at a time when news organizations have shut down foreign bureaus, a March 2010 Pew Research Center survey—“Understanding the News Participatory Consumer”—showed that about a third of Americans say they would like more international coverage. (The actual figures are 42 percent of “news participators,” defined by Pew as those who contribute to or share news online, and 28 percent of other adults.) This result is all the more remarkable given that never before has there been such quick and easy access to international news as there

is now with digital media.

The message I take from the Pew findings is that people are still in search of a different kind of international coverage. Or perhaps I should say different *kinds*. The fact that “outsider” news providers like *The Economist*, the BBC, and its Boston-based co-production with Public Radio International, “*The World*,” are increasingly popular proves the demand is there—and I’d argue there is still plenty of room for fresh perspectives.

After all, places that once seemed far away and foreign to most Americans are now part and parcel of their everyday lives. A nurse taking their blood pressure might have just returned from her family in Haiti made homeless by the earthquake. Their local supermarket sells goods not only from China but Central America and India and Eastern Europe. Language lessons with native speakers are now offered via the Internet so their child’s teacher might be in Beijing, Moscow or Sao Paulo.

International coverage too often fails to reflect—or take advantage of—the increasing networks of personal relationships that globalization enables. The ease and familiarity of these global connections speak, however, to the potential of a bottom-up approach to international journalism. And thanks to digital media we have tools to engage the audience as never before: We can call on their expertise; we can facilitate international debate; we can use crowdsourcing techniques to have them participate in deciding which stories to cover.

Consider, for example, the debate Americans had last year about reforming health care. Opponents of single-payer proposals made dire claims about the Canadian and British national health systems, but apart from a handful of good explanatory features about how these systems work (not to mention the French or Japanese systems) there was little sustained international context brought into the American debate. And yet the connections are there to be explored. Many American doctors have worked abroad; many foreign doctors have studied and

worked in the United States. Insurance companies are global corporations, just as pharmaceutical companies are. Americans live everywhere and require medical care.

The American debate about health care does not exist in isolation. In almost every European country, this topic is the subject of passionate conversation at the pub, café and office. With my editor’s cap on, what I see in

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**And thanks to digital media  
we have tools to engage  
the audience as never  
before: We can call on their  
expertise; we can facilitate  
international debate ...**

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these connections are compelling stories capable of resonating with people who share the experience—whatever the nationality—of being sick or needing a doctor’s care.

These kinds of stories can offer insights that make the audience “wiser,” as New York University professor Mitchell Stephens argues persuasively in “The Case for Wisdom Journalism—and for Journalists Surrendering the Pursuit of News,” which appeared in *Dædalus*’s “Future of News” issue in the spring. And the beauty of this approach is that it can be practiced as easily at the local level as it can at the national.

High school bullying may be a reality across the U.S. but the headlines this year were made by South Hadley, Massachusetts when a teenage girl committed suicide after classmates relentlessly taunted her, online and off. Several of those classmates ended up facing criminal charges. In the weeks that followed her death, news outlets were full of opinions about how the situation was handled by the school and the community.

Had there been some comparative

journalism from overseas it would have revealed that Italy has the worst record among European countries when it comes to school bullying and Norway has the best. Expert analysis could have offered some explanations of what accounts for this difference. A legal reporter might have discovered that in the United Kingdom a mother successfully sued the local school board for negligence when they failed to protect her child against bullying.

Each of these is an interesting story, but beyond that each provides the kind of contextual dimension of journalism that enhances understanding. Paraphrasing New York University journalism professor Jay Rosen, this kind of journalism is the background narrative that makes sense of news. Often that background narrative has an international dimension.

Historically, foreign affairs journalism has taken its cue from governmental priorities: war, trade policy, disaster relief. It’s past time to expand its focus—to welcome the grassroots perspectives of ordinary people. We have an opportunity to create a new genre of international coverage while exciting people about the relevance of journalism and the world to their lives.

To try out my ideas, I have decided to leave my job at the BBC and return to the United States after many years away. With the benefits of digital technology and social media networks, my own experience in the trenches of international journalism, and reflections that I’ve had during my recent Nieman year, I’m ready to experiment with a “Euronews” type strategy in my own country. As the gambling idiom so graphically puts it, it is time to put my money where my mouth is. ■

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# When Journalists Depart, Who Tells the Story?

Press releases and broadcast-ready video substitute for European Union coverage, as news organizations cut back on staff reporters in Brussels.

BY MICHAEL J. JORDAN

**A**t the age of 28, Irina Novakova holds a lofty perch in Bulgarian journalism, covering Brussels as European Union (EU) correspondent for both the most serious newspaper and weekly magazine in Bulgaria. She is prominent among the pack of correspondents from ex-Communist Eastern Europe who try to explain the often bewildering EU to its newly democratic members. Nevertheless, she's anxious. The economic crisis is roiling the region's media. Finances are so bad for her paper in Sofia, the Bulgarian capital, that management hit the staff with pay cuts.

In Brussels, meanwhile, recent EU member Lithuania is already down to zero correspondents. The last Latvian fends for survival, and a Hungarian correspondent tells Novakova how his country's sagging interest in EU affairs may force him to freelance, moonlighting in public relations. A veteran Serbian correspondent whose postwar nation aspires to join the EU laments he might need to leave because no client in Belgrade can afford to pay him to report from there. Novakova has attended several farewell parties where the correspondent departs without being replaced.

This trend, though, is not limited to Eastern Europe. The EU press corps itself is dwindling: According to the International Press Association (IPA) in Brussels, the number of accredited reporters has shrunk from some 1,300 in 2005 to 964 in 2009.

What's happening in Brussels is part of the same storm system battering the journalism industry globally. The pressure is not only financial. EU agencies are embracing multimedia and using the Internet to deliver messages directly to constituents in what we might consider political spin-doctoring

in real time. Back home, some editors think that European affairs, like so many other stories today, can be covered cheaply and easily from the newsroom via the Internet and telephone. Why keep a correspondent in pricey Brussels?

Novakova describes the "sense of gloom" that permeates the press corps. "I wouldn't call it a crisis or panic but when you talk to colleagues over a beer, they say, 'What can you do, these are the times we live in?'" she says. "There's a lot of dark humor. It's a sense of powerlessness that it's out of your control. Also, that you're not unique: What has hit the car-making industry or the banking industry in London is hitting us. It's in journalism. It's everywhere."

For denizens of its 27 member countries, what the EU does matters, as does the ability of voters back home to know how and why their representatives make their decisions. With fewer correspondents roaming the halls in Brussels, 500 million or so EU citizens are less informed about the policy decisions that affect their country and about the complex relations their country has with myriad European institutions.

Yet the vast EU public relations machinery—with its Webcast press conferences and well-written press releases along with its slick broadcast-ready video—has devalued, unintentionally, the work these foreign correspondents do in the eyes of consumers and editors alike, says Lorenzo Consoli, IPA president. When Consoli attends a Brussels press conference and asks a probing question, reporters back home who watch and listen on a computer, with press release in hand, can incorporate the answer (and the question, if they choose to) into their

stories. Those stories can be published online before Consoli even returns to his office.

Follow this to its obvious conclusion, however, and we have to wonder who will be left to even ask questions? What happens when those who actually do reporting are no longer there?

Especially at times of crisis, such as when European nations this year grappled with Greece's financial situation, which sent the euro tumbling and EU members scrambling to find a viable solution. At that point, institutional knowledge and connection to reliable sources is vital. Reporters who've been covering the story for years are well positioned to dig deep and tell the story with confidence in the validity of information they have gathered.

Without such a foothold, the impulse to cut corners can be strong. That's when the material produced by the PR folks in Brussels is presented as news. While editors might alter it slightly, the news organization may still present it as original journalism. Especially prone are cash-strapped outlets in Central and Eastern Europe. And not enough readers and viewers are savvy enough to detect the difference.

## Changing Rules

Concerned about this trend and with an eye toward reinventing the added value of Brussels-based correspondents, the IPA has called on EU institutions to "cooperate more closely and openly" with accredited correspondents to "promote a more democratic media landscape."

Here is how Consoli describes the alternative: The idea of bypassing the professional press, getting rid of that filter for information, and speaking

directly with the citizens is the totalitarian dream. Public opinion doesn't ask questions. It is the privilege—and duty—of the press to ask these questions, to challenge officials, and get answers. This is how democracy works. With the Internet and all the new media nowadays, a lot of people are forgetting this.

As part of this push, the IPA made several requests of the European Commission and Council of the European Union as a way for correspondents on the ground to produce deeper, more meaningful stories. The IPA proposed setting up more off the record or background briefings with more candid officials, along with early access to press releases that would be embargoed until correspondents have time to digest and interpret EU actions.

"It's an acknowledgement for companies that go through the expense of having people here that it's worth their while," says IPA vice president Ann Cahill, who is Europe correspondent for the Irish Examiner. "I compete, and I'm happy to compete. But if I can get something in advance, then I'm happy to do that, too."

European institutions themselves recognize the integral role of Brussels-based correspondents to not only explain the nuances of EU operations, decisions and policies but to shape public opinion, says commission spokeswoman Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen. This is especially true in member states where political forces less friendly to Brussels often sway popular attitudes against it.

"Of course we're very concerned when journalists leave and their media choose not to replace them," says Hansen. "We see the importance of having an accredited press corps to capture the

complexity of what the EU does and why in a way no one else can. They have a responsibility to provide the public with the information they need to form opinions on their own."

The commission grants the press corps unique access, says Hansen, with more frequent background briefings for selected correspondents on certain topics. But in meetings with the IPA, she says, EU officials have explained that a general embargo policy would be neither "manageable nor desirable."


"Operationally speaking, this would backfire," says Hansen. "We all know leaks happen, but can you imagine if some journalists were favored or if there were no market sensitivity to the subject matter? Some journalists complain that we need to be more transparent, but what would be next—withholding the broadcast of press conferences? Such a policy would be difficult to defend."

Meanwhile, not every Brussels correspondent agrees with the IPA's position. David Rennie, who used to write the Charlemagne column on European affairs for The Economist, blasts the IPA for the "privileged access" it seeks,

restricting information in the process.

"It's rank protectionism," says Rennie, who was based in Brussels while he wrote this column for one of the few publications thriving in these hard times. "In their anxiety to preserve journalists physically based in Brussels, they're behaving like the worst kind of labor union. What they don't understand is it won't work because the forces closing bureaus are more powerful than that. It's also a direct attack on the media from Eastern Europe that can't afford to be in Brussels and are trying to cover it from far afield. If you shut off the information, you hurt other journalists."

Indeed, the real cost is for Central and East Europeans who once saw their nations' 2004 entry to the EU—and to the NATO military alliance before that—as crowning achievements of their painful post-Communist transition. For the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (joined by Romania and Bulgaria in 2007), membership cemented their break from a totalitarian past and carved



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At the same time, journalists were keen to track their country's progress in Brussels and hold European and their own officials accountable for their words and deeds. That some have drifted toward having no correspondent based in Brussels who can report in their national language to folks back home illustrates how detached some countries are from the EU.

## Changing Appetites

The watchdog role of the press resides at the core of any healthy democracy. For countries that have little or no tradition of democracy, as in Central and Eastern Europe, the absence of the journalist in the broad mix of policy discussions is a troubling trend. Coincidentally, as this region's investment in EU correspondence wanes, Western Europe seems to have also lost interest in their region, as measured by journalists' feet on the ground.

When I worked in Budapest during the 1990's, it was a hopping place for foreign correspondents from North America and Western Europe. Generally speaking, we were there documenting the grand experiment from dictatorship to democracy. Some foreign reporters also used it as a base to cover the wars in the former Yugoslavia, which is Hungary's neighbor to the south. Today the Hungarian International Press Association (HIPA) serves as a bellwether for Western curiosity. During the last decade turnover in personnel—like me—coupled with tighter foreign reporting budgets and Western disinterest have caused a “steady erosion” of HIPA membership, says Kester Eddy, a longtime member and president from 2003 to 2007. Naturally this affects the coverage the region receives and spills over into the amount and kind of information people

have about what's happening here.

This year, for example, when the fastest growing far-right party in Europe, Jobbik, claimed 17 percent in Hungarian elections, some Western correspondents came over to decipher the phenomenon, as I did from across the border in Bratislava, Slovakia. Understandably the reporting only scratched the surface, says Eddy, who contributes to the Financial Times and The Economist Intelligence Unit. Eddy has done such in and out reporting in the region so he understands the limitations. “If you parachute in,” he says, “it's inevitable you won't know it as well as the guys on the ground.”

Novakova understands well what's happening. When she arrived in Brussels in 2006, at the age of 24, Bulgaria was abuzz. After four decades in which it was perceived as the Soviet Union's “16th republic,” sitting on the

the public there was developing a high level of interest in what was being said about them in Brussels. The intensity of interest peaked when the EU took unprecedented action and suspended aid to Bulgaria in 2008.

As a result, while other national contingents are today pulling back from Brussels, the Bulgarians have climbed from one correspondent, whom Novakova joined in 2006, to seven reporters based in Brussels. Even more interesting, says Novakova, Eurobarometer polls suggest the Bulgarian public now has so little faith in their own government that they trust Brussels more. In turn, the public and thus many editors don't demand critical coverage of the EU's maneuverings.

The ones she writes for, however, are more serious minded. So Novakova has devoted significant time during the past four years to comprehending the

web of EU institutions, developing sources and schmoozing with key players over drinks. As she's told me, while EU officials “can chat to you for hours in the corner of the press bar, they would not take your call at all if you are sitting in

the newsroom in Sofia trying to figure out what is really going on.”

She feels “lucky” not to be compelled to defend her position or lobby to explain the value of having someone on the ground, as some of her colleagues have had to do. “It's an existential question at some point,” she says. “To justify that you should keep doing your job—that's not a nice conversation to have with your boss.” ■

*Michael J. Jordan is a Slovakia-based foreign correspondent. He has reported from two dozen countries and leads the reporting project of the biannual Transitions Online Foreign Correspondence Training Course in Prague.*

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**The watchdog role of the press resides at the core of any healthy democracy. For countries that have little or no tradition of democracy, as in Central and Eastern Europe, the absence of the journalist in the broad mix of policy discussions is a troubling trend.**

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strategic western shore of the Black Sea, Bulgaria was on the brink of joining the European Union. Back then I was writing for The Christian Science Monitor, and EU officials were expressing serious concerns about the entry of Bulgaria and Romania. Upset about the reluctance of their governments to crack down on the worst corruption and organized crime in Europe, the EU attached conditions to their admission.

It was during this stretch that I met Novakova. In 2007, she was taking a one-week break from her Brussels job to participate in a foreign correspondence training I help lead in Prague every six months. (Rennie is a longtime lecturer for the same course.) With Bulgaria's woes so much in the news,

## Bearing Witness: The Poet as Journalist

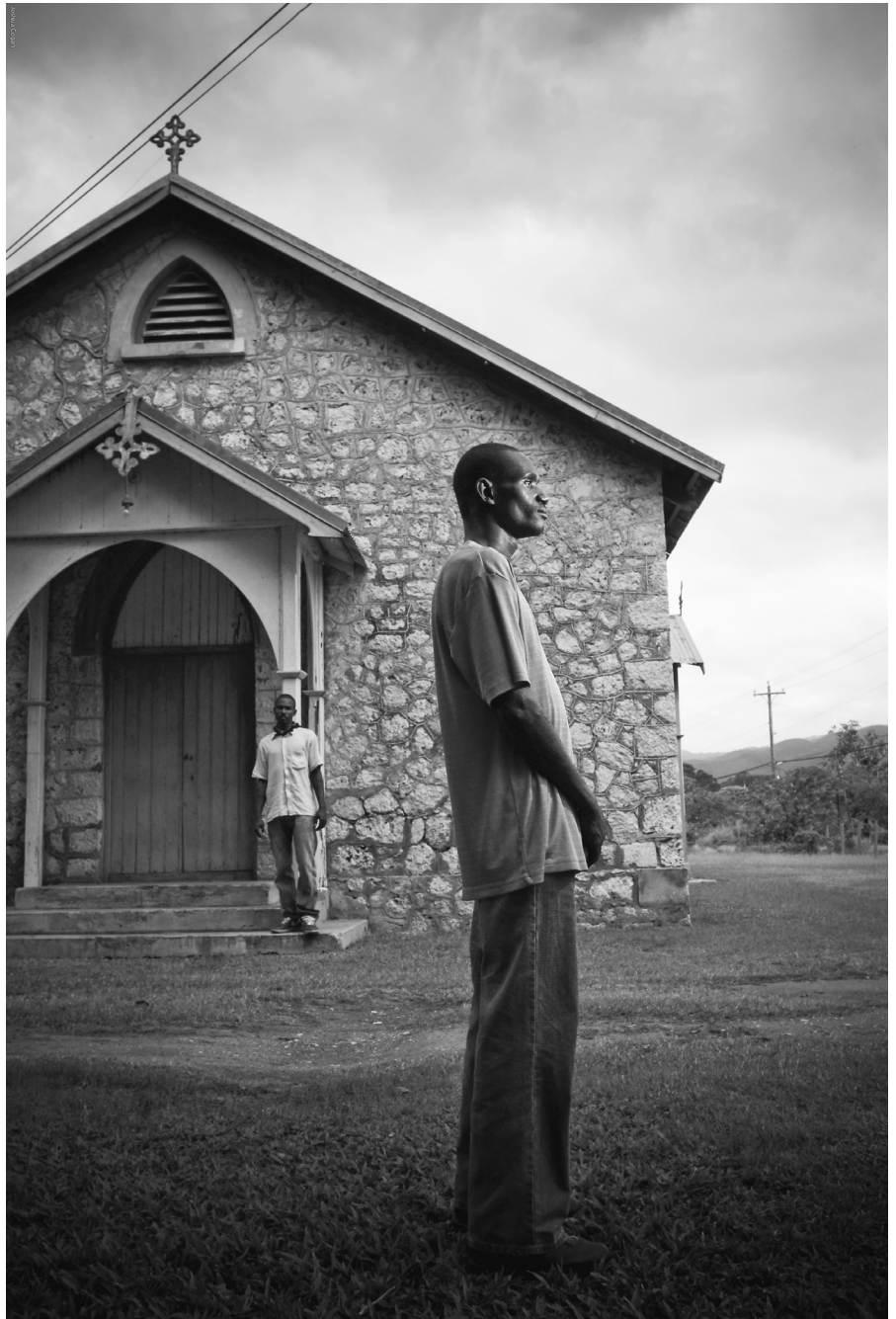
‘I stand as a witness to the silences—to what goes unspoken and ignored—to the things that float away as if insubstantial but that are filled with the simple breaths of people trying to make sense of their existence.’

BY KWAME DAWES

*Poet and journalist Kwame Dawes has traveled to Jamaica and Haiti to work on multimedia projects for the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. In combining his poetry with the images of photographers Joshua Cogan and Andre Lambertson, the life circumstances of people living with HIV/AIDS are revealed. Dawes describes these photographers' work as "rich with the possibility of language" and his poems as providing a "dialogue with their dance of light and moment." The multimedia Web site for "Hope: Living & Loving with HIV in Jamaica," a collaboration with Cogan, was awarded an Emmy last year in recognition of its new approach to news and documentary programming. In this essay, Dawes, who is distinguished poet in residence at the University of South Carolina, writes about the interwoven roles he experiences as a witness—as poet and journalist.*

**N**o matter how often I do it, I am unable to shake the nagging sense that an interview I am about to conduct is not going to reveal anything interesting or anything that will hold the interest of anyone else. At the heart of the fear is the concern that the person I am about to interview will not want to say anything at all. This is especially so when I am about to do an interview involving matters that can be intimate and deeply private. My fear is not merely academic. I have interviewed people who simply would not speak. I could tell quite quickly that they had either misunderstood what the interview was about or they had changed their minds.

But as a poet everything is useful material. Such material might be drawn from a long interview filled with brave details about violence against homosexuals and



Poems and photographs work together in the multimedia project, “Hope: Living & Loving with HIV in Jamaica.” Photo by Joshua Cogan ([www.joshuacogan.com](http://www.joshuacogan.com)).

## Coffee Break

By Kwame Dawes

It was Christmas time,  
the balloons needed blowing,  
and so in the evening  
we sat together to blow  
balloons and tell jokes,  
and the cool air off the hills  
made me think of coffee,  
so I said, "Coffee would be nice,"  
and he said, "Yes, coffee  
would be nice," and smiled  
as his thin fingers pulled  
the balloons from the plastic bags;  
so I went for coffee,  
and it takes a few minutes  
to make the coffee  
and I did not know  
if he wanted cow's milk  
or condensed milk,  
and when I came out  
to ask him, he was gone,  
just like that, in the time  
it took me to think,  
cow's milk or condensed;  
the balloons sat lightly  
on his still lap.

*Reprinted with permission from  
"Hope's Hospice and Other Poems,"  
published by Peepal Tree Press  
in 2009.*

risk-taking honesty about the person's own life, as I did in Jamaica two years ago, words I never heard again after the cameraman somehow lost the videotape. Or from talking with the self-centered head of a major organization in Haiti who gave me pat answers and spoke as if he had done this interview a million times before, which, alas, he might have; he gave one hint of something new and interesting in all that he said. Yet, as a poet, I am always storing material for some use.

This seems to present a false parallel between the making of poems and the writing of a news report—journalism, in a word. But this is not the case. Poetry and the collecting of material for poetry are never self-conscious. Indeed, the material that I collect for poetry is never collected for poetry but collected by me to keep track of where I have been, who I have been with, and how I feel about what I have seen. I am collecting, yes, but not consciously. What I am doing is responding as a human being to what I am seeing and hearing and trying to find ways of keeping track of what I am discovering.

I've recently made two reporting trips to Haiti. When I came home after the first trip I did not know if I would find anything to write about in poems. I knew I had a lot to write about in terms of straight journalistic pieces, but a poem is not the "story," it is something deeper; it has to do with an image, an image that can be both something seen or something that happens, a snippet of a narrative. It can be a detail, a scent, a question, a fear, a desire. I come to the poems without answers. By now I've seen and felt enough in my time in Haiti to write many poems, but the odd thing is that when I look at the poems I have since written, I do not have a clear recollection of making any mental notes of what drove them to existence while I was on the ground. I never refer to notes when I am writing the poems.

If someone said to me, write about what you feel about HIV/AIDS in Jamaica, I would say much more than

the poem "Coffee Break," which is part of our multimedia project, "Hope: Living & Loving with HIV in Jamaica." I am not sure what this poem says about HIV/AIDS in Jamaica yet it is about a man who dies of this disease there so in that sense it is a poem about what I feel about HIV/AIDS in Jamaica. But nothing happens in that poem. Nothing extraordinary. A man dies of AIDS. The only reason for the poem is the implied shock felt by a man who sees death everyday as he sees this one man die. So people die easily. What does that mean? Why is that important? Why is that helpful in making us understand the disease in Jamaica? I don't know. But I do know that I wrote the poem because when I heard the story told to me my eyes filled with tears and I stored it in my head not as a note for a poem but as a moment of feeling and understanding that I wanted to keep with me for as long as I could.

I did not write about this man's death in a journalistic piece nor did I say a great deal about it even as I told people about what I learned about AIDS in Jamaica. But it came back to me when I started to write a poem. It came back to me whole and fully formed. And I transported myself to the moment, a moment I did not actually witness, and so a moment I invented. The moment, which sits at the heart of the poem, is that final image: "the balloons sat lightly/on his still lap." What actually happened may have been more interesting, but for me the thought of his last breath caught in the balloon that seems strangely alive despite his passing is a haunting image that came to me at once when I started to write the poem.

The poems I have written about Haiti come from these "grace moments"—moments of silence and seeming insignificance. I am taking a chance to even suggest that therefore these poems are about a subject, about something that we understand in a journalistic way. Yet they are exactly that because they are about my witnessing not intellectually but mostly emotionally what is happening before me. I stand as a witness to the silences—to what goes



unspoken and ignored—to the things that float away as if insubstantial but that are filled with the simple breaths of people trying to make sense of their existence. This act of witnessing allows us to reach to other levels of meaning that can only be reached through the poem.

In a sense, my poems come out of a hunger to be in some kind of conversation. Like the interview, though,

I come to the page nervously. I have no idea whether the page will yield a poem, and I have no idea what that poem will be. It is reassuring to know that anxiety will always be my state before any kind of story.

If someone is seeking to discover the core of my experience researching, interviewing and writing about HIV/AIDS in Jamaica and Haiti, one will find it in my poems. They are unguarded

and by being poems their loyalty is to themselves and to my emotional and intellectual truth—as limited as that might be. In that place I try to be as open a witness as I can be. This is not the place to find out the facts of HIV/AIDS in these countries, but it is where one can find a way to see the way that disease enters the human imagination. This has to have some value. ■

## Chasing Haiti

‘Spending enough time in a tormented country for the reality to truly sink in is a painful experience.’

BY AMY BRACKEN

One afternoon in June, I was sitting in my car at a red light in downtown Port-au-Prince, when I saw, out of the corner of my eye, a begging hand reaching toward my window. I hate being hit up at stoplights. I hate being honked at when the light turns green as I’m reaching for change. I hate worrying that I’m going to run over someone’s foot as he pushes up against my car.

I waved the begging hand away. But when the light changed and I began to ease forward, I saw that the man was in a wheelchair, his legs severed. And the wheelchair was one of those cheap, white plastic deck chairs, connected by bent metal rods to bicycle wheels. I gasped.

I had heard about a Haitian wheelchair factory in the metal artisan town of Croix-des-Bouquets. They made cheap, funky, creative wheelchairs, I was told. In my mind, the factory represented the kind of Haitian innovation that springs from a lack of resources to meet desperate needs. I had wanted to find that factory. I had called government people, disability organizations, and United Nations humanitarian groups. I had driven around Croix-des-Bouquets and factory districts around Port-au-Prince,



Haiti remains devastated by the earthquake that struck in January. *Photo by Amy Bracken.*

asking random people on the street. No luck.

Now, seeing the begging man, I knew these chairs existed. I wended my way through the streets and returned to the stoplight. By then he had left but merchants on the sidewalk said they had seen someone pushing him

down the hill. I drove until I spotted them, parked the car, and pursued on foot. But they disappeared into the crowd. I asked everyone I saw on the street if they had seen the man in the wheelchair. After deliberation and debate, fingers pointed through another intersection and around a park.

I got back in my car and followed, circling, searching and finding nothing. They were gone. I felt crushed.

I would think about that man in that wheelchair for the next 24 hours, replaying what had happened and wondering what I should have done differently in my pursuit. How could I have been so slow? When I considered recounting this story to friends, I hesitated. Who would sympathize with a foreign journalist who only cared about a needy legless man because he could help her with a feature story? I wondered if journalism had skewed my sense of what mattered.

Meanwhile I kept thinking about the man, wondering not only where he had gotten his wheelchair, but other things: where he lived and how old he was, who was pushing him around, how he had lost his legs, how much money he made begging, if he had another source of income, if he would get any help from nongovernmental organizations coming into the country. I thought about the back pain I get after sitting too long in an uncomfortable chair. It struck me that that wheelchair might hurt like hell.

Finally, it struck me that it was the journalist in me that was asking all these questions. My instinct had been to wave the man away, but my profession had taught me to pursue what I sometimes want to avoid. A vague story idea had triggered a determination to understand more. What I had missed wasn't just the chance to do a quirky radio piece, it was an opportunity to learn something about the man in the wheelchair.

## Arriving in Haiti

Learning about people's dramatically different lives was a reason that I started thinking about foreign reporting when I graduated from college in 1997, and it was why I moved to Haiti after journalism school in 2003. Haiti was known on the outside as a land of coups d'état, chaos and poverty. I wanted to understand what these circumstances actually meant to the people living there.

I never imagined how long it would

take for this to happen. During the past seven years, I have spent a total of some 30 months in Haiti, and I still struggle to fathom the things I see, hear and experience. When I first set out for Haiti, a friend told me, "In Haiti, believe nothing of what you hear and only some of what you see." I followed this advice if only because I couldn't wrap my mind around much of what was happening around me.

During a period of violence that followed the ouster of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a nice-looking young man pointed to a beheaded corpse in the road and proudly took credit for it. I nodded and wrote in my notebook. After floods and landslides that killed several hundred people in the spring of 2004, residents of a devastated village told me they had just lost all of their children, and I nodded and wrote in my notebook.

While I was accumulating plenty of material for articles, I was having a very hard time comprehending that any of this was anyone's reality.

Spending enough time in a tormented country for the reality to truly sink in is a painful experience. It also becomes increasingly challenging to write about a place you're getting to know quite well for an audience that knows nothing about it. For Reuters and then The Associated Press (AP), my subsequent employer, this meant finding ways to succinctly explain what Haiti is and what it is going through.

I found out that I am not cut out for wire services. Work with them forced me onto the frontlines of important events, but I did not thrive under the tight control by bosses in another country, the always-yesterday deadlines, and the quick-and-dirty reporting style. There was no time for the reality of what I was experiencing to penetrate or percolate.

I left AP to try my hand at full-time freelancing for magazines and newspapers. But that reality came as a bit of a shock. I kept thinking that my phone wasn't working. It nearly stopped ringing after I left AP to strike out on my own. The AP had barred me from freelancing while I worked for them so moonlighting gigs I had

while working for Reuters and The Haitian Times were by now forgotten.

There were other factors, including bad timing when it came to Americans' interest in news from Haiti. Focus had rapidly shifted elsewhere. Haiti had no coups or major natural disasters then. Gang fighting was limited to certain slums, and elections happened without any major violence. Meanwhile wars were raging in the Middle East, and New Orleans was under water. What's more, there was suddenly far less space and money for international news. Though I was still fascinated by Haiti, and I had the time to pursue the stories I had been unable to do with the AP, the takers were few and paid little. I was frighteningly underemployed.

I returned home to Boston and moved in with my mother. I holed myself up in my room with a computer for days, applying to fellowships and jobs. The outcome: An offer for a night cops reporting position at a paper in a small town where the police responded to calls about graffiti and, at least once, "a suspicious seagull."

But I also began to identify outlets that seemed to be bucking the trend away from quality international news reporting. The Christian Science Monitor not only wanted features, but it also was looking for "positive" stories about Haiti. World Vision Report wanted richly textured and detailed pieces about life in other countries. Inter Press Service paid little but had an almost endless interest in the Caribbean and a new budget for stories on women's issues. Global Radio News (GRN) was there with broadcast contacts around the world should anything arise in Haiti. [See story on page 57 about GRN by founder Henry Peirse.] Random glossies, like Marie Claire and the Argentinean edition of Alma Magazine, would occasionally bite.

Through all of this, mediabistro.com, the online resource for freelancers, helped me identify outlets and figure out how to pitch to them.

I finally discovered Public Radio International's "The World" based at WGBH in Boston. Like so many other news programs, "The World" struggles with budget constraints, and it's hard



A makeshift “hotel” was set up on the edge of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Photo by Amy Bracken.

to get a job there in part because turnover is so low. But after waiting around for opportunities and pestering them for years, I’ve been able to report for them from Haiti and do freelance production work in their Boston newsroom. From the latter I’ve learned that it’s possible to do stimulating international journalism, even in the United States.

## Returning to Haiti

Almost six months after the devastating earthquake, I returned to Haiti to report for “The World.” It was my third trip to the country since the tragedy struck in January. And it’s still—or maybe increasingly—painful to see the destruction all around. Perhaps even harder is seeing the problems that existed in Haiti since well before the earthquake. Somehow one had hoped that all the international attention—all the donations after the earthquake—might have brought some modicum of positive change.

Traffic is chaotic, and driving

dangerous, as it always has been. For that reason, too many people lost limbs, if not their lives, even before the earthquake. And with or without such handicaps, more children and adults were begging on the streets in the months before the earthquake than I had seen in previous years. Now the number has multiplied. The deeply entrenched problems of poverty, corruption and lawlessness are hard to be around, and almost impossible for me to absorb. I still feel I have a choice: I can nod my head and passively record the cries for help; or I can fight through the pain involved in truly grasping the human dimensions of all that I am seeing and hearing and ask questions and make real, in whatever ways I can, people’s experiences for those listening back home.

Mostly, I am trying to do the latter, but I can’t do it all the time. So I take short trips to Haiti and go back home to process, relax and recover. As of this fall, I am a student again, at the Fletcher graduate school of international affairs at Tufts University, in

part to find new ways to understand what I’ve seen in Haiti. It’s hard to know where this path will take me, but I can’t imagine ever completely leaving journalism behind.

I know I’ll be returning to Haiti. Maybe I’ll see the man in the wheelchair again, and if I do, I don’t know if I’ll wave him away or chase him down. Even though I’ll likely be burnt out on suffering, maybe I’ll have the courage to ask what life is like for him. I might think I already know the answer, but just as likely I’d discover that I don’t, that the world doesn’t, and that that’s why I’m here, to find out.

One thing Haiti has taught me is to try to resist shutting out the suffering I find around me and to ask about it, try to understand it, and do whatever I can to help my audience to care. That’s why I love my job—but it’s also why I hate it. ■

*Amy Bracken is a freelance journalist who splits her time between Boston and Port-au-Prince.*

## Tanzanian Travels: Why Flexibility Matters

‘In these cash-strapped times, when heading off to Africa the expectation is that you will return with more than just a few stories. A daily radio show is a hungry beast to feed.’

BY JEB SHARP

I’m not sure there is any longer a typical reporting trip, and the trip I took recently to Africa was certainly not typical for me. When I’d gone to Africa before—to Rwanda, Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo—the stories I brought home were about the legacy of genocide. When I went to Tanzania in May, such brutalities were not central to my assignment.

The impetus for my trip was a handful of radio stories that our health editor at “The World” was keen to see done from Tanzania. I volunteered to go; I was eager to get back to Africa and intrigued to work on what sounded like good news. That, by itself, would be a welcome change.

When heading off to Africa in these cash-strapped times, the expectation is that you will return with more than just a few stories. A daily radio show is a hungry beast to feed. By the time I left for Tanzania, some of the stories we’d wanted to pursue didn’t hold up, but other compelling ones emerged. There was the promise and challenge of bringing solar power to rural Tanzania and the difficulty of combating road traffic injuries in Dar es Salaam. I would also take a look at clinical trials for a malaria vaccine and the recurring attacks against Tanzanian albinos. And I’d fit in the time I needed to profile performance artist Mrisho Mpotu.

If the stories weren’t typical for me, the way I went about preparing for my trip certainly was. After some preliminary research I set up interviews, found a translator, secured a Tanzanian visa and journalist’s permit, and booked flights and a place to stay. I’ve done this often enough to know that even the best-laid plans won’t hold, so as I prepared to head off, I

kept reminding myself that flexibility is the key to success.

It’s a lesson I remember often along the way.

Then there’s the packing, always more stressful and time-consuming than it should be. I put my work gear in a backpack: audio recorder and microphone, cords and headphones, camera, flash cards, batteries, laptop, cell phone, chargers and adapters, notebook, pens, press ID. I also add my valuables (passport, money, e-tickets). Then I fill a small suitcase with clothes and other sundries, including mosquito net, bed sheet, towel, toiletries and first aid. The backpack travels with me; the suitcase gets checked, but not without qualms about what happens if the bag goes astray. This time, volcanic ash forced a stopover in Amsterdam, and when I arrived in Dar es Salaam 36 hours behind schedule, my suitcase didn’t. (Let’s just say I’m extremely grateful for the extra T-shirts and underwear I bought in Amsterdam just in case.)

On the ground, my first call is to Mason Huffine, an American who works with the British nongovernmental organization SolarAid. Our plan is to go to Idodi in Iringa District where SolarAid has two projects, one at a health center, the other at a boarding school. Idodi is a day’s drive away so Mason and his Tanzanian colleague Stephen Chimallo and driver Bino Khan scoop me up at the airport and we’re on our way. The drive is interminable but the company is delightful. As we pass through Mikumi National Park, we make a game of spotting elephants, giraffes and zebras. We spend the night at a cheap guesthouse in Iringa and reach Idodi village the next morning.

Our first stop is Idodi Secondary

School, where 12 students perished in a fire in a dormitory last year. A student was studying late by candlelight. A mattress caught fire and the building was engulfed in flames. Since then, candles and kerosene lamps have been banned; only solar-powered lights are allowed. The tragedy was also the catalyst for a renewed push for safe lighting in all of Tanzania’s schools.

### Reporting Begins

Here is where I hit my first reporting snag. It’s Thursday morning—a day later than I thought we’d get there—and the headmaster with whom we’ve made arrangements has left town for a funeral. His deputy doesn’t feel that he has the authority to give me permission to interview students and teachers. Phone calls are made to try to locate the headmaster on his travels. No luck. Our cajoling, pleading and reasoning fall on deaf ears.

So we move on to the village’s health clinic where solar panels are being installed. Once in place, they will power all of its lights. I record the contractors installing the panels on the roof; I take photographs of the clinic; I interview staff about the difficulties of working without electricity. Health worker Tarchisya Kipangula shows me how she holds her cellphone flashlight in her mouth when she delivers a baby in the dark.

Later we return to the school where officials now will allow me to talk to one teacher and some handpicked students. I am forbidden to ask about the fire. So I go through the exercise of interviewing some of the kids, and they tell me how wonderful it is since solar power came to the school, how they can study more, and how well

they are doing as a result. Their answers sound like they've been rehearsed. While I appreciate the school's apparent desire not to re-traumatize the kids, it's frustrating not to be able to talk with them more freely.

As night falls, I get a taste of darkness in rural Tanzania. It comes on thick and fast and full, enveloping everything. But it doesn't last long at the school. After dinner the lights—powered by solar energy stored in batteries—come back on in classrooms so students can study. I record the hubbub of their voices and footsteps and the scraping of wooden chairs on concrete floors as they gather there. Then, as these teenagers enjoy the light, I step outside into the darkness to take in the most dramatic night sky I've seen in years. The Milky Way is truly milky. The stars are sharp and bright.

Then, the irony hits me: This intense darkness is for me a novelty, yet for these students the novelty is the strong light they now study by.

Later, we drive around the village to do an inventory of light. Most houses have none, but in a few we see the yellow flickers of a kerosene lamp. A diesel generator lights up a phone-charging kiosk and a string of colored lights at the local tavern is presumably powered the same way. Otherwise it's dark. What I now understand is how huge the potential market is for solar power—if the price is right. Later, we drop in at the home of the health clinic worker with whom I talked earlier that day. Mason conducts an impromptu focus group with her and her colleagues, prodding these relatively affluent women for information about what solar devices they might be willing to buy. Part of SolarAid's mission is to figure out how to stimulate markets and distribution networks for micro solar products like desk lamps and phone chargers. I record the session to capture the feel of his sales pitch.

Tonight's accommodation is sparse so Mason lends me a bed sheet since mine is somewhere in that suitcase



Mason Huffine of SolarAid gives an impromptu demonstration of solar power on the way to Iringa, Tanzania. Photo by Jeb Sharp/Public Radio International's "The World."

between Amsterdam and Dar es Salaam. After a sponge bath with baby wipes, I collapse under the bed net. I'm too tired to realize it yet but it's been a productive day.

The next morning we head back to Dar es Salaam. I retrieve my suitcase at the airport and at the hotel I enjoy the luxury of a hot shower and fresh clothes. On Saturday, I meet Robby Marwa, a colleague from the BBC office in Dar es Salaam, who will be my fixer (i.e. translator, driver, guide) for the remainder of my stay. During the next week, we move rapidly from place to place doing interviews, recording sound, and taking photos for my other stories.

Frustrations abound—logistical, linguistic and bureaucratic. But all in all, the days go well as I spend time talking with lawyers and politicians, doctors and merchants, and artists and teachers in apartments and hospitals, markets and schools, and on beaches. Steadily I gather what I need to deliver what I'd promised.

What I don't do—and what I thought I would do before I got there—is blog or tweet. My good intentions never

materialize as social media though I post a few photos to my Facebook page, if only to say "I'm here. I'm alive and all's well." It's partly that I'm tired and pressed for time. But there's another reason as well. After years of producing radio, that is what I am wired to do. It requires an intense focus, a certain relentlessness. If there's down time, I'm not blogging. I'm preparing for the next interview or raking over my to-do lists in my mind. That discipline has always served me well, obsessive as it may seem. And when I'm in that mode, blogging or tweeting is the last thing on my mind. I could force myself to do these things, but I realize that on this trip, at this particular moment, I choose not to. ■

*Jeb Sharp, a 2006 Nieman Fellow, is a reporter for Public Radio International's "The World" and host of the show's history podcast, "How We Got Here." She has twice won the Overseas Press Club's top radio award. Her stories and photographs from Tanzania can be heard and seen at [www.theworld.org](http://www.theworld.org).*

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AN ESSAY IN WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

# The Uninvited: Snapshots From Hyena Square

BY JEFFREY PORTER



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Lili, a 16-year-old prostitute, waits for a customer along one of the many passageways surrounding Hyena Square in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania's bastion of commercial sex workers.

I'm standing at the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro with my close friend and colleague Kevin Sites. At this celebratory moment, watching the sunrise from the "rooftop of Africa," I have no clue that in a week I will meet the woman I will eventually marry—Jacqueline, a native Tanzanian bank teller from Dar es Salaam. Nor do I

know that during a yearlong courtship, which will include three subsequent trips to Tanzania, the foundation of our relationship will be laid in one of the most unloving places on earth, Hyena Square, Dar es Salaam's notorious bastion of commercial sex workers.

Four months later, Jacqueline and I can barely see the dusty footpath

ahead of us, just silhouettes of men against kerosene-lit fried fish stands. I get nervous when she slips the engagement ring I gave her into her pocket for safekeeping. As we enter Hyena Square for the first time, its inhabitants are as surprised by the sight of a Westerner as we are by the droves of emaciated young women selling their



Buried deep in one of Dar es Salaam's densely populated squatter settlements, Hyena Square is innocuous by day, but under the cover of night it teems with as many as 200 young prostitutes. Nearly all of them have migrated from Tanzania's remote rural areas in search of a better life. Unable to find jobs, they turn to prostitution to survive. Their customers are drinkers, drug addicts, and hopelessly unemployed men who pay as little as a dollar for sex. *Photo and text by Jeffrey Porter.*

bodies for as little as a dollar in the nearly pitch-black night. At least half the girls appear to be infected with HIV/AIDS, but it's impossible to be sure as they're all severely malnourished, and many are *tejas* (Swahili slang for "junkies"). They've migrated from dirt-poor villages in search of a better life, but this is what they find.

Jacqueline tells me that there are many open-air flesh markets throughout the city, thousands more teenage sex workers, and little sustained effort by the Tanzanian government to create incentives for girls to remain in their villages or provide alternatives to commercial sex work for those who do come to Dar es Salaam.

At this moment, as a photojournalist, I know that I must try to bring attention to the social injustice I see in front of me. I can only hope that in doing so I will spur humanitarian organizations to lean on the Tanzanian government to reverse this abomination. Jacqueline came from a destitute village in rural Tanzania and feels a

connection to these girls. She agrees to be my translator.

We underestimate the challenge all of this poses.

“I’m in the business of selling my *kuma* (vagina) not my face,” Pili, a 28-year-old prostitute, shouts when she sees my camera. “And if this *mzungu* (white person) wants my *kuma* he can come to my room and pay for it like everybody else.”

Within moments we’re surrounded by a mob of prostitutes and johns, pushing, shouting and grabbing at my camera. We’re marched to a cinderblock police outpost where we assure officers that we only photograph those who give us permission. But no one who is present believes we’re here for any reason other than exploitation. To avoid a stint in the outpost’s crowded jail cell, we pay Pili a cash settlement and are released.

It is a shakedown to be sure, one of dozens we will endure in the coming weeks. But Pili’s objections aren’t entirely motivated by cash. Being a prostitute in Tanzania is considered disgraceful and embarrassing, and public knowledge of the fact can bring shame to an entire family.

Despite our promise that the story is strictly meant for Western audiences, the girls are cynical beyond their years. They’re convinced we’ll sell the story to Tanzanian newspapers and TV, revealing their dirty little secret. They may be village girls but they understand the power of the media.

The girls who let us photograph them are subject to the same hostility we are—not just from other prostitutes, but local brew makers, drug dealers, and others who depend on prostitution for their livelihoods. Every time my camera is out of its bag for longer than 60 seconds I find myself retreating to the side of my 5-foot-3-inch fiancée while she goes head-to-head with disgruntled inhabitants. Despite the insults they hurl, she treats them with respect, remembering what it feels like to be pushed to the edge of survival.

I’m humbled by her devotion to me—and to the project. Some of the girls, I can see, are starting to notice this too and slowly begin to trust us.

Ironically, Pili is one of the first to come around. She invites us to take photos and wait in her room—for a small fee, of course. Still, her offers are genuine, and she becomes one of our strongest allies. She tells us that as a teenager she dreamed of becoming Miss Tanzania, but a one-way bus ticket to Dar es Salaam sealed her fate. Now three fatherless children and a drug habit trap her here.

Lili, a newcomer not yet ravaged by the pitfalls of prostitution, becomes like a sister to us. At 16 years old, she’s the youngest prostitute in the area and one of the busiest; men aggressively pursue the younger girls believing they’re less likely to be infected with HIV. Some men force her to have sex without using a condom—others she allows if they offer her more money. Her teenage invincibility prevents her from seeing her destiny, etched on the drawn faces of the other girls.

Her love for the camera is refreshing, but, like Lili, we are blinded by our own ambition. While photographing her outside her “guesthouse” a strung out drug dealer begins hurling baseball-size stones at the three of us. Luckily they whiz past us, denting the corrugated metal siding of the guesthouse instead of our heads. He reveals a stick of chiseled hardwood, promising to beat us with it if he sees us again. A crowd forms behind him echoing his threats.

We’ve finally worn out our welcome—and, sadly, Lili’s too.

On our sofa, Lili looks like a typical teenager in the new clothes we bought her. She watches Swahili hip-hop videos while we make dozens of phone calls, trying to find someone who can take her. Though she can barely spell her name, she knows too well that there aren’t many social safety nets in Tanzania. The next day she disappears with her new wardrobe. We never see Lili again.

For a moment we think about shelving the project. The girls have been victimized enough without us making their struggle for survival even more difficult. I know the inhabitants of Hyena Square fear publicity but after looking at some of the photographs I

start to feel differently. While a truthful representation of their situation, the photographs are explicit and difficult to reconcile. It might be that the people to whom I will pitch this story will balk at publishing these pictures and tell me that they are too depressing for audiences to absorb. But the girls have taken risks by allowing us into their lives so we feel a tremendous responsibility to honor their lives by telling the stories they’ve shared with us.

After a much needed break from Hyena Square, we complete the project. Walking along the familiar footpath for the first time in two months, I can feel my heartbeat racing with trepidation but also with excitement. Jacqueline and I are bringing prints to the girls we’ve photographed, and we’re looking forward to their reactions.

Surprisingly, we’re greeted like old friends. The girls giggle and pass the photographs around so everyone can see them. We even bring photos for Lili hoping someone might know her whereabouts, but most can barely remember her. Two new arrivals from Mwanza have taken her place: Neema, 17, and Susie, 16. Neema seems to manage the men who prowl around her. Susie is a deer in the headlights.

The atmosphere is different this time, and for the next few days we are able to photograph with little resistance. On our last night at Hyena Square, Jacqueline and I are swarmed by a group of prostitutes and johns, only this time they are not calling for our arrest—they had come to say goodbye. The photography is finished but my pursuit to expose the betrayal these young women are experiencing is only just beginning. ■

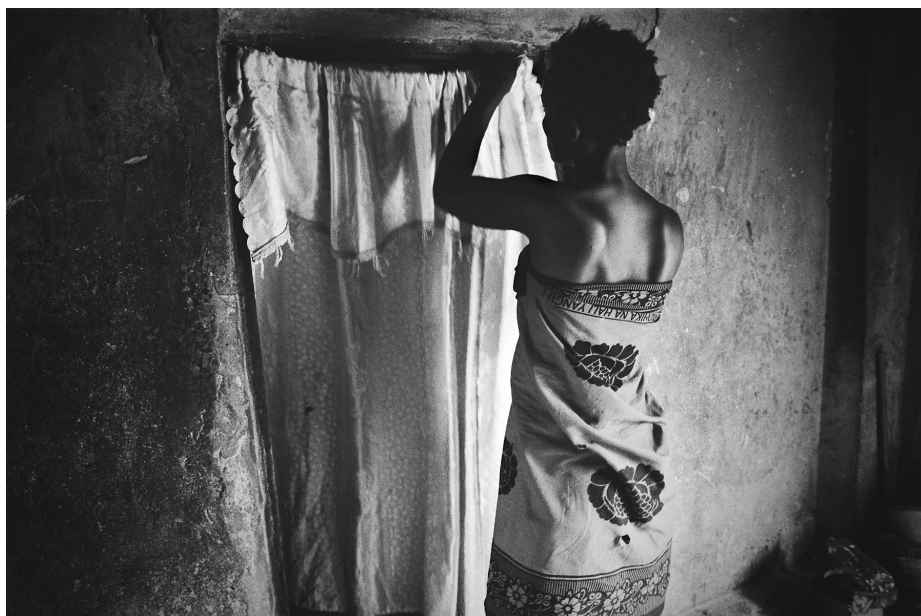
*Jeffrey Porter now combines his career as a feature and documentary filmmaker with being a photojournalist. In one of his films, “A World of Conflict,” he chronicled Kevin Sites’s Yahoo! News Hot Zone project. [See Sites’s story about his return to Afghanistan on page 63.]*





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Sixteen-year-old Susie, left, and Neema, 17, interrupt a local dice game to solicit customers. The girls say it's best to stop by the kolokolo tables early, before the men lose all their money.



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Pili's three children sleep behind a curtain while their mother sells her body at Hyena Square. "It's crucial I move away from here so my children have a chance for a better life," she says. "I have a 9-year-old daughter. I'd feel very sad if she found her way into this profession."

*Photos and text by Jeffrey Porter.*

## Into Africa—With a Newspaper in Iowa

With International Reporting Project support, ‘my story reminded Iowans that it’s not just the large coastal papers that bring them news from abroad.’

BY PERRY BEEMAN

It’s a moment I never saw coming when I studied journalism in college. Here I was in Rwanda watching scientists sort chimp poop—and thinking about how I was going to share this moment with readers back in Des Moines, Iowa.

For a long time I’ve reported on the environment for The Des Moines Register. In that job, I usually travel to sunny state parks and dank sewage treatment plants, to industrial hog farms and State House meetings, and to winding rivers dotted with dead fish and state swimming areas where I pull water samples to test for contaminants. But I end up spending too much time in my newsroom cubicle with a view of little else but desks and colleagues.

Sometimes I travel far away, like when I trained journalists in Panama, Belize and Mexico and accompanied scientists along the Amazon River studying what happens to the environment when Brazilians clear the rainforest to raise cattle. During my time as president of the U.S.-based Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ), I led panel discussions and tours in a number of states.

A key lesson: The world is small. When rainforest is cut in Rwanda or Brazil, it could upset the earth’s carbon balance in ways that can affect the climate from Iowa to Iceland to Italy. Americans’ infatuation with huge cruise boats can lead to damage to reefs in Belize. The world’s thirst for corn-sweetened sodas can plow under habitats that pheasants and waterfowl need.

Those international connections are what led me to Rwanda, known mainly for its mountain gorillas, 1994 genocide, and poverty. What drew me to east-central Africa, however, was the breadth of environmental initiatives in

a country that is far poorer than even its sub-Saharan neighbors. It was a story I wanted to report.

For me, the question was how could I make this happen?

### Local Meets International

My Rwandan experience provides an excellent example of the crucial role organizations—partners, really—such as the International Reporting Project (IRP) play in an era in which news organizations are struggling to hold on to their worldview as travel budgets blow away like so much glacial till. With IRP’s support, my story reminded Iowans that it’s not just the large coastal papers that bring them news from abroad.

The Register is a midsized paper with 16 Pulitzer Prizes and a long history of reporting, at least occasionally, on international events important to Iowans and other Americans.

In the past four decades or so, the Register reported from the Soviet Union about grain issues, from Nicaragua about ongoing unrest, from Africa about hunger, and from Finland about innovative education initiatives. Among the Pulitzer winners was editorial writer Lauren Soth, whose bold invitation to Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev to visit farms in Iowa made history.

With history in mind, a couple of years ago I proposed to my editors that I visit Rwanda to cover a project cofounded by Great Ape Trust, a Des Moines-based research center focused on the language, social and cognitive skills of great apes and the conservation of the endangered primates. That work involves saving a small, isolated group of chimpanzees in the Gishwati Forest in northwestern Rwanda, a forest that

at one point was 99 percent gone; it had a direct tie to Des Moines.

Twice, I was turned down. The interest was there, but the Register’s budget simply was too tight.

That’s when I turned to the IRP for help. I had read about the program on SEJ’s Web site. The privately funded, independent IRP is located at Johns Hopkins University’s Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C. [See story about IRP on page 47.] It exists to promote international reporting and likes to send its fellows to places they’ve never been. This would be my first trip to Africa so I knew I was on the right track.

When I decided to pursue the IRP fellowship, my vision broadened as I spent time learning more about Rwanda’s environmental efforts. What I found was a rebel leader turned president, Paul Kagame, who had quietly become perhaps Africa’s most vocal supporter of environmental initiatives. This struck me as surprising, refreshing—and a good story to tell.

From the movie “Hotel Rwanda,” if nothing else, what Americans know about Rwanda is that the Hutu government killed 800,000 to one million Tutsis, the minority, and moderate Hutus in 100 days. This bloodbath—the latest and worst in a series of genocides going back to 1959—happened after the Hutu president was shot down near the Kigali airport. A study later blamed President Juvénal Habyarimana’s own soldiers for his death. He had angered many by signing a peace accord with the Tutsis.

Kagame’s rebel army returned Tutsis to power on July 4, 1994. Now he leads a country where citizens struggle with that history and a per capita income of \$500, barely more than

half the sub-Saharan average. Yet President Kagame insists that Rwanda's first broad-based, international economy be built with environmental sustainability in mind. He banned plastic grocery bags that end up in trees. Women sweep litter from streets and the hydropower that lights many bulbs is now assisted by solar panels. There is talk of wind turbines.

I proposed a series of stories about these aspects of Rwanda's environmental activism, and my project was one of 10 selected from nearly 200 applicants. This meant they paid for me to travel to and report from Rwanda for five weeks. During this time I wrote blog posts for the Register and IRP, and then in December, my stories were published as "Renewal in Rwanda," a four-part series in the Register and on our Web site as well as the IRP's.

### Life as an IRP Fellow

I described the unmistakable and moving joy in the faces of 1,000 worshippers in a Pentecostal church in Gisenyi, raising their voices in praise without a trace of the pain that must come with praying alongside people who killed your kin. I wrote about an invigorating 10.5-mile hike through the Gishwati Forest to track chimps and of the scientists' laborious efforts to sort through their poop to see what the primates eat in varying weather conditions and seasons. I also described the country's work to spread clean water, alternative energy, and toilets across the countryside.

Before I left for Rwanda, IRP offered me and the other fellows semi-private offices not far from Dupont Circle. They connected us with former British Royal Marines who were flown in to teach us how to avoid booby traps, kidnapping and petty theft. We were



Neighbors working in a bean field are part of the 90 percent of Rwanda's population engaged in agriculture. The government's goal is to shift some of these workers to ecotourism and high-tech jobs. *Photo by Perry Beeman/The Des Moines Register/International Reporting Project.*

taught how to recognize the sound of various weapons so we would know whether to drop to the ground in a strategic position or run as fast as we knew how. It was all very realistic.

Then we spread across the globe to do our reporting before returning to Washington to spend two weeks writing and filling in the reporting blanks. I gave presentations at Johns Hopkins, George Washington University, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, where I accepted an invitation to serve as a short-term public policy scholar. When I got home, the speaking engagements piled up at churches, breakfast clubs, and schools.

For "Renewal in Rwanda," I, along with the IRP, received a citation from the Overseas Press Club of America. Showing up in online search results, this story that originated in Des Moines traveled the world with the series drawing the attention of readers on several continents. Parts of what I wrote were reprinted in Rwanda and in other countries.

International reporting is as vital as ever, perhaps more so as the Internet, environmental concerns, travel and trade connect us as we've not been before. Tapping these new partnerships is part of what it will take to keep our eyes and ears on world developments as The Associated Press struggles, news organizations close bureaus, and people throughout the world clamor for even more news, updated by the minute.

My project was important work that started with a regional focus and grew to the type of international view that reporters need to find ways to keep alive. With fellowships such as IRP, journalists who work for news organizations, large and small, and freelancers, too, can still bring home that worldview. ■

*Perry Beeman writes about environmental issues for The Des Moines Register.*

## Leaving a Sad and Difficult Story in Gaza Behind— For a While

‘... I always say that I am not the story. I am out of it. I observe the place, and I describe it as it is. If I talk to people, I talk to all sides of the story. That’s how I conceive it.’

*From 2001 to 2009, Taghreed El-Khodary, who is Palestinian, reported from Gaza for The New York Times. Her reporting for the Times ceased soon after it was revealed that the son of Ethan Bronner, the paper’s Jerusalem bureau chief, was serving in the Israeli army. The Times decided not to remove Bronner from that position.*

*In June, El-Khodary spoke at The*

*Palestine Center in Washington, D.C. as a panel member at a discussion about covering Palestine. At that event, she spoke briefly about her decision to suspend her reporting, expressing how sorry she was to leave Gaza.*

*“But my bureau chief’s son joined the Israeli army and I felt like it’s not wise of me [to stay],” she said, and explained why. “I don’t want to risk*

*losing my sources that I have been establishing for many, many years. It’s a very sensitive issue, as you all know, not only that, but it’s also risky and you have many small groups who would like revenge and I can be a great person to get a hold of. It’s very sensitive and I was really disappointed that they took this decision but they understand why I left.”*



Palestinian children walk on a makeshift bridge over floodwaters after a rainstorm in a Gaza City refugee camp. *Photo by Adel Hana/The Associated Press.*

*For a full transcript of that discussion go to <http://bit.ly/blRuFk>.*

*El-Khodary, who is a 2006 Nieman Fellow, is a visiting scholar in the Middle East program at the Carnegie Endowment in Washington, D.C., where she focuses her research on Gaza. She spoke with Nieman Reports editor Melissa Ludtke in June shortly after Israel raided one of the ships in the flotilla of boats headed from Turkey to deliver supplies to the people of Gaza. In the conversation, she spoke about how she approached her coverage of Gaza. Edited excerpts appear below:*

**Taghreed El-Khodary:** When I worked on a story in Gaza, I understood that I was writing for Americans. I felt as though I play a role in explaining the situation happening on the ground. I feel responsible for doing that.

**Melissa Ludtke:** Right now, as news of the Israeli raid on the flotilla is breaking, you are not in Gaza and the Times doesn't have another person with your kind of experience to bring news to their readers. Without you there, what dimensions of this story are we not getting?

**El-Khodary:** We can always learn something. I feel guilty, as a journalist, to leave the place, but at the same time for me, it's important to get out, to breathe, and to listen to other voices. For me, I cannot live in one place. In Gaza, there has been so much pressure on me that I decided to take off for a while.

**Ludtke:** How would you describe your mission as a journalist in covering Gaza for a Western audience?

**El-Khodary:** I felt the pressure of being the only one covering the war in Gaza for The New York Times. Whenever there is a war somewhere the newspaper will send an army of journalists, an army of producers. But in Gaza I'm by myself covering that big story. I felt so responsible. Many wire service journalists decided to work from home or only from their

office; they relied heavily on their photographers and their cameraman. But as a journalist, I felt responsible to go to the scene to actually see it. I cannot believe it unless I see it. I cannot believe anything unless I see it with my eyes.

**Ludtke:** That's a very big risk.

**El-Khodary:** Yes. It is a risk. I risked my life several times. I have a very good driver, but he has a family so I can't ask him to take those risks. I always asked him to stay away, and I would walk. On many occasions I would walk by myself. It was hard but there was a driving force inside me to get the truth out because I am responsible and it was very critical to tell this story. I don't want to give any wrong information so I am very thankful that there was nothing wrong in my articles. Even when there was [a disputed] bombing of a school, I didn't say that it happened inside the school. I said outside.

I knew because I went to the scene, I went to the hospital, I spoke to witnesses. Many other news organizations had to correct their reporting after they found out that it wasn't inside the school. It was outside. Many civilians were hurt, of course, but I said the bombing happened outside of the school. There were Jewish readers and Israelis who asked the newspaper to correct my story. But the Times said that they didn't need to correct what I'd written. It was reported correctly.

**Ludtke:** But people thought you'd said it happened inside of the school?

**El-Khodary:** I felt like I did my part when I covered that story. All I was thinking was to get the truth out to the American people. That was my only agenda, to get the truth out.

**Ludtke:** You talk about Western audiences responding to what you write. With digital media, your sources in Gaza can read The New York Times. I'm wondering if they perceived a bias in the coverage of the Israeli and Palestinian conflict in the paper's over-

all coverage and, if so, whether that perception would pose problems for you in going back to them as sources.

**El-Khodary:** Luckily, I enjoy a good reputation because I never belonged to any political faction; even my parents have nothing to do with politics. It is an advantage. When I see what I believe is the truth, I speak out. And I have people around me in the community who are aware of me as a journalist and know that I am fair.

**Ludtke:** So they are able to separate you, as the journalist they know, from the institution for which you write that they may perceive as having a different view?

**El-Khodary:** I mean, you have the Jewish Americans, some of them, that are not happy at all with the coverage. Then you have some Palestinians and they are not happy with the coverage. But, you know? You cannot make everybody happy. And yes, I feel very sad that Gaza has not been covered in the past year. No features or analysis of the place until recently.

**Ludtke:** How did you reconcile your own commitment, for lack of a better word, to the cause of the Palestinian people with the expectation of how you would go about covering what happened there in an objective way? Did you have a difficulty in reconciling these two things?

**El-Khodary:** Human beings fascinate me; it's people who move me. It's a hard story, but I just get a feel for the people anywhere I go. It doesn't have to be a place where I'm from. But at the same time, of course, I was born and raised in Gaza. And I can see since childhood how the place has changed. It's a sad story, definitely. I mean, it's sad when I see how the society is collapsing. It is due to the wrong policies. It's sad to see it going, in a way, backwards. And I see all of that, and I am moved, of course. But you have to learn, and I always say that I am not the story. I am out of it. I observe the place, and I describe



Palestinians living in a refugee camp in Gaza City wait for their monthly food supply from the United Nations. *Photo by Lefteris Pitarakis/The Associated Press.*

it as it is. If I talk to people, I talk to all sides of the story. That's how I conceive it.

When I was in the West Bank, I asked people living there questions because I want to understand the mindset. How do they think? Why for them is it important to take over a Palestinian land in the West Bank? They are leaving Brooklyn or Manhattan to go live in a Palestinian village or Palestinian town saying that it is part of "our DNA." For me, it is fascinating to understand so I interview many of them. For me, it is always interesting to understand the other voice, the other analysis, so I can get the whole picture.

I don't isolate myself from their reality. I am a realist. I cannot just be stuck with only one side of the story. That's one of the reasons it's so hard to be in a place like Gaza and just to cover the same thing over and over again.

**Ludtke:** What are challenges you see with Western news organizations parachuting someone in to report from Gaza? Will they have the ability to tell anything approximating an accurate story about what's happening there and the forces at play?

**El-Khodary:** It's important to have an outside eye coming in and observing the place and describing the place. But of course, they cannot do it by themselves because most of them don't speak the local language. So, of course, they need someone always to help them, whether it's a driver, whether it's a local reporter, to help them, to guide them. It is very important to find a good one because in the end that person is guiding them.

**Ludtke:** And framing the story in many ways?

**El-Khodary:** Yes, of course. They play a great role in framing the story, and that's why it's important to find a credible one, a good one. The scary thing is when some reporters go to the field and find it hard to listen to people. There are those who are completely brainwashed and stick with whatever stereotype they bring with them.

**Ludtke:** How can you tell who is going to be a good guide and who is not?

**El-Khodary:** You just have to keep trying. It's a relationship you develop, and you will see how you can be comfortable and how you understand each other,

and then you figure out how the other person works.

**Ludtke:** I would guess that Western audiences bring perceptions about Gaza and the people who live there to their reading of stories about Gaza or about this conflict. Did you make an effort in your stories to break through some of these preconceptions?

**El-Khodary:** There are many preconceptions that people have from their reading. They want it to be a certain way. But as reporter, you cannot; you have to see the whole thing as it is. This takes time—to understand the whole dynamic—so it's essential to spend time in the place. It's essential to talk to many people. That is very important. There are things that people don't say but in time you can read it through their voice, facial expression, and action. It's what I call the living expressions, the feeling, and those are very important to understand.

**Ludtke:** Can you remember a story in which you think your reporting conveyed this living expression of feeling?

**El-Khodary:** I have a list of many of them. There is so much pain in Gaza. There are many people who lost their loved ones, and these are the moments. When a woman is talking about her love of her girl or the loss of her boy. This is very important. There are many women who will lose children and the pain is expressed differently from one human being to another. You need to be able to transmit, to understand and to conceive it. There are those that don't cry and are not expressive. To feel it, it means you have to get closer to the source. You have to think like them. You have to make them feel very comfortable with you.

**Ludtke:** A lot of the time you're probably dealing with people who have suffered from trauma, and that requires a particular need for empathy, understanding and special journalistic skills.

**El-Khodary:** These are very sensitive and delicate stories. You have to pay

attention and you have to respect the pain. You have to be able to listen. It is very crucial and difficult since you are not the one going through that pain. There are many people who cover this story, but how many people feel it? How many people can?

**Ludtke:** I'm wondering if there were challenges for you in terms of being a woman and doing this reporting in the region in which you were working. I can't imagine that there are a lot of Palestinian women working there as reporters.

**El-Khodary:** Surprisingly it is changing from when I started reporting in the mid-1990's. Many female reporters are working there. But how many women go into the field? Some rely heavily on their cameramen. Some go. It depends on the story. I can go anytime at night.

Many women cannot.

**Ludtke:** Why are you able to and other women can't?

**El-Khodary:** Because I don't have a family that would say no.

**Ludtke:** This has more to do with cultural norms rather than laws or regulations.

**El-Khodary:** Yes. And sometimes it's very helpful to be a woman. Especially covering stories about women. At the same time, of course, as a woman, there is much pressure. But you have to manage. You have to be able to present yourself in a very respectable way. You have to respect the place, after all. Wherever you go, first of all you have to understand the place. That is very important. In Gaza, I like

to see women journalists. There's so much potential. And they always ask me "How does this work? I feel it is dominated by men." Of course, I worked as a reporter, but at the same time you hear many things. Many voices are critical. You have to understand these voices. You shouldn't be angry. You should understand.

**Ludtke:** Maybe those same voices might question what you are doing in this role.

**El-Khodary:** You have to respect them. Sometimes you don't need to question. The story, after all, is not you. Many journalists come from outside. Some of them, they think it's about them. It's interesting to see that. But you have to be aware of things. You have to protect yourself from the story. It takes time. ■

## A Foreign Correspondent as Suspect

'One of the first things to hit me was the difference between how the Pakistani state and the Pakistani people viewed me.'

BY NIRUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN

It is one of the most coveted assignments in Indian journalism, and I had dreamed about it for many years. Yet as I flew to Islamabad from New Delhi in May 2006 to take up my post as the new foreign correspondent in Pakistan for my newspaper, *The Hindu*, my heart filled with dread.

Partly, it was the challenge of a new assignment. An unwritten agreement between India and Pakistan ensures only two journalists from either country can be stationed in the other at any given time. Pakistan always sent representatives from its state-owned media to New Delhi. *The Hindu*, a privately owned independent English language daily, has one of the two slots for India, a wire service the other. The job comes with much responsibility.

The newspaper's Pakistan coverage is known for its sobriety and balance; Pakistan-watchers in India and elsewhere follow it closely. One former diplomat, who had served as India's high commissioner to Pakistan, told me before I left: "You will be one of only two Indians who can write what they see and hear for others to read. We diplomats write too, but that's only for the files."

In part, the dread that I felt was about going to a country that I had grown up thinking of as "the enemy" and where people thought likewise of India and Indians. Pakistan separated at birth from India in 1947, and after three and a half wars they are locked in instinctive rivalry over everything from the cricket ground to the size of

their nuclear arsenal. My predecessors had warned that life would not be easy.

Having left in February after nearly four years in Pakistan, I look back on my time in that country as the most complex and rewarding period of my 24 years as a journalist. I learned much as I unlearned much more about Pakistan and my own country and gained important insights into my profession.

### The Eyes Watching Me

One of the first things to hit me was the difference between how the Pakistani state and the Pakistani people viewed me. On arrival, I gained two shadows from the national intelligence agencies. During the next four years, the "state"

would be with me constantly—mostly just one man on a motorbike, wearing blue jeans and glasses, but at times, three or even four men, stationed outside my house, following me wherever I went. I took for granted that my phones were tapped and my e-mails read.

There was nothing covert or discreet about the shadowing; it was done openly. Nor was I singled out. The other Indian journalist got similar treatment, as had all our predecessors. Indian diplomats are subject to much closer surveillance. I quickly realized it was not so much to keep track of me as to discourage Pakistanis from interacting with me.

Pakistanis, fed up with the overwhelming influence of the national intelligence agencies on their nation's destiny, sarcastically call them *farishtey*, Persian/Urdu for “angels.” If I went to a Pakistani home, they would be visited the next day by a *farishta*, or they would receive a phone call from a “blocked caller ID” number asking them how they knew me, what business they had with me, and what we had talked about. If a Pakistani visited me at my office-cum-home, he would be accosted by the *farishta* at the gate, asked for his identity, and the same questions followed. Evidently the intelligence agencies feared I could be an Indian intelligence operative who was trying to recruit agents in Pakistan.

Not surprisingly, I had very little official access. No bureaucrat wanted to

be seen talking to an Indian journalist for fear of earning a career-affecting black mark from the intelligence agencies. My only professional interaction with the government was through press officers. The Pakistani military held briefings for foreign journalists and took them on visits to the North-West Frontier regions where they were fighting the Taliban. Neither of the two Indian journalists was ever invited.

From the kind of questions I asked at a press conference to the number of times I visited the Indian High Commission and which Indian diplomats I socialized with, I felt constantly studied for evidence of my presumed links to the Indian intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing.

The onus was on me to prove I was clean and not just through what I wrote for my newspaper, although that was important too. This I found to be one of the big challenges of my job. As a journalist, I had to find out about things, but if I asked too many questions, even in a social situation, people would say: “My dear, you are very curious, aren't you?”

Afraid that I might unwittingly confirm the presumption that I was an extension of the Indian High Commission, I deliberately interacted with Indian diplomats less than I did during an earlier posting in Sri Lanka; at press briefings, I worked hard at phrasing my questions so that no one could accuse me of asking one planted by the Indian government. Even after

all this, a friend with contacts among the *farishtey* dropped a warning: “They think you are calling the Indian High Commission too often.”

## Visa Problems

The visa terms for Indian journalists are restrictive, and this drastically affected my coverage of events. Based in Islamabad, I could travel to Lahore and Karachi only. Every other place in Pakistan was off-limits. I was always told I could ask for permission to visit any place in Pakistan. Long after the dates of my proposed travel were past, I would get a note from the information ministry's External Publicity Wing telling me that “your request is regretted”(sic).

Rawalpindi, which is less than 10 kilometers from Islamabad, was out of bounds too. But just once, I got permission to go. It was to cover Benazir Bhutto's election campaign rally in that city on December 27, 2007. I was just 30 feet away when a suicide bomber blew himself up near her car in the attack that killed her.

The visa renewal process was an annual battle. I applied four months before the visa ran out in May every year, and I usually got it four months after it expired. It was something to keep you on tenterhooks for eight months of the year. At the first renewal in 2007, I had to wait until September. The exact reason for the delay was never spelled out to me.



Scenes of Pakistan range from a protest in the streets and a remembrance of the slain Benazir Bhutto to



But one day the top official in external publicity summoned me and warned that I was “trespassing in the domain of national security” and to stay clear of such “activities.”

My own conjecture—based on identically worded reports containing an indirect reference to me in two English language newspapers—was that I was being punished for being friends with Ayesha Siddiqi, the author of “Military Inc.,” a critical book about the Pakistani military that caused a storm when it came out in mid-2007.

Considering how shut out I was from official Pakistan, I was lucky that one of the big stories during my time there, the fall of General Pervez Musharraf, unfolded mostly on the streets of the Pakistani capital. My lack of government access did not matter nor did the travel restrictions; it was all happening on the streets outside the Supreme Court, a couple of kilometers from where I lived. Lawyers and politicians involved in the protests were always happy to talk and were extra courteous when they discovered I was Indian. Other events in 2007, a defining year in Pakistan’s history, were also easily accessible because they were happening on the streets of Islamabad, such as the siege of Lal Masjid.

There were downers, too—my requests for interviews with the president, prime minister, or foreign minister were never granted. Officials always quoted the reciprocity

principle—“Our journalists in India are not even invited to your foreign office briefings.”

### People Talk to Me

If official Pakistan was always suspicious, distant and sometimes hostile, the people seemed to inhabit a separate universe when it came to dealing with an Indian. Even if some thought I was a spy, their reactions to me were a complex mix of curiosity and suspicion, friendliness and antagonism, warmth and caution.

My nationality was a natural ice-breaker. “Oh! Indian? Which part? My father is from [Indian] Punjab” was a common refrain. Or “Have you met Shahrukh Khan?”—a reference to India’s top film star. Bollywood films are a huge hit in Pakistan, as is Indian music, both pop and classical, and Pakistani women are hooked on Indian soaps. I encountered both dislike and admiration for India and an envy that it had left Pakistan far behind in so many ways.

Waiting for a flight to Lahore once, I was accosted by a teenage boy who asked me for my autograph. “Why do you want my autograph?” I asked him. “But you are Indian, aren’t you?” he said.

Many people braved the angels at the gates to visit me and opened their homes to me. I had never expected to make so many friends in Pakistan. Some I now count as family. As eager

as I was to know more about them and their lives, they wanted to find out about me and my country and its successes and failures. We did not always agree on everything, but if I was able to bring perspective and depth to my coverage, it was thanks to these interactions with Pakistani people.

With my Indian nationality far more important than my identity as a reporter in the eyes of others, all through those four years I was acutely aware that I was not just a journalist reporting a story but also a part of the story. Just how much this was so is something that I realized with the terrorist attacks in Mumbai in November 2008.

Every Pakistani I knew wanted me to tell them “what India [is] thinking.” A day didn’t pass in which I found myself without a variant of that question. Pakistani television shows asked me to talk about the “Indian viewpoint.” Those tense months were a revelation about how governments use the media and how the media in turn can manipulate both government and their audiences. Strangely enough, I made more friends during this time than in the two years before.

The Pakistani state came back at me in 2009. In August as I waited for my visa extension, I was abruptly asked to leave the country within two weeks. My application had been rejected. I was given no reason, and this time I had no clue if it was to do with a story I had written, something I had



the pleasures of henna and video games. Photos by Nirupama Subramanian.

said on one of the television channels, or if the angels were simply unhappy with my rapidly expanding network of Pakistani friends. The Hindu preferred to work out this situation quietly so that it would not become another point of contention between the two governments. I got a six-month reprieve, until February 2010.

From my experience in Pakistan, there are a few things I now know for

certain. One is that it would do much for relations between India and Pakistan if the two governments scrapped that two correspondents rule, opened up to as many media organizations from the other side as are interested in sending correspondents, and allowed them to travel without restrictions and report freely.

Journalists on both sides must push hard for this to happen. ■

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## When ‘We’ Don’t Want to Know About ‘Them’

A lot happened after a Turkish journalist set out to tell people in her country about those who belong to the Armenian diaspora.

BY AFSIN YURDAKUL

I was not surprised to hear the question: “Have your editors in Istanbul ever changed the meaning of anything you wrote in the past?” a prominent Armenian-American source asked me when I reached him by phone for the first time.

“Of course not,” I replied.

Here I was in the midst of trying to explain my intent with the story I was calling about, and what I thought were reassuring words weren’t working. What I wanted to do was offer Turkish readers the opportunity to hear directly from people in the Armenian diaspora about the tensions between these two communities.

Predictably, a long, awkward silence ensued. After connecting by phone with Armenian-Americans who live in Glendale, California, I was growing accustomed to enduring these pauses in conversation. As a Turkish journalist, I wasn’t someone who they would feel comfortable about opening up to until some sense of trust was established between us.

“I will have to decline your request because of the sensitivity of the issue,” this person told me.

While I was disheartened by another rejection, in his voice I heard a faint

opening. His “no” sounded more like a “yes,” albeit a half-hearted one. Even better, our conversation continued. Why, he wondered, would a Turkish journalist choose to write about the diaspora? And could a Turkish journalist ever write fairly about it?

Each question he tossed my way spoke to the lack of contact between “us” and “them.” As I carefully considered my responses, I knew he would weigh my words and listen to the tone of my voice. He seemed to be testing whether I was someone he could trust. If so, perhaps he would keep talking with me.

It took nearly an hour but we finally reached that juncture when I could tell he felt he could say things to me. He told me that he had not spoken to a Turkish or an Armenian journalist in more than a decade. Why? Because he fears being misquoted. With me, my attitude has somehow convinced him that he can go on the record.

Our rough start led to one of my most honest and heartfelt interviews.

### Pushing Past Speculation

I had pitched the idea of writing an in-depth piece about the Armenian

diaspora to my editor, Semin Gumusel, in October 2009, right after Turkey and Armenia signed protocols for the normalization of ties. She worked in Istanbul for Newsweek Türkiye, the edition of the magazine published there; I reported from Washington, D.C. At that time, the Turkish media were flooded with news about the diaspora Armenians from Paris to New York protesting the accords. In Turkey, what little was known about this far-flung community was fed by a narrative that rarely stretched beyond political paranoia.

My proposal was to expand the arc of this worn-out narrative by reporting a story with a different goal—a desire to demystify the diaspora. Once Gumusel gave my idea the go-ahead, this article, which would be published as a cover story, embroiled me in more than four months of reporting. From Istanbul, Gumusel oversaw the story’s progress and Richard Giragosian, another correspondent, contributed reporting from Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. Over the course of editing this story, we exchanged hundreds of e-mails, and in them we discussed with utmost sensitivity how we thought readers of various political slants would perceive

our tone and even our usage of words.

Throughout the process, we were acutely aware of the intellectual responsibility resting on our shoulders, given the enduring forces of division and fear that stood ready to politicize our effort. In my role as the lead reporter reaching out to Armenian-American sources, my experiences taught me a lot about dealing with frustrations that were simply a part of trying to untie a knot that had grown only tighter as the 20th century moved on.

First, I had to come to terms with the inevitability of being misunderstood by Turks and Armenian-Americans. Some Armenian-Americans doubted that I could or would represent their voices fairly. No matter how much I tried to assure them about my journalistic standards, the fact that I am Turkish overrode anything I could possibly say. From Turkish readers came concerns, too, as some questioned the magazine's editorial judgment. To publish this piece with the prominence of a cover story meant too much attention was being paid to Armenian perspectives at the expense of drowning out Turkish voices on these issues of historic and contemporary importance.

My view was that our editorial decision was to spur a new dialogue that didn't bear the residue of the old one with its impulse to debase or glorify one of the two sides. Within my reporting, I wanted to search for common ground and thereby push the discussion past conventional boundaries. The usual two-sided narrative fed on clashing loyalties the Turks and Armenians have nurtured for decades, but I hoped this one would create fresh appetites for new exploration. Focusing on opposing perspectives leaves little room for empathy. This story would be different.

It was published in the Turkish edition of Newsweek during the week in March when the Foreign Affairs Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution to recognize the 1915 killings of Armenians as genocide. Following this vote, Turkey

withdrew its U.S. ambassador, and any hope of proceeding with the protocols between Ankara and Yerevan was dim at best. Amid this political turmoil, the article achieved its original goal, which was to challenge perceptions that Turks and Armenians have about one another.

## Returning to My Sources

For my Armenian-American sources, the idea of a Turkish journalist reaching out to listen to their stories with genuine interest was relatively new and partly surprising. Yet when they felt convinced that I would tell their story as I heard them tell it to me, they shared their views openly. In return, I did all I could to make certain they felt comfortable with the material I would use in my story. Numerous times I went over the paragraphs with my sources—both the original transcripts of my interviews and my Turkish translations. I suggested that they consult with other Turkish speakers whom they knew so that they wouldn't rely solely on me. These conversations

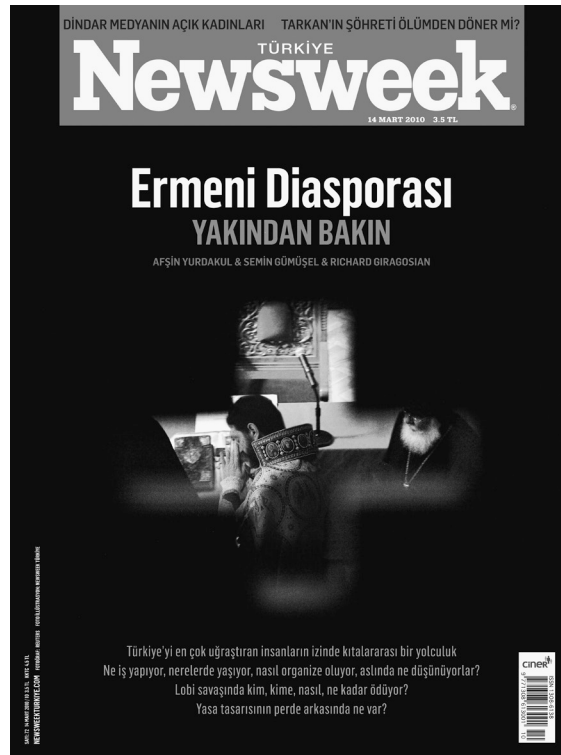
helped me to establish and build trust with my sources, despite the initial skepticism that I encountered.

For most Turkish readers too, it was an unusual experience to be exposed to a sensibly written article about the Armenian diaspora. What they read shook deep-rooted assumptions they held. For example, my reporting shed light on the amount of money Turks assumed Armenian organizations spent in Washington for lobbying. I hadn't found any substantial reporting done on this topic in Turkey, yet speculation on the street was that the spending was in the millions of dollars.

In researching this question, I was able to document that one prominent Armenian group spent less than \$300,000 in 2009, and this amount turned out not to be significantly higher than what was spent in the preceding years. It turned out that the Turkish government spent more than ethnic Armenian organizations on its lobbying efforts. Before our story appeared, this wasn't known in Turkey, and revealing it launched a discussion about how Turkey imagines the diaspora's influence in Washington.

There are reasons why our article was received well in contemporary Turkey whereas a decade ago this probably would not have been so. Posing and contemplating difficult questions is part of the societal change under way in Turkey today, just as the magazine's initiative is part of a new wave in Turkish journalism in which space is opened up for informed and critical debate. Recently Newsweek Türkiye's Editor in Chief Selcuk Tepeli let me know that thoughtful and sensible news reporting is becoming more important as Turkey finds itself squarely in the midst of a rapidly changing political environment.

This story about the Armenian diaspora as well as Giragosian's piece calling for keeping the channels of dialogue open prompted high-ranking diplomats to get in touch with my editors. The foreign ministry had taken notice of the debate that Newsweek Türkiye's



The Turkish edition of Newsweek broke new ground with a cover story about the Armenian diaspora.

cover story stirred in the media and offered assurances that such calls for dialogue wouldn't be stymied. And despite concerns and criticism voiced by some readers, the magazine's sales increased by almost 25 percent that week.

This was the first in-depth article written about the Armenian diaspora in the Turkish press, and it remained

among the most-read articles on the magazine's Web site in the weeks that followed. Such sustained interest—and watching how it sparked conversation—convinced me that when fairness is a cornerstone of storytelling, words have the power to transform, even when the political picture looks grim. By placing human beings at the hub of complex political issues,

spaces previously sealed off from such conversation can be found. ■

*Afsin Yurdakul is a New York City-based correspondent for Newsweek's Turkish edition. Her articles have appeared on MSNBC.com and PBS's Tehranbureau.com.*

## Piecing Together a Mosaic of America

'As a foreign correspondent, my challenge was to tell stories about America in ways that would connect with my Finnish audience—both in print and through my multimedia presentations ...'

BY PEKKA MYKKÄNEN

**F**our years and 50 states later it is hard to say what has been the most striking, stunning, depressing, wonderful or uplifting experience I've had while covering the United States. But I can say that my bosses at Helsingin Sanomat, the

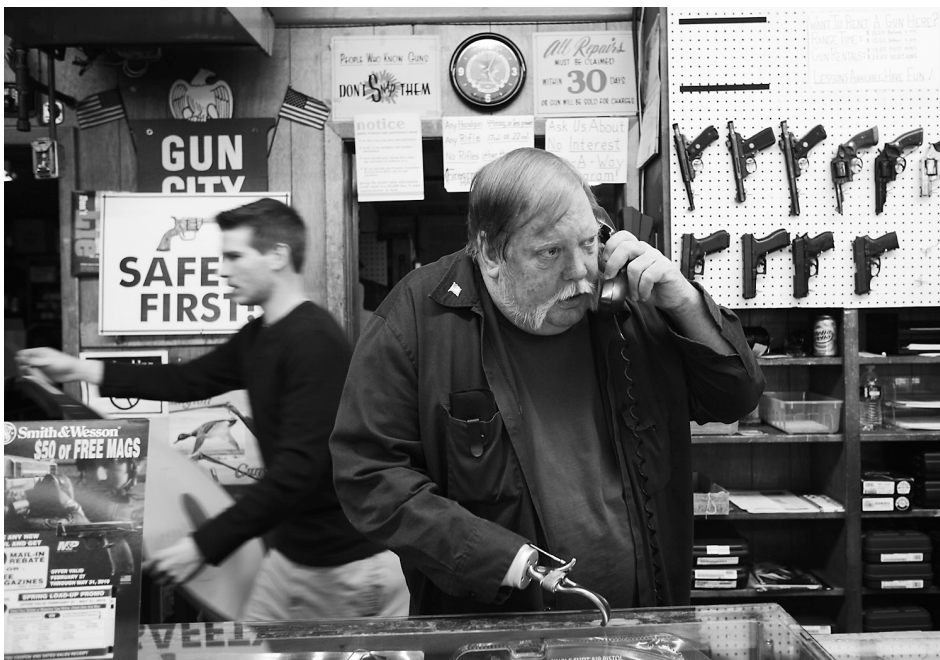
largest daily newspaper in Finland, got their money's worth when I flew to Chicago in November of 2007 for a two-day reporting trip. The result: three revealing stories, each very different from the other, each offering a glimpse of America.

There was my interview with Tony Lagouranis, who'd written the book, "Fear Up Harsh: An Army Interrogator's Dark Journey Through Iraq." He told me that he had tortured prisoners in Iraq while working there as a U.S. Army interrogator. That was when President George W. Bush and his inner circle were still insisting that "the United States does not torture."

I then met William Spielberger, who was helping poor, mostly black, often old, and sometimes nearly illiterate people sue some of the nation's biggest investment banks because of complex products they had been sold. In time, Americans would become quite familiar with the consequences of subprime loans.

Rachel Felson worked in a campaign headquarters located in a office building and was getting ready to devote herself fully to what then looked like the long-shot campaign of a local politician with an exotic name: Barack Hussein Obama.

Those two days in Chicago paint a portrait of the good, the bad, and the ugly that I shared with my Finnish readers as I told them about America. Anywhere I went, it seemed, I would stumble on this variety of stories in



Terry Holmes, who works at Gun City USA in Nashville, Tennessee, said sales rose after the 2008 presidential election. *Photo by Pekka Mykkänen.*

this wild, fascinating, mad and lovable land. For a foreign journalist the United States is a gold mine and a nightmare. Ever think you finally understand her, and something happens to bulldoze that feeling.

In my four years as our paper's correspondent based in Washington, D.C., I witnessed the election of the first black U.S. president, reported on the worst economic crisis since the 1930's, chronicled the fall of the auto industry and the rise of health care reform, and conveyed the horrible effects of oil spilling into the Gulf of Mexico. I spent time talking with heartbroken fishermen from Louisiana, and in Florida I walked through neighborhoods that went belly up when the mortgage crisis hit. Long-suffering families in Flint, Michigan shared the pride they felt in being the birthplace of General Motors, and then they expressed anger and sorrow as they watched their livelihoods from the American automobile industry vanish.

I traveled to a coal mining area of eastern Kentucky where the life expectancy of residents is 10 years less than those who live nearby in northern Virginia. Too much Mountain Dew, beer and OxyContin and too many potato chips and cigarettes are the culprits. Countless businesspeople and ordinary Americans I talked with expressed concern about China's rising power, and people everywhere let me know their fears about the future and their feelings about the unkept promise of the American Dream; it didn't matter whether they were making steel pipes, paper, gravestones or solar panels.

I also discovered in the state of Washington a private university called DigiPen with a degree-granting curriculum that teaches students how to make entertaining, addicting and sometimes even educational video games. Back on the East Coast, I went to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and met an artist who was studying the relationship between a researcher and a humanoid robot. And I read about some other researchers at MIT who invented a flying car: "Simply land at the airport,

fold your wings up and drive home," their commercial instructs.

In politics, I discovered a land of overlapping realities. In Oregon, a state known for its progressive politics, where euthanasia is legal, two members of the state Supreme Court are openly gay, and green practices and policies are common, I wrote about the fact that the state is also the home of America's most conservative Republi-

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**Given my readers'  
perceptions about  
America, which I learned  
from their e-mails  
and online comments,  
I often found myself  
bringing forth  
countering evidence ...**

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can voters, as measured in exit polls. With its ongoing battle between the country's most liberal voters and its most conservative, Oregon turns out to be America's most polarized state.

In Tennessee, I interviewed Tea Party activists and gun owners who told me they were afraid of Obama's "socialism" and its destructive impact on their beloved country and its fiscal strength. "It's only a matter of time when this house of cards will collapse," said Stacie Burke, cofounder of the Tennessee Tea Party and a mother of three. "People are afraid and absolutely convinced that it is only a question of time when the federal government will come and take away our freedoms," explained Terry Holmes who worked at a gun store in Nashville. Holmes lost his right hand in Vietnam. He told me that guns and ammunition sold like hotcakes after Obama won the presidential election.

When I visited Arizona to report on the passage of its strict immigration

law, I remembered words from an essay by Richard Hofstadter entitled "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," which I first read during my Nieman year at Harvard. Here's why:

American politics has often been an arena for angry minds ... behind this I believe there is a style of mind that is far from new and that is not necessarily right-wing. I call it the paranoid style simply because no other word adequately evokes the sense of heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy that I have in mind.

Hofstadter wrote those words in the 1960's, though he could have written them today, or in the 1830's, as he acknowledged in his book when he referred to Lyman Beecher, a Presbyterian minister (and the father of Harriet Beecher Stowe). In 1835, Beecher was worried about the great tide of Catholic immigrants from Europe: They would fill the jails and crowd the poorhouses, multiply tumult and violence, quadruple taxation, and mess up the elections. "Whatever we do, it must be done quickly," he wrote in "Plea for the West."

Something must be done—quickly—or the sky will fall. This story line is a common thread running through American politics. It's certainly one that I relayed to my Finnish audience as I tried to explain these times. Despite this sense of urgency, back in Washington, D.C. partisanship has often crippled any action, slow or fast.

### **Storytelling for a Finnish Audience**

As a foreign correspondent, my challenge was to tell stories about America in ways that would connect with my Finnish audience—both in print and through my multimedia presentations, blog postings, videos and radio pieces. After all, if they wanted news about America, they could go to the Web and find (in English) an abundant supply of U.S. publications. Yet, because I am Finnish, grew up there, still have



This free dental clinic in Soft Shell, Kentucky was organized by a nonprofit that provides health care in remote areas of the world. Photo by Pekka Mykkänen.

family living there, and therefore understand and appreciate the cultural and political sensibilities of my audience, the stories I decided to tell and how I told them were closely tied to our shared experiences.

I came to this U.S. posting, for example, with the knowledge that Finns are very suspicious of American foreign policy: Only about 5 percent of Finns felt their country should join the invasion of Iraq. And Finns' stereotypical views of Americans have largely been shaped by the TV shows and movies they've seen, holidays some have spent here, and individual encounters with Americans. They are curious, however, and digest bits of information that they come across. For example, many of my readers assumed that Americans are ignorant. Why? Because a well-publicized survey revealed that nearly a third of Americans could not name their vice president. Others believe that Americans don't care about the environment because they account for a disproportionate share of the world's carbon emissions. Here are a few other beliefs that many Finns hold: Americans invade faraway countries for oil;

they are fundamentalist Christians who trust in the Old Testament's "an eye for an eye" philosophy. As evidence, they point to the fact that Utah's attorney general thought that the execution by firing squad of Ronnie Lee Gardner was something people would like to read about on Twitter. ("I just gave the go ahead to Corrections Director to proceed with Gardner's execution. May God grant him the mercy he denied his victims.")

Given my readers' perceptions about America, which I learned about from their e-mails and online comments, I often found myself bringing forth countering evidence as I wrote about some of these issues:

- Listen up folks: Michigan abolished the death penalty in 1846, more than 100 years before the high-minded folks in Finland.
- Yellowstone was the first national park in the world and the U.S. Congress established it in 1872 when one would think that they might have been busy with other things.
- All voting in Oregon is done by

mail, and we have a lot to learn from their experiences and electoral innovations.

I'd also remind readers that whenever a mistake is made in or by America or power is abused, forces surface to remedy the problems and get the country back on track. For every Hummer that an American owns, there are long waiting lists of people eager to buy an environmentally friendly Prius. In the aftermath of a hurricane at home or an earthquake or tsunami in other countries, the American people volunteer to help. Former President Bill Clinton expressed this best at the Democratic National Convention in 2008: "People the world over have always been more impressed by the power of our example than by the example of our power."

At times it was hard to tell whether Americans truly understood how much their policies and actions during the past decade—concerning the military, the environment, and the economic crisis—have harmed their international standing. When the pictures from Abu Ghraib surfaced in the spring of 2004, the U.S. State Department postponed the release of its global report called "Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2003-2004." When it was released two weeks late, I recall how one Chinese official mocked the U.S., saying the report had become the laughingstock of the world and it exposed America's hypocrisy about human rights.

In heading back to Finland I take with me an understanding I didn't have when I arrived four years ago: A person can tell stories about America but never quite explain her. ■

*Pekka Mykkänen, a 2004 Nieman Fellow, was the Washington, D.C. correspondent for Helsingin Sanomat, the largest daily in Finland, from 2006 to 2010. He reported for the newspaper from China as its Asia correspondent from 1998 to 2003.*

# The Sometimes Bumpy Nonprofit Ride Into Digital Foreign Correspondence

‘We began with the naïve assumption that if we covered the costs of getting journalists to the field they would be able to earn a decent income through placement of the resulting stories. We were wrong!’

BY JON SAWYER

**T**he Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting began with a simple idea—that we could leverage small travel grants to journalists to assure multiple voices on big global issues and at the same time help talented individuals sustain careers

as foreign correspondents. Five years and some 150 projects later those remain key goals but our mission has expanded—and with it our sense of what is required of nonprofit journalism initiatives like the Pulitzer Center.

Some lessons we’ve learned:

**Collaboration:** Our best projects have entailed partnerships with multiple organizations and outlets. We developed our expertise on video by producing several dozen short pieces for the now defunct public television program “Foreign Exchange With Fareed Zakaria,”



The Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting supported the collaboration of a photographer and a poet who produced an Emmy Award-winning multimedia project about HIV in Jamaica. *Photo by Joshua Cogan (www.joshuacogan.com).*

for example, and we extended our audience by partnering with YouTube on its first video reporting contest. In our project on Sudan we are collaborating with The Washington Post to support the work of journalist/attorney Rebecca Hamilton and funding complementary coverage on “PBS NewsHour.” We have worked in tandem with “NewsHour” and National Geographic to promote our common work on the global water crisis. In these and other reporting initiatives we have recruited donors with an interest in raising the visibility of systemic issues—and an appreciation that the journalism cannot succeed unless there is an assurance of absolute independence in our work.

**Multimedia and the Web:** I began the Pulitzer Center with no video experience, thinking that our focus would be enterprise print projects of the sort I had done over three decades as a correspondent for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. I learned the power of video in the center’s first project, a trip I made with African Union peacekeeper forces in Darfur. At the suggestion of “Foreign Exchange,” I recruited Egyptian videographer Abdul Nasser Abdoun. The footage we collected led to a video report for “Foreign Exchange,” a televised panel of experts at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and a longer documentary that we showed at three dozen universities—a far greater reach, in short, than the print report I wrote for the Post-Dispatch. Multimedia presentations have been a hallmark of Pulitzer projects ever since—from the photojournalism of Sean Gallagher in China and Fred de Sam Lazaro’s television reporting on food and water to immersive Web experiences such as “Hope: Living & Loving With HIV in Jamaica” that is built on the poetry of Kwame Dawes and won an Emmy last year for new approaches to news and documentaries. [See Dawes’s story on page 21.]

Livehopelove.com was an unconventional take on an important issue but it led to an abundance of conventional news-media coverage—from essays in The Washington Post and Virginia Quarterly Review to a featured interview on “NewsHour” and a one-hour radio documentary that aired on dozens of public radio stations. Projects like this have also given us rich visual assets to enhance the presentation of our work online, especially through the Gateway portals on our site that draw from our reporting around the world to address issues such as climate change, fragile states, and women and children in crisis.

**Education and Outreach:** The Gateways have also become a principal means of engaging middle school, high school, and college students. We began with the idea that our role was to fill gaps in the supply of high-quality journalism, with a focus on international reporting that traditional news outlets were increasingly less able to undertake on their own. We soon realized that to be effective we had to address the equal challenge on the demand side, especially among younger audiences with no attachment to traditional news media. We had to reach out to them where they are—in the classroom, on YouTube, and on Twitter, Facebook and other social media. The Pulitzer Center is now funded for 10 full time jobs; four of them are devoted almost exclusively to educational outreach and two others to social media and Web outreach. We produce dozens of journalist events at schools and colleges each year; we engage thousands of students through online encounters with journalists, with each other, and with individuals in the countries on which we report. On projects such as our reporting on water we have collected hundreds of “Share Your Stories” videos, short statements or reported pieces from interested individuals and

students around the globe, all presented within the context of the high-end journalism we have sponsored. The idea is public engagement—informed engagement—with the issues that affect us all.

**Editorial Standards:** In the beginning we assumed that our role would focus on identifying stories worth covering and selecting journalists to do the work; we would provide funding and help with placement but the principal editorial supervision would come from the news media outlets with which the work was placed. We did not anticipate that most big regional newspapers would jettison their foreign editors and that national outlets would increasingly consider freelance pieces for publication or broadcast only when those pieces were nearly completed. That has placed a larger burden on organizations like the Pulitzer Center to provide editorial direction from within; so has the increasing prominence on our site of Untold Stories, which publishes blog posts from journalists in the field. A painful, useful learning experience for us was our photojournalism project on child sacrifice in Uganda, in which we briefly published and then withdrew images that we determined were inappropriate. The experience led us to craft an explicit policy on ethics and standards, now featured prominently on our Web site and as an explicit part of our relationship with the journalists we fund. We have also added the position of senior editor to our staff, reflecting the importance of this part of our work.<sup>1</sup>

**Income for Journalists:** We began with the naïve assumption that if we covered the costs of getting journalists to the field they would be able to earn a decent income through placement of the resulting stories. We were wrong! We’ve had projects in which we provided

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<sup>1</sup> On April 30, Sawyer delivered a speech at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Journalism and Mass Communications’ conference titled “New Journalism, New Ethics?,” in which he spoke in depth about the Uganda project. It is online at <http://bit.ly/dh3pB0>.



\$15,000 and up in travel costs and journalists invested weeks or months of work—and national news media outlets have paid \$1,000 or less for the articles they have published. An urgent part of our mission has become the identification of income streams for our journalists—from payment for talks we arrange on college campuses to the provision of income within our journalism grants themselves. Pulitzer grantees who have demonstrated their ability to produce great work—journalists like Jason Motlagh—know they can count on us for the quick funding decisions that enable them to seize reporting opportunities. [See page 69 for Motlagh’s story.] Others, among them radio documentary producer Dan Grossman, have raised significant funding by using the Pulitzer Center as fiscal agent and by incorporating their work within our coverage of specific issues. The basic argument is simple: Good journalism costs money. It has value. Those who create it should be paid.

**Local Voices:** In my career at the Post-Dispatch I prepared dozens of enterprise projects around the world, traveling to areas of interest for weeks

at a time but never stationed permanently in any of the places I covered. It was parachute journalism, to be sure, but undertaken with a commitment to providing both a fresh perspective and sufficient reporting to ensure against superficial results. Many of the projects we fund follow this model, with the aim of producing print and broadcast journalism that will speak to the largest possible American audience.

Yet as we expand, we are conscious of the need to incorporate authoritative local voices from the countries we cover, indigenous journalists who speak from an experience no visitor can match. Our collaboration this year on food insecurity issues with Global Voices Online, the international community of bloggers, is one example of this approach. [See page 14 for story about Global Voices Online.] Another is our partnership with Nieman Reports to support the work of Fatima Tlisova, featured in this issue, on the persecution of journalists in her home region of Russia’s North Caucasus. [See page 73 for Tlisova’s story.]

Tlisova was given political asylum in this country and spent two years at Harvard, first at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy and then as a

Nieman Fellow. We were introduced to her with the help of Persephone Miel, a senior journalist at Internews, a former fellow at Harvard’s Berkman Center for Internet & Society, and constant champion of journalists struggling against great odds in repressive regions of the world. Miel died earlier this summer. She asked that Internews and the Pulitzer Center create a fellowship in her honor that would provide Pulitzer Center reporting fellowships for journalists like Tlisova.

It’s an honor to be part of this initiative, so close in spirit to our commitment to “illuminate dark places” and “interpret these troubled times.” We hope this fellowship will be an integral part of our work for years to come. ■

*Jon Sawyer is the founding director of the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, a Washington-based nonprofit that promotes in-depth engagement with global affairs through its sponsorship of quality international journalism across all media platforms and an innovative program of outreach and education.*

## It’s Not Like It Used to Be

Just a dozen years ago, the International Reporting Project’s approach was very different. Then, it trained staff reporters hoping to head to foreign bureaus; now it supports story ideas, many of them from freelancers.

BY JOHN SCHIDLOVSKY

It was the spring of 1999, and Steve Inskip, then a 30-year-old correspondent at NPR, poked his head into my office. “Got a second?” he asked. As part of his International Reporting Project (IRP) Fellowship, Inskip was scheduled to fly the next day to Colombia to report on that country’s guerrilla war. With virtually no experience reporting overseas, he

acknowledged he was a bit apprehensive about his five-week trip.

“Steve,” I told him, “you’re a great reporter. You’ve spent six weeks preparing for this story. You’ve taught yourself basic Spanish. You’ve talked to every expert on Colombia you could find. You’re going to do just fine.”

And he did. Inskip returned to Washington five weeks later with

powerful stories for NPR, including a memorable interview with an elderly village woman who, just days after Inskip spoke with her, was killed by the very military forces she had told Inskip she feared. His riveting stories helped to confirm NPR’s editors’ judgment of him as a major talent. He was assigned to the Pentagon and, after the September 11th attacks,

to cover the war in Afghanistan, the first of many international reporting assignments. Later Inskip was named cohost of “Morning Edition,” NPR’s flagship program.

Inskip is just one of the many U.S. journalists who have had their first taste of overseas reporting through one of our fellowships, which have been supported by grants received from a wide range of foundations. Today, nearly 13 years after the program’s founding in 1998, more than 330 U.S. journalists have traveled overseas on IRP programs. Just over half of them have been reporters going on five-week individual reporting trips that have taken them to 92 countries, from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. The others have been senior editors and producers who have traveled on intensive two-week expedition-style trips designed to remind top newsroom executives just why we need foreign reporting.

### **In the Age of Foreign Bureaus**

As the founding director of the IRP, I knew we were filling a need. While there were plenty of mid-career journalism fellowship programs, none were designed to encourage more or better international coverage in the U.S. media. With a three-year start-up grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts, we created a specialized journalism fellowship with a mission of “training the next generation of foreign correspondents,” as Loren Jenkins, senior foreign editor at NPR and one of our initial advisory board members, described it.

What I could not have envisioned then were the significant shifts we’d make in our program’s approach as a result of massive changes in the journalism business. In the beginning, we saw ourselves as giving a boost to young reporters whose ambition was a foreign bureau assignment within their news organization. A decade later, many bureaus were closed, and so our focus switched to providing support for international stories—many of which are reported by independent journalists—and creating a digital platform for their publication.

In our early years, we awarded fellowships to lots of rising stars from news organizations such as The Dallas Morning News, The (Baltimore) Sun, NPR, The Boston Globe, Newsday, The Philadelphia Inquirer, and others. Our program was short—just 13 weeks—and intense. Twice a year, groups of eight to 10 journalists arrived at Johns Hopkins University’s Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C., and spent six weeks taking classes (some studied the Arabic or Russian) and attending seminars with world-class scholars on international topics.

We offered what was considered to be a bold experiment in journalism fellowship programs. Instead of a break from reporting, our project gave reporters a chance to do a kind of reporting they had not done before. Each IRP Fellow went overseas for five weeks to pursue an in-depth project. Our first group of fellows, in the fall of 1998, reported from China, southern Africa, the Middle East, Armenia/Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Kenya and Chile, and their stories appeared prominently in the Inquirer, The Dallas Morning News, The (Toledo, Ohio) Blade, the San Francisco Chronicle, The Independent in London, and elsewhere. Betsy Hiel, a member of our first group of fellows, won the Edward Weintal Prize for Diplomatic Reporting for her stories from Gaza and the West Bank.

Yet even a few years into our effort it was becoming apparent that a major change was taking place in the way international news was being covered. The Sun, where I had been the bureau chief in New Delhi and Beijing in two tours in the 1980’s, went from having eight foreign bureaus at the start of 2000 to none by the end of the decade. The Globe, the Inquirer, the Chicago Tribune, and others all began to shut overseas bureaus.

Soon, that next generation of foreign correspondents we were planning to train would have no jobs to aim for. There would be no more expense account-wielding, long-term expat residents in Beijing, Nairobi, Paris, Bangkok or Rome. Much of the next era of foreign reporting was going

to be done by stringers, freelancers or former staffers now applying for grants like ours.

By 2005 IRP had morphed into a prototype of a new model of journalism. As a small nonprofit, we were now underwriting dozens of international stories a year; this was more original global coverage than newspapers like the Sun, the Globe, and the Inquirer combined. Word spread quickly among journalists. By 2009, 186 U.S. journalists applied for our fellowships; this was the largest number of applications from U.S. journalists to any university-based journalism fellowship program that year.

Where does the money come from? Since 1998, we’ve received nearly \$14 million in grants from individuals and foundations, which have included The Pew Charitable Trusts, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, The Stanley Foundation, and others. The foundations agree to leave the editorial decisions to us so IRP decides which journalists receive our reporting grants and which stories get covered.

### **In an Era of Freelancers**

Today IRP is all about stories, and two-thirds of our applicants are freelancers. Each year the number of fellows who are freelancers increases; they have made up 58 percent of our fellows during the past three years. Fellows still come to IRP before they go overseas but our in-house sessions last only two weeks; reporters are too impatient to get to their story to sit for our former six-week academic stint.

From the beginning, we’ve encouraged reporting about the developing world on topics such as health care, environment, religion, post-conflict recovery and development, women and children’s circumstances, refugees and population issues. Of the 174 IRP Fellows we’ve funded since the program started, 82 percent of them have reported from Africa, Asia or Latin America. Woefully neglected by

the mainstream media, Africa is the continent that our fellows travel to the most; 58 of our journalists—one third of the fellows so far—have reported from 30 African countries. [See Perry Beeman’s story about reporting from Rwanda on page 32.] Add up all the time they’ve spent there and it is the equivalent of five and a half years’ worth of daily reporting.

In 2009, Joanna Kakissis, a freelancer and IRP Fellow, traveled to Bangladesh where she produced a multimedia project exploring the displacement of people within that country due to global warming. Flooding, caused by drought and sea level change, has created a new intracountry category of refugees, and her stories about their plight were broadcast on the BBC/Public Radio International program “The World” and published on the front page of the International Herald Tribune.

Is this kind of nonprofit model

sustainable? It’s too soon to tell. Here’s what we know: There is an abundant interest in telling foreign stories and IRP Fellows produce high-quality journalism. Each year we turn down more than 100 proposals from journalists with terrific ideas for international stories. With more funding we could support many more critically important global reporting projects and we could easily triple our annual allocation of 32 fellowships.

Fellows’ stories have won Emmy Awards, Overseas Press Club Awards, two Oscar nominations for best documentary, and other honors. Stories by IRP Fellows have been carried by almost every major U.S. news organization, including The New York Times, The Washington Post, NPR and PBS.

The stories produced by our IRP Fellows are ones that likely would not be done without the support of foundations. But is such foreign news reporting really needed? Anyone seek-

ing news about other countries can go online and easily find plenty of information at indigenous news organizations. Yet much of this information is presented without the context that most Americans want and need. That’s what foreign correspondents at their best can do—make what is foreign seem accessible and inviting.

Today, great value remains in sending journalists to do this on-the-ground reporting in faraway places even though the economic model that once supported such a mission is gone. The challenge for all of us becomes this: Will funders continue to appreciate this as a value worth paying for? We shall see. ■

*John Schidlovsky is the founding director of the International Reporting Project based at the Johns Hopkins University’s Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies.*

## A Global Investigation: Partners + Local Reporters = Success

Exposing the booming asbestos trade in the developing world became the most recent of many projects undertaken by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists.

BY DAVID E. KAPLAN

**D**oing quality investigative reporting has always been a challenge, even in the United States, where the craft enjoys an honored and storied century-long tradition. We’ve had to fight for reporting time and for space to publish and broadcast what we’ve dug up. We face threats from lawsuits and from penny-pinching owners. Lately the obstacles have become downright nasty: a shifting economic model for news, changing technology, fleeting attention spans, and a bruising recession.

And we have it easy.

Now add to those challenges a whole

new set from operating internationally: differences in language, culture, professional standards, and libel laws. Then throw in a bunch of more mundane headaches like time differences and access to reliable communications. Finally, figure out a way to finance a months-long multinational bout of muckraking.

Welcome to my world—or, more precisely, welcome to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), a rather unusual animal in the news media wilderness. We are a network of leading investigative reporters, with more than 100 members

in 50 countries. Our journalists—numbering anywhere from three to 20—come together as teams to work on long-term investigative projects. We’re a true network, linked by cell phones, e-mail, collaborative online software, and a handful of core staff in Washington, D.C.

ICIJ was created in 1997 by the Center for Public Integrity, one of the original nonprofit centers dedicated to investigative journalism. Founded 20 years ago in Washington, D.C., the center was the brainchild of former “60 Minutes” producer Chuck Lewis. He recognized the need for an independent

organization in the nation's capital to do the kind of tough investigations into corruption, conflict of interest, and other pressing social issues that the news media too often fail to cover.

ICIJ was charged with taking the center's style of in-depth, watchdog journalism overseas. While our name might be unfamiliar, our work might not be. Over the years ICIJ teams have exposed the collusion of tobacco companies with organized crime; investigated the hidden efforts of private military cartels, water privatization developers, and climate change lobbyists; and broken new ground by revealing details of Iraq and Afghanistan war contracts, including those of a once obscure company called Halliburton.

I came on board as ICIJ director in 2008, following in the footsteps of Maud Beelman, who is now deputy managing editor for projects and enterprise at The Dallas Morning News. Building on the foundation that she and others established, we have expanded ICIJ and now have a staff of six at our Washington headquarters, a growing membership, and an active Facebook community of more than 5,000 followers in at least 30 countries. Our partners include some of the world's top media organizations: the BBC's International News Services; Le Soir, the leading French daily in Brussels; Folha de Sao Paulo, Brazil's top paper; Novaya Gazeta, one of the few gutsy papers left in Russia; and the enterprising McClatchy newspaper chain here in the United States.

## Global Collaboration

Our latest series, on how the asbestos industry has targeted developing countries, featured 21 stories produced by a joint BBC/ICIJ investigation that appeared on radio and TV and in newspapers, weekly magazines, and as online multimedia presentations. Dubbed "Dangers in the Dust: Inside the Global Asbestos Trade," the series began modestly enough with a proposal by veteran environmental reporter Jim Morris to do a single feature on the asbestos trade. Morris had been asking sources, "What's the

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# DANGERS IN THE DUST

Inside the Global Asbestos Trade

HOME ARTICLES MAP ABOUT Search

CHINA  
**A Ravenous Appetite for Asbestos**

For China, the world's biggest asbestos consumer, the worst may be yet to come. Widespread use began in the late 1970s, and given the lag time between exposure and the onset of disease, health experts say, China's appetite for the mineral will have lethal consequences into the middle of this century. Read More

Michael Goodline

OVERVIEW

BBC ICIJ

The homepage for the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists' asbestos project.

biggest public health story no one's writing about?" Some suggested he look at the booming asbestos trade in the developing world and pointed him toward Fernanda Giannasi, a Brazilian labor inspector waging what amounted to a one-woman war against the asbestos industry. Marina Walker Guevara, ICIJ's deputy director, grew convinced that he was on to a good story. On the lookout for shorter pieces to accompany our big projects, we commissioned the piece and sent him to Brazil.

That was in the fall of 2009. Like many investigative stories, I expected we'd continually narrow our focus on this piece until what remained were the bare essentials. That didn't happen. The more we learned, the more intrigued we became. It turned out that 52 countries had either banned or sharply restricted the use of asbestos, blamed for killing hundreds of thousands of workers in North America and Europe. The European Union has banned entirely the sale of the mineral. Yet sales of the fiber, valued for its fire and heat resistance, are booming in China, India

and other developing countries. One key reason we found: The asbestos industry has spent millions of dollars to market its wares around the world. The human cost, health experts told us, would be enormous: By the year 2030, some predicted, between 5 million to 10 million people would die from asbestos-related cancer, with the toll increasingly centered in the developing world.

Convinced we had a great story, we began assembling a team. One of ICIJ's strengths is its ability to draw on top local reporters in a host of countries. Membership in ICIJ is by invitation only, and we work with first-rate journalists wherever we find them—at partner news organizations and nonprofit investigative centers and among the embattled foreign press corps of freelancers and fixers around the world. With "Dangers in the Dust," our outreach effort was no different. By now, Morris had joined the Center for Public Integrity staff and become our project leader. In New Delhi, India, we recruited Murali Krishnan, a veteran correspondent and

longtime ICIJ member. From Russia, we worked with Roman Shleynov, the investigative editor of *Novaya Gazeta*. In Mexico, we tapped the talented Ana Avila, a freelance reporter based in Mexico City. And in London we teamed up with Steve Bradshaw, an accomplished BBC producer.

Key to ICIJ projects is finding the right partners. Linking up with major news organizations boosts both our resources and our reach. In this case we approached Anne Koch, the commissioning editor of the BBC World Service. She grasped immediately the potential of the story and opened door after door at the BBC. We soon were working with World Service, the BBC's overseas radio branch which reaches into more than 150 countries; BBC World TV, the international news channel seen around the globe; and BBC News Online, one of the world's top news sites. Backed by ICIJ reporting and its own work, the BBC staff produced 10 news and documentary programs on asbestos while ICIJ published its own seven-part series which we syndicated to our print partners around the world.

Collaborations this big can turn maddeningly complex. The final project grew into a nine-month, eight-country behemoth. We translated Gujarati-

language legal complaints from state labor officials in India, pored through Portuguese-language company records in Brazil, and pursued reluctant industry officials in a half-dozen countries. A dozen reporters and producers each from ICIJ and the BBC worked on the project, some in tandem, some independently. We had to sort out questions of assignments, key findings, legal review, and joint credit. There were, not surprisingly, differences in organizational culture. The stately, measured BBC and ICIJ's scrappy network of investigators sometimes saw the stories differently, but both sides benefited immensely from a respectful dialogue and careful approach. As in all partnerships, success depended on personal relationships, and we owe much to Koch's leadership at the BBC.

The topic itself was complicated, with no shortage of angles. There was a strong science story, in which industry-backed scientists argued that white asbestos—the only kind used today—is less hazardous than now-banned blue or brown forms. It was also a business story, with our reporters scoping out the dimensions of a multibillion dollar industry ranging from a Russian mine half the size of Manhattan to Indian mom-and-pop shops that sell asbestos-laden roof

sheeting. Most of all, for ICIJ, it was a follow-the-money investigation. After months of digging, our team pieced together the story of how the asbestos industry had spent nearly \$100 million since the mid-1980's to keep its toxic product in commerce.

The series, released July 21, has reached millions worldwide and sparked needed debate in Brazil, India, and Mexico, as well as in Canada, where the leader of the Canadian opposition has called for an end to his country's role as a major asbestos exporter. Still, these big international projects are like wrestling an alligator—exhausting. At the end of what became a grueling editorial process, I turned to the center's managing editor, my old friend Gordon Witkin, and asked him to remind me, “Why do we like doing this?”

His answer—and mine—was obvious: This kind of a job is more than work—it's a calling, and we're a few of the lucky ones left who get to do it. ■

*David E. Kaplan directs the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, a global reporting initiative based at the Center for Public Integrity in Washington, D.C.*

## Africa—Revealed on GlobalPost Through People-Oriented Stories

‘We work hard to make our stories break out of the “should read” category and into the “want to know” one.’

BY ANDREW MELDRUM

**I**n Morocco, marijuana growers protest, angered by the escalating pressure to pay bribes to local police to be allowed to grow their illegal crop.

On the streets of Harar, Ethiopia, packs of hyena prowl at night, posing a danger to the city's farm animals, but some residents—the “hyena whisper-

ers”—feed them scraps of goat meat and, over time, befriend them.

And Dakar, Senegal is a destination of choice for European women looking for “sun, sea and sex,” creating a market for sex tourism as men earn favors—and sometimes money—through these liaisons.

These are among the recent dispatches that GlobalPost has published from Africa as part of our daily online international news coverage. GlobalPost's approach to stories from Africa is the same one we bring to reporting from the rest of the world.

Stories are sent to us by a world-

wide network of 50 journalists, who are under contract to GlobalPost to deliver two to four stories per month for which they are paid. In addition, correspondents receive shares of stock in GlobalPost, giving them a stake in the for-profit company's future. In most months, about 125 freelance journalists file stories for GlobalPost. And their reporting focuses more on what is happening with people than governments or policy. In addition, bloggers publish posts on our site without any editorial review, and this is explained so that readers know how the content got there.

As the editor in charge of coverage from Africa, I have correspondents filing regularly from 10 countries, and I also receive stories from other African countries. What a correspondent sends me needs to be tightly focused, provocative, crisply written, and to the point—usually about 600 to 800 words. A lot can be told in that length, but it leaves no room for waffling. To make it work requires an attention-grabbing lede, informative nut graf, sharply focused quotes, solid facts, and a satisfying finish.

Conventional wisdom would tell

us that finding—and maintaining—an Internet audience for African news is tough, if not impossible. For decades, news from Africa has been routinely relegated to the bottom of the foreign news pile, and that was when newspapers and networks actually had bureaus and covered global news. To put it bluntly, Africa is a continent filled with fascinating and important stories, and what we are discovering is that an audience will be there to read them when we give them the right connecting threads through our reporting and presentation.

We are doing this by producing stories that are fun to read. We work hard to make our stories break out of the “should read” category and into the “want to know” one. Think about it this way: Someone might come across a lengthy story about Sudan and think, “I should read that” and bookmark it online (or clip it in print) to get to later. That pile of worthy stories quickly grows, and soon becomes daunting, even guilt inducing, until finally either the paper goes into the recycling bin or the bookmark recedes from memory.

In contrast, GlobalPost stories are

geared to attract readers' attention immediately. They aren't homework; they are quick, informative, interesting pieces to be consumed then and there. The appeal comes from the lively, offbeat topics that elicit a “who knew?” reaction, but this is coupled with efforts we make to put a GlobalPost twist on important international stories of the day—the ones in the news that people are talking about.

With World Cup soccer in South Africa—being played on the African continent for the first time—GlobalPost brought together the reporting of correspondents in the 32 participating countries. The question uniting them was this: What does this World Cup team mean to this country? From Germany came word of how this is the first time its team had an ethnic diversity that reflected the rise of its immigrant population. And the dispatch from Spain told how the national team showed a new unity of players from that country's bitterly divided Basque, Catalan and other regions. Likewise, stories from the other countries illuminated this interplay between soccer and politics, economics and popular culture.

Logistically, it was a challenge for our small editorial team in our home office in Boston, Massachusetts to gather, edit, design the graphics, and link these 32 stories together on our site, but the result was satisfying and in synch with how we use on-the-ground reporting to inform fresh international coverage. During the weeks of the tournament, we continued to publish a range of illuminating articles from South Africa, in one case exploring whether the new stadiums built for the World Cup would become white elephants.

Another unifying theme emerged in Rainbow Planet, our series about what's happening with gay rights in many countries. GlobalPost's correspondents wrote about



The care and feeding of hyenas on the streets of Harar, Ethiopia was the subject of a story on GlobalPost. Photo by Prasanna Muralidharan/GlobalPost.

the rights of homosexuals in countries such as Brazil, Japan, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, and France. Along with finding out how politically charged the issue is in so many countries, it was fascinating to learn how this controversial issue is affecting local events.

In addition to these larger special projects, GlobalPost produces daily stories about politics and economic developments, culture and technology, health and education. Because of the quick and constant pace of our coverage, the pressure to run more comprehensive and lengthier stories is reduced; our correspondents know, as we do, that a tightly focused and informative dispatch works best for our audience.

A year and half after our launch, GlobalPost attracted more than 900,000 unique visitors from 222 countries in May and again in July.

The company expects that by year's end the total number of users will be close to 10 million. Of those who stop by GlobalPost, nearly half return.

We're heartened by our progress and recognize that continued success relies on finding the revenue streams that will sustain our worldwide operation. Included in our business strategy is advertising revenue, which is the most important part of our long-term financing; the syndication of our content through partnerships with media entities; the backing of individual investors; and our paid memberships, which provide extra content for a price. GlobalPost members now pay \$2.95 per month or \$29.95 a year. Convincing one percent of our site's monthly visitors to become members would generate \$270,000 a year.

At a time when most news organizations are moving away from foreign

news, GlobalPost is taking advantage of the Internet to get reporting, photography and multimedia presentations out to readers quickly and efficiently. And we are taking advantage of social media and search engines to reach out to new audiences. It is a testing time for international news, as it is for journalism. At GlobalPost we are finding it is also a time of great opportunity and new solutions and we relish our role of providing lively foreign reporting for a global, digital audience. ■

*Andrew Meldrum, a 2008 Nieman Fellow, is senior editor at GlobalPost. From 1980 to 2007 he worked in Zimbabwe and South Africa, writing for The Guardian, The Economist, and several other publications.*

## An Odd Couple: Journalists and Academics

Partnering with Harvard's Carr Center gave a freelance journalist the chance to continue her reporting about drug wars in Juárez, Mexico.

BY MONICA CAMPBELL

**E**ight o'clock Monday morning in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Federal cops, their high-powered weapons pointed outward, packed pickup trucks and patrolled the city's streets. Women waited at a bus stop to head to factory jobs. A newspaper's front page featured grisly crime scene photos. It was July, searing hot, and I headed to my first interview.

Unlike my previous trips to Juárez, I was not there on a traditional news assignment. On this reporting project my partner was the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. This opportunity arose during my Nieman year when I noticed a growing interest among academics in Mexico's escalating drug cartel-related

violence. Having reported from Mexico for several years, I developed a proposal for research that would focus on citizens' response to the violence in Juárez, the epicenter of Mexico's bloody drug war.

My proposal struck a chord with Leonardo Vivas, a fellow at the Carr Center. My reporting would provide a contemporary, frontline view of how some residents in Juárez are attempting to address neighborhood troubles brought on by the violence of the drug cartels. It turned out that the topic I wanted to report on fit well into a conference—sponsored by Harvard and Mexico's Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education—that he was planning about Mexico's drug wars.

This kind of university partnership signals an interesting and perhaps overlooked opening for journalists, particularly those with a specialized area of reporting. In my case, Mexico and its battle against powerful drug cartels are topics I've covered for many years. Typically, university support for those in news media comes in the form of journalism schools, foundations, such as the Nieman, or other awards. But I'm learning to look, too, in lesser known academic nooks, at smaller centers and institutes that may be flexible and interdisciplinary—and open to new ideas and partners.

Of course, while it can help to have a relationship with a university, it's not a requirement. What will make this work is if a department chair or professor is



Teens gather at a community center in Ciudad Juárez. Photo by Monica Campbell.

able to appreciate your idea, evaluate your expertise, and trust that it will be a good complement to their research. At the same time, universities, many of which are increasingly cash-strapped, are not looking to fund journalists. The bar can be high and funding tough to find. What's crucial is that your experience and expertise, whether it's been gained through covering health, religion or Latin America, meshes with the interests of the university.

Finding such a partnership has clear benefits. To meet the requirements the Carr Center set out for me, I will present a report at the conference about anti-crime initiatives in Juárez being led by citizens, the challenges they face, how they measure success, and the type of support they need to advance their projects. I will also tap the material I gathered in Juárez for use in producing my own stories. With the luxury of not being on a tight deadline for a news organization, I had the freedom to watch a story unfold as I did my reporting and research. Of course, there's no guarantee that a long-form magazine piece will evolve from this. I'll have to regroup and write a story proposal, but with a good deal

of on-the-ground reporting behind me, I have a strong start.

There are other pluses. Before heading to Mexico, Vivas, an expert on Latin America, passed me a stack of papers he had collected on violence and social capital. Other academics also offered their guidance and insight into topics including corruption, Mexico's political history, and drug gang dynamics. In Juárez, I traveled with Viridiana Rios, a doctoral candidate at Harvard's Department of Government who is also researching Mexico. Our daily recaps, poring over our notes and taking stock of the day's interviews, provided a valuable running dialogue about Mexico's dilemmas.

Once back from Juárez, I checked in with fellow freelance journalist Eliza Barclay, who had just returned from a three-week research trip to China, funded by Johns Hopkins University. While completing a master's degree in science writing, Barclay spotted a call for proposals from the Center for a Livable Future. The grant for research on diet, health and food security—topics Barclay has written about extensively—was open to all Johns Hopkins' students. With her

application, Barclay attached a cover letter acknowledging that funding a journalist might be unorthodox. But her proposal appealed to the selection committee and, after defining her methodology a bit more precisely, she got the grant.

While Barclay and I agreed on the upsides of university funding, we also acknowledged that the arrangement and mission of a project must be clear. The university funded our research and, for a time, we were within the academic sandbox. But we are still journalists, and our work reflects our strengths—relating stories and testimonies we gathered and arriving at possible conclusions. If a university trusts that our storytelling and research skills can benefit their work, too, then let us hope that such partnerships expand. ■

*Monica Campbell, a 2010 Nieman Fellow, reported from Mexico for The Christian Science Monitor, San Francisco Chronicle, Newsweek and other magazines from 2003 to 2008 and was the Mexico consultant for the Committee to Protect Journalists. She is now based in New York.*



# Creating a Go-To Digital Destination for Foreign Affairs Reporting and Commentary

‘At the start of our Web relaunch, here’s what we had: essentially no money, no reporters, a creaky and often barely functioning custom-made Web platform, a wonderfully talented young staff ...’

BY SUSAN B. GLASSER

The journalistic crowd has taken it as an article of faith in recent years that international news is not a draw on the Internet, coming to believe, however reluctantly, that the advent of new media means it’s just no longer worth the effort and cost involved. As Pew Research Center’s president Andrew Kohut and journalist Bruce Stokes put it after looking at survey numbers, Americans are “disinterested in foreign news, except when it deals directly with the United States or the war on terrorism.” Many editors have taken as axiomatic what Lee C. Bollinger, president of Columbia University, wrote in a July Wall Street Journal op-ed when he contended that the “decimated” ranks of American foreign correspondents means there is no longer any way for Americans to inform themselves about crucial global issues.

Against this skeptical backdrop, Foreign Policy launched an experiment in January 2009: a new daily online magazine for people who care about the world. Since then our site has attracted a growing audience for original reporting, writing and analysis about global issues—much of which has little to do with either the United States or terrorism. And despite Bollinger’s concerns, we’ve found the Web has also unleashed an abundant new supply of international coverage, making it easy for us to connect

with correspondents in Azerbaijan and Burundi, Congo and Colombia, Afghanistan and Pakistan, China and Russia, Egypt and Israel. On any given day Foreign Policy now publishes more original writing about international affairs than The Washington Post or Newsweek.

But Bollinger is right about this: Other sources of foreign news have been cut back or vanished at an alarming rate. The question for journalists, though, is no longer whether we can hold on to the old model of international coverage but whether we embrace new models that work for the digital era. Such models are already

out there, as the many vibrant Web sites offering news and commentary about everything from sports to U.S. politics to Hollywood attest. It’s true that foreign news in the future may be more of a niche journalistic product than it was in the past. Then again, the world is a pretty big niche.

## Transitional Times

At the start of the decade, I was a foreign correspondent for The Washington Post. When I covered the battle of Tora Bora after the 9/11 attacks, I traveled to that remote part of Afghanistan with a reporter and photographer from The

Boston Globe. When the U.S. invaded Iraq two years later, we rode across the sandy border in a fleet of rental cars with colleagues from Newsday and the Chicago Tribune. None of those venerable news organizations has a single foreign correspondent anymore and even The Post, where I was among nearly 30 correspondents just a few years ago, now only has 15 staff correspondents covering foreign news. And it’s not just cutbacks: It has become increasingly clear that the old style of foreign correspondence will have to change, and radically so. With little print space devoted to international news and little to nothing in the way of original Web features, correspondents in recent years have often had to beg their paper or magazine to

Thomas E. Ricks, formerly a reporter for The Washington Post, blogs daily for Foreign Policy about national security.

run their stories, and they have been writing fewer of them.

Instead of reinventing international coverage for the digital era, many news organizations embraced the conventional wisdom—that reader interest wouldn't be there so it was not worth pursuing—and a self-fulfilling cycle ensued. Foreign news was de-emphasized, kept on the Web long after the news cycle had moved on, or offered little of added value beyond the news wires' much faster versions, so it not surprisingly received few page views. All of this was taken as confirmation that there just wasn't any appetite for foreign news.

Like many other pronouncements being made by those in the news business in their panic about the Internet, this claim seemed spurious. Remember these other dictates? Long stories don't work on the Web. No one reads investigative stories. There's no value in original reporting anymore; the Web is all about aggregating others' content. And, my personal favorite: Good design just isn't important on the Web.

All seemed assumptions worth disproving.

And we set out to do so as soon as the Post Company bought Foreign Policy in late 2008 with the idea of developing a robust Web site to go along with the award-winning but money-losing print magazine. There were some great models to emulate, such as The Atlantic's savvy collection of newsy blogs and the edgy writing on our new sister publication Slate. Still, the Web seemed like a wasteland in the realm of international affairs, which was often covered as though a small handful of men in gray suits really did run the world—and would be the only ones interested in reading about it. Jokingly at first, but later less so, we decided that our slogan should be "The world is not a boring place."

Many editors have talked in recent years about wanting to capture the audience and energy of the British newsweekly The Economist, with its impressive print circulation. Most of them look to emulate its opinionated and sharp analysis, not necessarily its

single-minded gaze on the world. For us, the appeal was in fact the international outlook at a time when more people than ever perceive themselves as global stakeholders. We wanted to combine a relentless focus on the world with the belief that a dedicated, underserved—and large (or at least large enough) community of readers was out there.

## Launching Our New Site

At the start of our Web relaunch, here's what we had: essentially no money, no reporters, a creaky and often barely functioning custom-made Web platform, a wonderfully talented young staff—and the freedom to try new things with the edge and sensibility that a traditional news organization would find hard to get away with. At the time Foreign Policy had exactly one blog and published a single Web-exclusive article every day or so. Our site averaged just fewer than one million page views a month.

In six weeks we created a new site—with a new approach to covering foreign news. We constructed it around a vibrant homepage and created a network of blogs written by authoritative experts, including Pulitzer-winning military reporter Thomas E. Ricks on national security, Harvard's Kennedy School professor Stephen Walt on international relations, and former Clinton administration official David Rothkopf on how Washington actually works. We also recruited established independent bloggers, including international trade expert Daniel W. Drezner and Middle East scholar Marc Lynch, who signed up after learning of the project from Drezner's Facebook update. For the first time in Foreign Policy's 40-year history, we added original reporting, with The Cable, a daily blog reporting on the Obama administration's foreign policy team and its initiatives; by scooping more established competitors about who was getting what job, it became a must-read in Washington.

Soon after we relaunched our audience tripled, and it has continued to expand. As of this summer, it had

grown 1,000 percent to more than 1.5 million unique visitors and 11 million page views a month. We now publish more than 100 original articles each month—an average of five or more every weekday as well as the daily blogs. On any given day the site offers a mix of stories: a scoop about the United Nations looking to award a prize endowed by an African dictator; an essay by Turkey's influential minister of foreign affairs; former top Bush administration officials politely castigating the White House in their Shadow Government group blog; a sharp dispatch from Moscow; an op-ed salvo from Senator John Kerry; the latest installment of journalist Anna Badkhen's monthlong journey across northern Afghanistan; a report about Israel's settlements on our new Middle East Channel.

Our approach to telling these stories ranges from first-person narratives to short items about State Department scuttlebutt, from policy debates to slideshows. At its core, what we are doing on the Web is a natural digital evolution of a magazine's roving curiosity about its subject—with far more entry points and daily variety than was possible before, when editors had to make painful choices about which small handful of foreign pieces they would run.

In that and so many ways, we've been lucky. As counterintuitive as it might seem, this is a great time to create new pathways for journalism—and journalists. There is no shortage of writers with a real desire to connect with the audiences we reach—and fewer and fewer ambitious places to feature their work. Given the exodus from many news organizations of journalists forced into painful transitions, now is a good moment to go looking for expertise.

Ricks was our first such recruit. The author of the bestselling book "Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq" and a veteran of The Post, he had taken a buyout from the Post to become a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security. Now his daily blog The Best Defense is defining a new genre of reporting. With several

original items a day, his blog features everything from e-mailed comments from General David Petraeus to investigative reports on the military's cover-up of a disastrous battle at the Afghan outpost of Wanat (later covered on the front pages of the Post and The New York Times). In the spring Ricks was recognized with the first National Magazine Award for best blogger of the year.

But Ricks also suggests the limits of our new approach; for now, Foreign Policy's new Web site couldn't exist without the support of institutions—whether universities or think tanks or more deep-pocketed mainstream news organizations—that still pay some of those who write for us something approximating a living wage. Only a few of our writers are full-time Foreign

Policy staffers on the old journalism model; indeed, most of our staff is an editing staff, working to pull together a coherent site from an array of contributors who run the gamut from young freelancers abroad to leading experts in their fields looking to reach our audience. For some, this is a replacement for the newspaper op-eds they used to write and little payment is expected, then or now. But for others, the time will come when someone will have to pay more to sustain the independent journalism they are doing. Until we have the money to do so, we are intent on experimenting with any model that works, from the New America Foundation fellow who works with us as a contributing editor to the Carnegie Corporation grant that helps support the scholars who collaborate

on our Middle East Channel.

Experiment is the key word. The Web certainly made it easy and inexpensive to find and grow our audience; it has also connected us to a network of new writers and readers in countries throughout the world. Advertising has grown, too. But beware of anyone who claims to have cracked the code; I'm not sure there's any business out there that can credibly argue it's figured out what it takes to support the journalistic ambitions of a magazine determined to take full advantage of the digital era. Until then, an experiment it will remain. ■

*Susan B. Glasser is editor in chief of Foreign Policy magazine.*

## Connecting Correspondents With Broadcasters

Global Radio News, an online agency for reporters, insists on fair treatment and insurance to protect those whose work takes them into harm's way.

BY HENRY PEIRSE

**W**hen I started freelancing the news business was changing, and that was even before the Internet was the cause. It was too early for that to happen. Back then it was the BBC that was slowly suffocating what had been one of the oldest, largest and most reliable sources of foreign news, World Service Radio, in its quest to move into television. In the early 1990's I'd hear words such as "multiskilling," as reporters started being trained in how to use video cameras.

In many ways, this was the beginning of the end. Or seen through the lens of today, it was the start of a journey that hasn't ended.

In those days, news organizations had big budgets and paid good salaries to staff reporters, though they were starting to rely on freelancers like me to

do much of the work. I'll never forget the bureau chief of one of the big TV news agencies with his two suites in a luxury hotel, one for work and one for play, all on an expense account. He had a blast and still delivered.

I was covering the war in the former Yugoslavia. It was a mad time. I was 22, with no real grasp of the risks. There was no hostile environment training and no insurance. Journalism was a trade; we learned it as we worked. Passion for the story drove us, and money was a welcome byproduct. My editors cared only that I was on the scene with a phone connection and could file. It was hard work; when a story broke, I'd call all my clients, half a dozen regulars, to persuade them the story was worth running. I'd file, and if I was lucky I'd send the same piece again with a different sign-off

to each of my clients. Then I'd wait and hope they would pay.

On quiet days I wasted money on phone calls as I'd try to persuade an accounts person that I really did the work and deserved my payment. It wasn't easy since I couldn't get angry and risk being labeled as a problem correspondent and see my client list shrink.

After I spent seven years on that story, I decided it was time to come home. My editors were happy to meet for a drink, but work was hard to come by. Budgets were already under the knife.

It was then that I was struck with moment of genius, or so I thought. In Bosnia, I learned how the Web was being used for instant communications when I saw students keeping in touch via e-mail across the frontlines during

the war. So I figured that freelancers could use the Web to pitch and sell stories with somebody in the middle to chase payments for them. Back in London, I did the dot-com thing, and like so many others I pretended that I understood the business and I raised some money. But I blew it on the wrong things, and soon the bubble popped.

Whether it was vanity or blind stupidity or the tenacity I acquired in Bosnia, something kept me going. I could see that budgets were shrinking at news organizations, but I also knew that the appetite for well-sourced, reliable foreign news reporting wasn't. And so I set out to create Global Radio News (GRN) and for 10 years the business has played the critical middleman role in connecting broadcasters with proven reporters. We've faced some competition, and we've adapted to the changing marketplace by using technology to streamline our services.

## Designing a New Newsdesk

Now GRN has embarked on an initiative to fill the vacuum left by the hollowing out of newsrooms. Not too long ago those at the newsdesk knew where every reporter was at any time, whether on the frontlines of a battle or on a stool at a bar. And they knew what story a reporter was covering and how. They were usually the ones to give reporters their next assignment. Now this function falls to desk editors, one job among many.

This is where GRN steps in. We do what newsdesks used to do and more. We suggest stories, using ideas we pick up from daily messages sent to us by reporters working in all parts of the world. Widespread reporting about the famine and brutality in Darfur started with an alert we received from one of our reporters who'd been there. In some cases, we even help to direct coverage.

GRN tries as much as possible to

use journalists who live where the story is taking place. Local journalists have the gift of institutional knowledge and this can set them apart from those who parachute into a story, though the old-timers can also be ready to leap in given the expertise they carry inside of them. When they were foreign correspondents, they settled in a region of the world and got to know their way around; they were ready when news broke. In this tweeting generation of journalists, deep digging isn't valued so this kind of ingrained knowledge doesn't grow. Of course this is understandable at a time when



Global Radio News (GRN) provides insurance for reporters on assignment in places such as Bangkok, Thailand where protesters clashed with government forces. *Photo by Andrew Chant/GRN.*

it's the rare news organization that invests in having a reporter watch a story until it becomes news.

GRN's role is to support reporters by finding them and investing in them before a story breaks in their backyard. When it does, we connect broadcasters with a person who is ready to do the job.

## Connecting Reporters and Broadcasters

During the uprising in Kyrgyzstan this spring, we watched the story develop for a few weeks. Then one morning Tim Judah, a reporter we've worked with for many years, called us to say that his son Ben was in the capital, Bishkek, and he'd written about the troubles in that country. We immediately pushed Ben's name and whereabouts out via the daily alerts we send to our clients. We then set about organizing his insurance, knowing that bookings would start to come in soon. And they did.

Broadcasters watch our alerts as they are deciding whether they want to cover a story and if so, how. Are they willing to spend the money to send a staff reporter? Or will they take a chance on a reporter like Ben who is there, knows the story, and can start to file immediately. A number of our clients—CBC, CBS, France 24, Fox News, Deutsche Welle, and RTE, among others—chose to use him so for several days he was a busy man. And as he handled his reporting assignments, GRN took care of the sales and marketing of his work, billed the broadcasters, and paid him.

As protests escalated on the streets of Tehran last summer, Saeed Kamali Dehghan picked up reporting assignments after other broadcasters had been forced to leave or had their movements severely restricted by the authorities. Given his local knowledge, Dehghan, who was writing for *The Guardian*, started to be used extensively by other news organizations, including broadcasters. Writing recently in *The Observer* of this experience, he recalled how his assignments increased:

One day, I was on the back of a motorbike. A friend was helping me to get from one place to another in Tehran and my agents, GRN in London, called and said: 'Saeed, in five minutes you have to go live on CNN.' With

no broadcast experience, I was suddenly live on TV for the first time on the back of a motorbike in the middle of a city in chaos. They loved it and I gave more than 50 live TV interviews to different broadcasters in June alone, most of the time appearing anonymously.

### Insisting on Fairness

Our business works by providing a service for broadcasters and reporters. Given the danger inherent in foreign news reporting—especially in conflict zones—we use our agent role and leverage to insist on a solid level of protection for reporters. Our approach comes out of our belief that no broadcaster should run a story, picture or video done by a reporter who is not insured. To accomplish this, we've established a program whereby all of the reporters who work through GRN carry insurance when they do a story that has been assigned to them through us.

If a broadcaster wants reliable, high-

quality reporters, it must be willing to treat them fairly and do all they can to keep them safe. And what they pay has to be commensurate with the use they want to make of the reporting they receive; put simply, they can't own the rights forever if they pay little to produce it.

Seeing that these obligations are met doesn't happen easily, but GRN has fought similar battles before. When we were starting out we insisted that broadcasters pay for even a brief phoner with a reporter; making that standard procedure required a fight. The broadcasters presumed that reporters would be satisfied just to be asked to talk on their news program, and that would be enough. It isn't.

To take these next steps, we created a package designed to support the work that our foreign news reporters do. We call it "GRN Assignment Insurance." Through this program, we assist reporters in securing the insurance they need by helping to cover its cost with a guarantee of work. We also help in arranging their visas and press cards. We book work and facilitate payment

within 30 days. We also advance funds on confirmed stories and help reporters get discounts on the tools and services they'll need in the field.

The cost to the reporter is our commission, their loyalty, and a small fee paid to belong to GRN. As agents, we earn money through commissions that vary. Broadcasters pay rates that are determined by their size and location, but reporters earn the same percentage of the fee whether the broadcast outlet is enormous or tiny. Our same rigorous professional standards always apply.

We know that a reporter working on his or her own would earn more for each job, but with us they benefit from our economies of scale and the practices that we insist be in place for them. In 10 years, we've only had a handful of reporters leave GRN and head out on their own. Ours is a model of organizing and running the business of foreign reporting that fits its time while also holding on to the journalistic values that guided reporters in the past. ■

*Henry Peirse is the founder and CEO of Global Radio News (GRN).*

## Similar Paths, Different Missions: International Journalists and Human Rights Observers

As some journalists migrate to Human Rights Watch, one reason might be that they are 'tired of treating all stories with the same pretense of aloofness—especially the ones who have covered mass atrocities.'

BY CARROLL BOGERT

In June when violence broke out in the Fergana Valley of Kyrgyzstan, Human Rights Watch happened to have a researcher already in Osh, the epicenter of the mayhem. Within days, we sent in reinforcements from our emergencies team—the "firemen" who cover armed conflicts for us. They interviewed dozens of victims, separately whenever possible, asking detailed questions about who insti-

gated the violence, who was killed or injured, what the perpetrators did, what weapons they had, what time they showed up, how long they stayed, who said what to whom, what everyone was wearing, and now let's go over all this one more time. It took days.

Human Rights Watch also assigned a photographer who works frequently for the international media, paying him a standard day rate, and a local

cameraman to take video. Both of these shooters had worked with us before and had substantial experience covering armed conflicts.

This was not exactly journalism because Human Rights Watch is an advocacy group and not a media organization. But the fact remains that the commercial model for international fact-gathering and distribution is broken, and the number of



A woman mourns her husband, who died after being severely beaten by local security forces in Nariman, Kyrgyzstan. Photo by Moises Saman for Human Rights Watch.

foreign correspondents working for U.S. newspapers and TV networks has fallen precipitously. Meanwhile, the number of researchers at Human Rights Watch is larger than the corps of foreign correspondents at either The New York Times or The Washington Post, and the organization has quadrupled in size since I joined in 1998 after a dozen years as a foreign correspondent for Newsweek.

Our researchers do more than cover the story, of course. In Kyrgyzstan, in addition to interviewing all those victims and eyewitnesses, they were also consulting with United Nations agencies about getting humanitarian aid to people, issuing press releases calling for an independent inquiry into the violence and for international police to be deployed, urging Kyrgyz government officials to rein in security forces, and meeting diplomats to get them to issue *démarche*. In other words, once the facts are collected, we don't consider the job over—our researchers become energetic advocates on the question of what should be done about them.

Nevertheless, our researchers may have been more thorough and objective than some journalists. Many reporters focused almost exclusively on violence

against Uzbeks. We sought out Kyrgyz victims, although they were fewer in number, to ensure their stories got told. And we didn't, for example, fall for that legend about pregnant women getting their bellies ripped open by the enemy, a claim that did get published on the Web. (We've heard the same claim in many ethnic conflicts we've covered over the years.) We are more experienced than many journalists in taking testimony from people whose passions are inflamed, who are acutely distressed, or who have suffered great trauma. We've logged more hours on these types of stories, and our researchers are specifically and extensively trained to do this kind of work.

### Establishing Credibility

The fact that we do advocacy in addition to collecting facts does not necessarily reduce our credibility, however. Human Rights Watch is far from a household name, but we're pretty well-known among people, including foreign correspondents, who follow news from places like Kyrgyzstan. In 2008, The New York Times cited Human Rights Watch 200 times. I don't think that means they're not objective. It simply reflects

a changing information economy in which Human Rights Watch is a useful and reliable producer of good, fresh stuff. We bring juicy tidbits to the information marketplace. And the price is right—they're free.

The nonprofit sector generally has a good deal of credibility, at least according to a study done by the Edelman Trust Barometer. In this annual review, conducted by a big New York public relations firm, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were found to enjoy greater public confidence than business, government or the media. Trust in NGOs is significantly higher in Latin America and relatively lower in Asia for reasons the survey does not fully explain. But the overall numbers are pretty compelling: The NGO sector is the only institution trusted by more than 50 percent of "informed publics" aged 35-64 in 20 countries. So I'm not sure that the information generated by Human Rights Watch will be less credible to the public than the information produced by the mainstream media.

We don't try to pass ourselves off as journalists. It's important for Human Rights Watch to be transparent about who we are and how we gather our facts in the field. We're not slyly distributing "stories" pre-packaged for local television, as the Bush administration liked to do. Our multimedia packages are branded as Human Rights Watch products, and our methodology is spelled out in detail on our Web site. So are our major donors and our mission. This is the kind of transparency that led Jim Barnett, writing for the Nieman Journalism Lab, to conclude recently that Human Rights Watch is producing "work of the same—or, arguably, higher—journalistic quality."

We do have a lot of ex-journalists on our staff. Some of them are researchers who wanted to "get out of the bleachers and join the game," as a job applicant put it recently. (Despite the cool metaphor, he didn't get the job.) Some work for our multimedia team, repackaging the material that our researchers collect. We also hire freelance photographers, videographers and radio reporters to go into

the field and illustrate our research findings. These multimedia features live on our Web site and often get picked up by mainstream media all over the world—including in the United States. One of them won a Webby this year.

The numerous job applications we receive from journalists are mostly a product of the bad economy. If times were good at American newspapers, most journalists would not be interested in moving to a human rights organization. Yet there are extremely good journalists who get tired of treating all stories with the same pretense of aloofness—especially the ones who have covered mass atrocities. Think of Christiane Amanpour’s impassioned pleas for Western intervention in Bosnia. War photographers, in particular, have often witnessed a great

deal of extreme brutality. For their psychological health, some of them want to contribute to an organization that’s doing something about it, not just covering it and moving on.

Human Rights Watch gathers information in a lot of places where journalists don’t go. In part, this is because we don’t use a commercial yardstick to measure the worthiness of the information we gather. We don’t care if people don’t care about Burundi. We cover it anyway. We decide whether to cover an issue based on criteria that may sound familiar to creaky old junkies of what used to be called “hard news”: How many people suffered? Did the abuse of power lead to the tragedy? If we reveal that abuse, can we succeed in getting some people riled up about it?

Foreign correspondents who help us

“name and shame” the perpetrators of abuse are critical partners in the mission of Human Rights Watch, whether they think of themselves that way or not. We want them to keep doing their job. The best foreign correspondents are highly seasoned and experienced, and we learn a lot from them. They have bigger audiences and they work for better-known brands. But I wouldn’t count Human Rights Watch out. We’re different from the journalistic institutions of yesteryear, to be sure, but we’re no less legitimate. ■

*Carroll Bogert is the deputy executive director of Human Rights Watch for external relations. Before joining the staff in 1998, she worked for 12 years as a foreign correspondent at Newsweek.*

## Living Manhattan, Feeling Zamboanga

After returning to the United States following a long stint overseas, a reporter is reminded that it is still all about adapting to circumstances.

BY PHIL ZABRISKIE

**E**arly in 2008 I came back to the United States after living and reporting overseas for seven years in Asia and the Middle East. It didn’t take long for the reality to sink in of how different it was being “over here” and how thoroughly my time “over there” had shaped my interests and habits. Every morning I’d look first at the international news in American papers, then scour the Web sites of The Independent, the Jakarta Post, The National, Tehelka, Ha’aretz, MindaNews or TamilNet. Or I’d read reports from the International Crisis Group or Moby Capital’s regular collections of Afghanistan and Pakistan bulletins.

Even now, I’ll often go to sleep or wake up thinking about something that’s happening over there. It has remained my everyday language, even

though the daily conversation over here just isn’t the same and despite the fact that the tactile sense that comes with physically being in those places is impossible to recreate.

I came back willingly and gladly, but I do miss those long drives on bumpy roads, those tense moments in interviews with government officials or religious leaders, those drinks with colleagues at the end of a long day, and those times when I’d come around a corner to see something I’d never seen before. And I wonder how people I met and shared extremely meaningful experiences with are doing, worrying about some and hoping they are safe and content.

But it’s more than simple nostalgia, more than friendly concern. It’s the sense that something that was so central to me for so long, something

that became a part of my identity, is no more.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, I often found myself seeking out places where “over there” and “over here” converge, where the massive movement of people around the world is clearly evident—Chinatown, for example, or neighborhoods in Queens that are nearly as South Asian as South Asia itself. I’ve also done lengthy spells of reporting on Nepali Bhutanese refugees being resettled in the Bronx, Cameroonian and Ethiopian asylum seekers in the Washington, D.C. area who’d been tortured in their homelands before fleeing, and soldiers and Marines returning from deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq.

I continued going abroad to work as well, returning to Afghanistan and Jerusalem, for instance, and making



Phil Zabriskie in a U.S. military helicopter above one of President Saddam Hussein's former palaces in Tikrit, Iraq, days after U.S. forces captured Hussein. *Photo by Yuri Kozyrev.*

my first trip to Russia. But whether it was timing or simply that I wasn't that good at foreign news freelancing out of New York City, it kept getting harder to do these stories. I made sure to pepper my story proposals with assertions that I knew how to keep costs low wherever I was. But I still heard often that certain ideas, especially those that involved flying halfway around the world, paying a fixer/translator, and spending a significant block of time (and money) in some faraway land were just too expensive to commission, at least from me, at least at this time. The answer might be "maybe," if someone else picked up part of the tab or if the publication had not already done, say, an Africa story that year, or if there were more Americans involved. But otherwise, it wasn't going to happen.

Dispiriting though it was, I had to start looking at other possibilities. Again, though, I hoped to find something that built on my experiences overseas. And one day I noticed that Doctors Without Borders needed a managing editor to oversee publications and its Web site. It was an organization I knew and respected

from the field. This job held the promise of some stability, which at the time was very attractive, and travel to places I very much wanted to go. I applied and was hired, starting the day after the earthquake in Haiti. It was a whirlwind beginning, tracking and chronicling a large-scale, complex response to that devastating event. The frenetic atmosphere was comforting, though. It felt familiar.

I can still write, too, which is great. I can't write about countries where the organization has missions, which rules out some of my favorite places. And time is an issue. But I have been able to get assignments on topics that are connected in some way to things I'd done or that involve familiar dynamics and struggles. Thus far that's meant, among other things, profiling gay soldiers serving under "don't ask, don't tell" and following education projects in inner city Baltimore. And, of course, I'm still looking for that great book idea.

It's hard and at times unsettling to have only one foot, or a couple of toes, in journalism, especially when I see that, for instance, Afghanistan, a place I've been a dozen times, is the

story of the day. But I made my choice to come home and the ground shifted. That part of it is not so much different from life overseas when, more often than not, there was no choice but to adapt to circumstances, whatever they were.

I love reading stories and seeing photographs by colleagues who are still out there, watching them demonstrate why being there, seeing things up close (not from a desk in a TV studio somewhere) still matters. I do get envious, but for the moment, this job feels right and the work worthwhile. Soon I will be able to travel to places that interest me, and that will feel good, even if it's not to as many places as I'd like to get to or how I imagined I'd get there. ■

*Phil Zabriskie, who is managing editor for publications for Doctors Without Borders USA, spent 2001 through 2008 in Asia and the Middle East working as a staff writer for Time and freelancing for National Geographic, National Geographic Adventure, The Washington Post Magazine, and others.*



## This Is How I Go

‘Every time I leave for war, there are rituals and routines—and one unyielding truth.’

BY KEVIN SITES

The sun is a tea bag dipping into the Pacific seeping orange and reds onto the horizon. Scattered surfers catch the meager waves of this summer evening while members of a fitness boot camp do crunches near a homeless man sleeping under a tree. I’m running with my girlfriend along a bluff next to Ocean Avenue. It’s in the 70’s with a soft onshore breeze

that makes the palm leaves shudder above our heads. We keep an easy pace—chatting about what happened during our day. She is preparing for a half-marathon in Seattle. I’m preparing to go to Afghanistan—for the fourth time.

This is how I go to war. I pretend I’m not. It’s always in my forebrain, as involuntary as breathing or my heart-

beat—but I keep the gear and duffle bags in the closet until I absolutely have to pull them out.

In my past relationships, I never talked about going. The resulting sadness would overwhelm the short time we had left so we avoided the topic until it hung over us like a raincloud, finally spilling its contents on our drive to the airport, too late to be constructive or



War correspondent Kevin Sites enters a U.S. Army Buffalo, a military vehicle used to search for roadside bombs, prior to a mission with the 20th Engineer Battalion. *Photo by Ben Brody.*

cathartic. My girlfriend now will have none of that. She is small and feisty, bull-charging awkward moments like they were San Fermin revelers on the streets of Pamplona. She wants me to talk about it, share my excitement, even though it makes her sad.

Still, my instinct is to tamp it down. So I wait until she's at work to look at my cameras, lay out the three sets of quick-dry pants and shirts that I will rotate wearing for the next two months. I place on the bed my pocket multitool that can cut, carve, pull and open nearly anything; my ballistic sunglasses that the manufacturers say will deflect shrapnel; my compass and carabiners; my fireproof Nomex gloves so, if I need to, I can open the door of a burning Humvee. I have a 100-foot parachute cord that I will cut and use to do everything from replacing boot laces to making a clothesline for a quick dry after washing. I have pens, a khaki baseball cap, a 60-day supply of vitamins, a power strip to recharge batteries for cameras, a satellite modem that connects to my laptop and allows me to transmit my stories from nearly anywhere in the world. My space-age tripod folds flat for packing and its removable leg will serve a dual purpose as an extension boom for my camera to videotape over walls and around corners. I've also discovered that it's a nice gadget to have if someone is shooting at you.

I double-check that I have backup USB cables to download my video and still pictures. And there is the first aid kit with the large trauma pad that soldiers advise me to carry, and so I do, in my right rear pocket. Widely known to most American troops at least, this kit is the first place to look for something to staunch the bleeding in case of a shooting incident.

To paraphrase the title of Tim O'Brien's classic book about the war in Vietnam, these are the things I carry when I head off to report a war. This baggage is physical and psychological. These things allow me to do my job but also transform me into a beast of burden—the price of being a backpack journalist. I struggle even

under the liberation of the lighter digital gear while heading into the new journalistic paradigm, which is turning the only job I've ever known firmly and distinctly on its head.

## What I Leave Behind

Every time I leave for war, there are rituals and routines—and one unyielding truth.

While my packing routine is deeply ingrained in muscle memory, the rituals of this preparation seem as distinct and different to me as each child is to a mother. What has changed for me are the circumstances I will leave behind. No longer am I responsible only to myself; I'm enmeshed in a party of five, living with my girlfriend, her sister, and their daughters—one nine, the other five. Because my only job is to prepare to go to war, I've taken an active role in the daily care of the girls. I make breakfast, take them to school, get them snacks when the school day is over, and talk and play with them while I pack and prep for my looming deployment.

Pushing my loaded cart down the grocery store aisle as I pick out maple-flavored oatmeal and cat-shaped cookies, I jokingly text my girlfriend about how I've gone from being a war correspondent to a desperate housewife. She's empathetic but relentlessly practical. Do the job in front of you, she reminds me by example, and not the one you want to do—in my case, a job that garners the attention despite its inherent selfishness.

Going to war, I know, will result in me thinking only of myself again, as everyday things like paying bills and feeding kids get pushed aside. The problem is that I have found my short month of domesticity so lopsidedly more rewarding than my supposedly adventurous life in conflict. At moments, it occurs to me that perhaps I feel this way because I've had the luxury of experiencing too little of the first and too much of the second.

This time, before I go, there are things I need to do as a family member, and not just as a person who

soon will do what is easy for me—tell stories that can almost tell themselves. After all, war is a ready-made drama, packed with moral dilemmas and the inevitable struggle to stay human in the face of killing and dying. Right now, I need to write and notarize my will, buy presents for birthdays I'll miss, schedule online payments, and extend credit cards slated to expire in my absence.

## My Departure

Even as I move through my to-do list, it grows lengthier as I think of other things I need to do. In the past, working for NBC and CNN, even for Yahoo! News, I had administrative support and producers. People booked my business class tickets overseas and expedited my foreign visas. They then handed me briefcases of cash to keep our war zone news bureaus running.

This trip signifies the irreversible changes in the foreign coverage model in which freelance operators like me are the rule, not the exception. Unlike the past, when I simply went to a conflict area and did the job and got paid for it, now I cover all of my own costs upfront and try to pay it off one story at a time. I must fill out applications for my Afghan visa and pay for it, apply for a spot as a U.S. military embed, buy my flight tickets from Los Angeles to Kandahar, Afghanistan, and upgrade my gear. Though I never wore a helmet—and rarely wore body armor—on past assignments, the U.S. military now requires it for journalists seeking to embed so I need to buy both.

After finding what I consider to be a reputable supplier online, I spend one morning talking with Steve at Bullet Proof Me. He walks me through the process of measuring “sweet spots,” where vital organs reside, that I need to make sure are properly covered. While he finds me the proper ballistic panels (the material that actually stops the bullets), they do not have the outer shell or carrier in stock. I need to custom order it and with only two weeks to go before my deployment, it will be a tight turnaround.



Many who go off to war often take keepsakes of their loved ones—photographs end up in the linings of helmets or stashed within body armor. *Photo by Kevin Sites.*

In my last week before departure, things start to unravel. When I'm at REI buying some last minute items, my credit card is declined. When I talk with a customer service rep, I find out that someone in Germany has been using my card to play online video games. I cancel the card with the promise that a new one will arrive via FedEx on Thursday morning.

That's the day I'm scheduled to leave, and it's also the day my body armor vest is slated to arrive.

That morning I make the girls breakfast and they give me drawings they did on index cards that I tell them I will carry to Afghanistan. As I hold tight to my girlfriend, I assure her that we'll be in contact regularly through e-mail. Before she leaves for work, she asks me to show her the lucky charm I wear around my neck—an Iraqi dog tag I found in the dirt on the day I was captured in Tikrit by Saddam Hussein's Fedayeen militia soon after the invasion. I've worn it or carried it

on every deployment since.

I know I have it somewhere, but I can't find it. Go to work, I tell her, and I'll find it and e-mail a photo of me wearing it. It's not a solution that satisfies her so as I tear open my well-packed gear, the tension becomes more frantic. She tosses things from my closet, looks under the bed. Finally, I find it in the crevice of my gear bag.

"I've got it," I shout, pulling it over my head. I rush upstairs and soon she is crying with relief as I embrace her.

It's a dangerous thing to imbue an inanimate object with so much power.

A few minutes later, a FedEx truck pulls up with my new credit card and my bulletproof vest. One of the girls' drawings is deposited in an opening in the front, the other in back, as I tell them how they will protect me from both sides. Under my helmet's webbing I slide a photograph of my girlfriend, the one I asked her to choose. It is from an unforgettable day on the beach when the ocean breeze tossed

her hair around her face.

After she leaves for work, I repack, and then head to the airport. The next thing I realize is that the pop singer Seal is in the security line next to me. As he and I go through the screening machines and then pull our belts and shoes back on, I smile, thinking how the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is now our great equalizer.

Suddenly and weirdly, one of the TSA supervisors yells "bravo." Others answer back with the same. We are told to move away from the screening machines and freeze in place, which in that moment makes all of this seem almost like a child's game. It's five minutes before I hear someone yelling "clear." Magically, we are unfrozen

and proceed to our gates.

It's at this point, heading to my gate, that I begin to feel like a bag of sand being dragged across the ground and through a small hole, losing all the things that give me shape and substance. Despite the draining loneliness I feel, I know in my heart it's much easier for those of us who leave than for those who are left behind. ■

*Kevin Sites, a 2010 Nieman Fellow, is the author of "In the Hot Zone: One Man, One Year, Twenty Wars," based on his reporting for Yahoo! News. His next book, which is about the isolating experiences of war, is titled "The Things They Cannot Say," and will be published by Harper Perennial in 2011. His war reporting can be seen at <http://hotzone.yahoo.com> and [www.kevinsitesreports.com](http://www.kevinsitesreports.com).*

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## WAR: TOLD FROM THE INSIDE OUT

*When journalists go into war zones, some of them are there to report the news of battles fought, of ground gained or lost, and of soldiers hurt or killed. Others remain with soldiers for a longer time, embedded in their unit, and over time they become embedded in their lives. It becomes their purpose to absorb what it means—and convey what it feels like—to be a soldier fighting this war. Such is the vantage point of author*

*and journalist Sebastian Junger who emerged from his time in Afghanistan with a book called “War” and a companion documentary film, “Restrepo,” co-produced with photojournalist Tim Hetherington. In the following two essays, we offer the perspective of a soldier who served in Iraq and Afghanistan on how well Junger succeeded with “War” and of a movie critic, Chris Vognar, who writes about “Restrepo.”*

# Bonds of Friendship on an Emotional Journey

BY JOSEPH KEARNS GOODWIN

Such is the raw power of Sebastian Junger’s book “War,” which follows a platoon stationed in the harsh Korengal Valley of Afghanistan, that I found myself responding with a visceral memory of my own combat service in Iraq and Afghanistan. As I followed Junger’s portrait of the Second Platoon, Battle Company of the storied 173rd Airborne Brigade, I completely understood the intense bonds of friendship the young soldiers formed with one another, immersed as they were in an alien landscape, wholly reliant upon each other, and under constant threat of mortal danger.

I joined the Army in the aftermath of 9/11, having graduated from Harvard College that June. I had been the happy beneficiary of almost every advantage a free and prosperous society offered. It seemed only fair, right and just that I spend time giving something back to the great country that had given me so much. But what began as a selfless pursuit quickly became a selfish one, for joining the military proved to be the start of a journey during which powerful friendships, much as those Junger describes, were forged in the fires of hardship, isolation and danger.

Junger tells what may seem to many a chilling story. When the men at the firebase heard on the radio that an injured Taliban fighter had died of

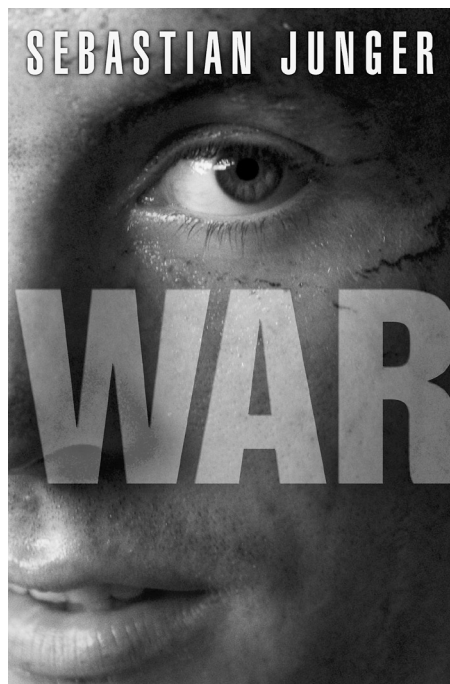
his wounds after crawling “around on the mountainside without a leg,” they cheered. I remember all too well experiencing similar emotions while leading my platoon in Baghdad. On our nightly patrols we were either looking for insurgents to shoot or just waiting for them to shoot at us so we could return fire and kill them.

On nights when we took fire but were unable to positively identify the targets in order to kill them in

turn, I experienced an intense frustration, even rage. Given the hit and run tactics, the improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and the indirect fire of the conflict at that time, this was a fairly common occurrence. Hours later, however, back in the safety of my bunk, I couldn’t conceive that I had mustered such strong emotions simply because I had been denied the opportunity to take a life. The very thought that I hungered for it seemed disgusting to me. Even still, the feeling returned time and time again.

Conversely, when we were able to find our attacker, the feeling was not one of satisfaction that one would assume to be the natural counterpoint of the earlier frustration. There was no celebrating, there was no sense of triumph, instead there was an intense sadness, especially when the collection of the body almost inevitably revealed a man whose youthful features were so evocative of the men of my platoon.

Junger clearly articulates one of the primary ways in which men justify these killings. “You’re thinking that this guy could have murdered your friend,” one of the soldiers tells Junger. “People think we were cheering because we just shot someone but we were cheering because we just stopped someone from killing us.” Junger himself recognizes this very personal aspect of armed



conflict when he ruminates on the individual whose IED just barely failed to kill him. He is shocked by “the raw fact that this man wanted to negate everything I’d ever done in my life or might ever do.”

For me, such rationales, necessary to maintain a bit of sanity in the insanity of combat, break down when innocent civilians are killed. While in Afghanistan from 2008 to 2009, one of my responsibilities was to help investigate allegations of major civilian casualty incidents potentially caused by NATO and international forces. In one instance we went to a camp of nomads where a U.S. missile had struck the night before, seeking out, in vain, a “high value target.”

We landed one hilltop over from where the Kuchi nomads had established their camp. For the most part, the actual body parts had been cleared out—however, the destruction visited by the U.S. ordnance was such that there were still remnants strewn throughout the area, most barely recognizable and indistinguishable from the livestock that had been in the kill zone. Indeed, the most recognizable human remain was the oddly preserved decapitated head of a 12- to 14-year-old boy. No matter how

carefully constructed your emotional and intellectual justifications for the horrors organic to armed conflict, it is difficult to emerge whole from such experiences.

In fact, many do not emerge unscathed. Junger’s primary protagonist, Sergeant Brendan O’Byrne, is one of those. Serving as the voice of the platoon, his character is more fully realized than any, save Junger himself. As such, it is particularly painful to watch his slow demise when he returns from the deployment, first to his home base in Italy and ultimately out of the Army in the United States. He drinks heavily, begins to see enemies where none exist, and ultimately needs an officer’s assistance to be allowed to return home rather than go to jail. As he writes to Junger, “A lot of people tell me I could be anything I want to be. If that’s true, why can’t I be a fucking civilian and lead a normal fucking life?”

After our arduous deployment, this was a question tacitly asked by members of my company and platoon as they experienced a similar downward spiral. Some lost years to drinking, one went to jail for assault, numerous marriages did not survive. Others, sent back to Iraq and Afghanistan for

multiple redeployments, lost their lives.

I believe post-traumatic stress disorder is not simply a function of images that cannot be forgotten, actions that cannot be rationalized. The returning soldier is no longer part of a group bound together by a clear sense of purpose, familiar rituals, and shared experiences. Relationships forged under fire cannot be easily recreated in the modern world or even understood by anyone who has not been in combat. This is especially pronounced in the modern era of warfare, when such a tiny percentage of the population is actively engaged in America’s conflicts. Yet, if we are to reach our troubled soldiers, we must begin to understand that feelings of isolation and the absence of camaraderie combined with the loss of clear purpose weigh as heavily as the memories of the bodies, bombs and bullets. ■

*Joseph Kearns Goodwin, a former captain in the U.S. Army, served as a platoon leader in Iraq between 2003 and 2004 and as a top aide to the director of strategic communications in Afghanistan from 2008 to 2009. He is now in law school.*

## Noticing Quiet Amid the Battles of War

BY CHRIS VOGNAR

A platoon patrols a particularly treacherous part of the Korengal Valley, the locus of combat for American troops in Afghanistan. The men know they’ll take enemy fire. We know this too, even as we watch them from the safe distance of Sebastian Junger and Tim Hetherington’s documentary “Restrepo.” But first we all have to wait as the silence builds and builds until it’s ready to break—which, inevitably, it does.

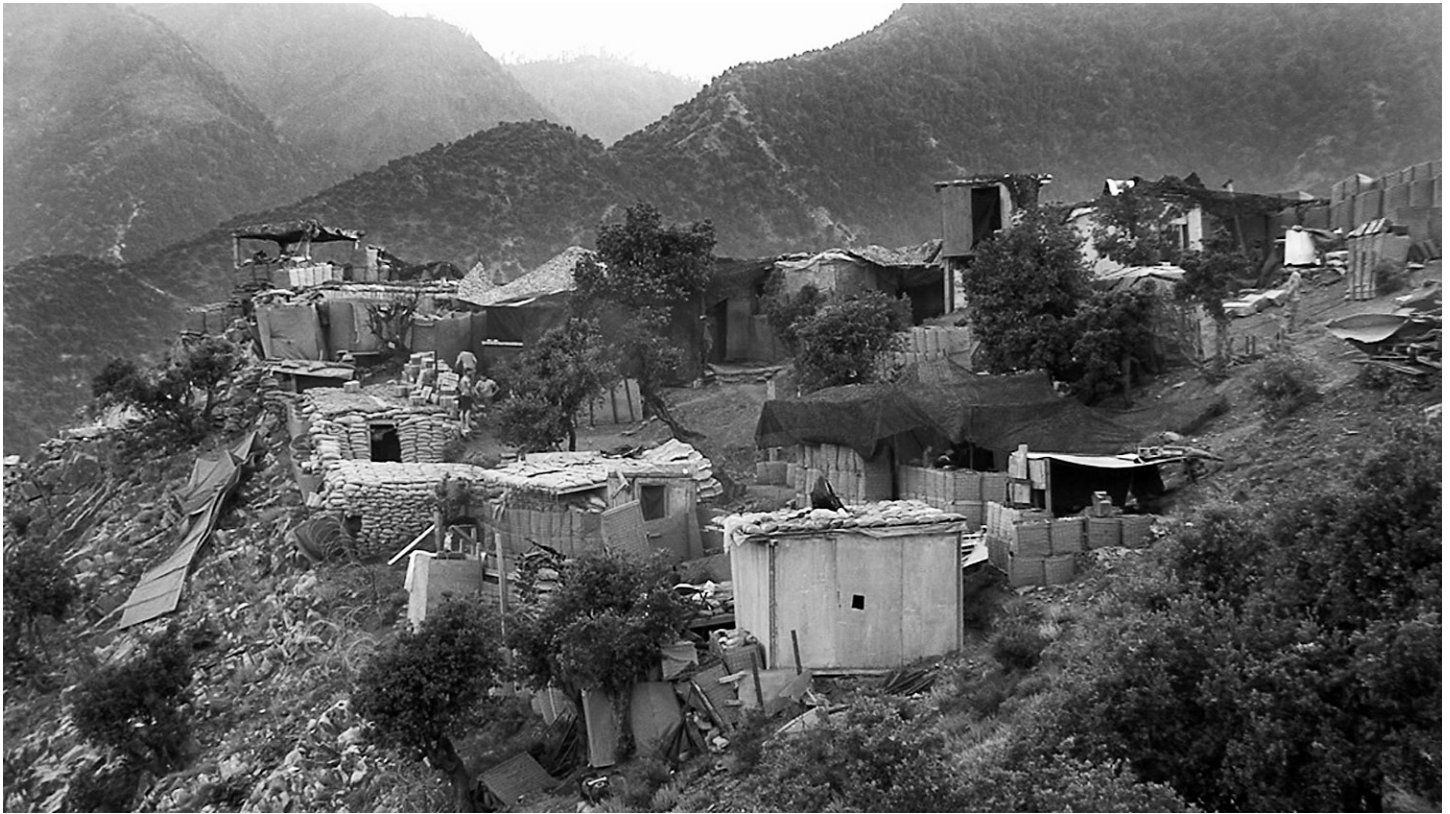
This is the kind of moment that defines “Restrepo” and, by extension,

the trust built between the filmmakers and their subjects. As consumers of war films, we are conditioned to see gore and await dramatic climax. But that’s not war. That’s entertainment, the kind that wins Oscars and allows escape.

Junger and Hetherington are after something else. They spent the better part of 14 months with the Second Platoon, Battle Company of the 173rd Airborne Brigade. The filmmakers went on patrols with the platoon. They took many of the same risks, suffered inju-

ries—Junger a torn Achilles tendon, Hetherington a broken leg. They made it clear that they were in for the long haul. So by the time the maddening quiet came along, their presence was taken for granted.

“Restrepo” is more experiential than objectively informative. And part of the experience is the relationship that forms between journalists and subjects when immersion is an option. Call it access, but for these soldiers it was something more. “You build trust,” Jay Liske, a sergeant in the Second



“Restrepo” focuses on the soldiers’ outpost in the desolate Korengal Valley in Afghanistan. Image © Outpost Films.

Platoon, told me in an interview. “You can open up more and talk about what’s really going on and not be afraid that they’re going to pick and choose the words and make it look like it’s something it’s not.”

Forming bonds of trust also pays dividends once the combat and waiting cease. It’s then time for the men to attempt the near impossible and explain to those who weren’t there what it was like to lose friends, take lives, and fear for their own as they adjust to being back home among civilians. “I’ve been on about four or five different types of sleeping pills and none of them help, that’s how bad the nightmares are. I prefer to not sleep and not dream about it than sleep and just see the picture in my head,” one platoon member says, describing his life in the aftermath of war.

Another foresees his internal struggle as he attempts to figure out how to remember his time at war, a time that others might urge him to try to forget: “I still obviously haven’t

figured out how to deal with it inside,” he says. “The only hope I have right now is that eventually I’ll be able to process it differently. I’m never going to forget it. ... I don’t want to not have that as a memory.” He doesn’t say as much, but you get the feeling this soldier is learning to do this even as he speaks about figuring this out.

“Restrepo” brings the war from Afghanistan to us, inviting us to move inside that which we don’t normally even see. The film has been playing at theaters alongside all manner of other movies, and it has been discussed over post-screening beers among friends seeking out Friday night diversion. Sure, we want to understand. But the act of talking about it seems to serve a different purpose for the guys who were there.

“It’s really hard to put it into words and talk about how it feels,” Liske told me. “When people ask what it’s like, we say it sucks. But an actual movie that shows people exactly what we went through and the emotional aspect of

it, that’s kind of a weight lifted off our shoulders. We don’t have to explain it to people who have no idea. Now they actually have something to see.”

Documentary filmmakers are recorders and storytellers, not therapists. But Liske hit upon an intangible kind of alchemy on display in “Restrepo,” and it comes back to that sense of trust. Soldiers don’t tell just anyone about their nightmares or the way traumatic memories cling to them. Nor do they tell just any journalist. They confide in someone who’s been along for the ride and has invested the time to burrow deep inside the story.

For the soldiers, it’s trust. For the filmmakers, it’s dedication. And for us, it’s a different kind of war film—powerful, provocative and penetrating. ■

*Chris Vognar, a 2009 Nieman Fellow, writes about movies and culture for The Dallas Morning News.*

# From War Zones to Life at Home: Serendipity and Partners Matter

“This Pulitzer Center partnership turned out to be the start of a productive ad hoc partnership that kick-started my career as an independent journalist.”

BY JASON MOTLAGH

The Chinook helicopter banked hard and dropped to the ground, whipping up a cloud of dust and debris. The summer fighting season in southern Afghanistan was winding down yet bands of Taliban were still harassing villagers in the badlands of Paktika province where I was embedded with the U.S. Army, and they were now flushing them out by air assault. Local sources had relayed word earlier in the morning that militants were moving around the area. We were told to be ready for incoming fire.

It was late 2008 and I was on a video assignment for Time.com, my first. The plan was to exit the chopper and film the soldiers surging out behind me, rifles at the ready. But I also hoped to snap a few pictures to go with the print stories I had lined up for other longtime clients. “Go, go, go,” yelled the sergeant as we touched down. With my video camera rolling in one hand, my still camera slung over my shoulder, I ran out the back and quickly dove for cover in a furrow. There was no shooting but the scene on camera was lively enough: guns, grit and a thumping rotor. Or so I thought. In my haste, alternating between cameras, I later realized that I’d forgotten to switch the video camera’s external microphone back on. Most of the footage was unusable.

This wasn’t the first or last time that’s happened. As a multitasking, multimedia journalist, I find that such snafus are an inevitable part of the daily hustle, a kind of occupational tax. Juggling gear and making split-second decisions under pressure—as to what to document and how—are near-constant challenges. While it can be invigorating to do on my own

what once required a crew of people, at times it can feel self-defeating. At those moments I envy colleagues who doggedly devote themselves to a single medium. Their videos or photographs often seem sharper, and their text stories are richer with nuance. Perhaps they really are.

But after working at this hectic pace—and serving these various masters of video, stills and words—for several years now, I’ve come to thrive on the mix. There’s a greater sense of freedom and storytelling possibility as the tools of the trade become more user-friendly. Most importantly, the ability to do more with less keeps me busy in an increasingly tight foreign news market.

## A Pathway to Multimedia Reporting

When I was in college, journalism programs weren’t teaching multimedia skills, and I never did go to journalism school. When I first struck off for West Africa as a freelancer in mid-2005, it was to be a print correspondent. For the better part of a year I roved around the region, reporting on trans-Saharan smuggling in Mali, the civil war in Ivory Coast, and a food crisis in Niger. Along the way editors started taking an interest in my photographs. This opened my eyes to a secondary source of income that gave me a competitive edge in getting stories placed. Although a staff job at a newswire brought me back to the United States, after months of itching to be back out in the field I called it quits and decided to freelance overseas full time.

During a lull, I saw an ad for the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, a

nonprofit organization committed to drawing attention to under-reported global issues. [See story on page 45.] Their mission instantly struck a chord, and I knew partnering with them was something I needed to try to do, especially since I was relaunching with paltry resources at my disposal. Two times I applied for grants, and twice I was rejected. With stubbornness a prerequisite for this line of work, my third proposal—to report on a then little-known Maoist insurgency in backcountry India—was accepted.

I doubled down and moved to New Delhi to cover South Asia. The timing was critical. Soon after I got my first grant, a host of outlets I’d written for—the San Francisco Chronicle, The Washington Times, U.S. News and World Report—either drastically cut or stopped taking freelance foreign copy altogether, emblematic of industrywide troubles. The writing was on the wall: Shrinking news pages alone no longer offered enough space to make a living. Much to my benefit, part of the Pulitzer Center’s approach is that stories be distributed as widely as possible, across a variety of media platforms. My multimedia skills were still raw but the Pulitzer center was willing to midwife some projects, pairing me with seasoned videographers so I could learn on the job. Within months I produced my first segment for TV broadcast, tried my hand at shooting and editing my own pieces, and put together narrated slideshows.

Suddenly, it seemed, I was doing a little bit of everything, and there were incentives to keep it that way.

This Pulitzer Center partnership turned out to be the start of a productive ad hoc partnership that kick-



The Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting funded reporting on what was then a little-known Maoist insurgency in backcountry India. *Photo by Jason Motlagh.*

started my career as an independent journalist. Over the past three years, the center has generously funded projects of mine in Asia, from stories about ethnic strife in Sri Lanka to ongoing work on the impact of civilian casualties in Afghanistan. To get more mileage out of the reporting they support, they have an outreach program called Global Gateway that sponsors journalists to speak at high schools and universities. At a time when many expect something for nothing, we are paid for these profile-boosting appearances, which also give us the rare chance to engage with young news consumers. They've also made some key introductions that have led to steady work that's not always related to the projects they support. It's a lot like having an agent that pays you to do what you love.

This is how I met Craig Duff, the multimedia director at Time.com. He was building his shop there and, fortunately, was willing to stomach some of my early shortcomings as a videographer. One thing I remember him saying upfront was that submissions he received tended to have the "V but not the J," in other words, the technical video skills but not the journalistic backbone. I'm grateful

for his patience. The air assault piece that I almost botched was the first of many Web videos that have allowed me to explore offbeat story topics while developing a visual style all my own. What's more, the video entree at Time.com subsequently opened a backdoor to the editorial department.

These days my Web videos are often packaged with text stories that have become a large part of my livelihood. When news is breaking I might be writing every day. When it's slow, I can dig into my video features. Either way, the need to change gears without breaking stride ensures the work is interesting and filled with purpose.

Being versatile requires mobility. From my new base in Istanbul, it's easy for me to travel on short notice anywhere between Khartoum and Kathmandu. Recently I returned from a monthlong Time assignment to Afghanistan's southern battlefield where the Taliban is ramping up the fight against American forces. The country is similarly hard on equipment; and this time out my video camera and laptop went bust in quick succession so I stuck to writing stories to salvage the trip. I also report for other outlets including The Economist and the Virginia Quarterly Review, where I

have the luxury of writing longer and in my own voice. Recently I've teamed up with filmmaker Rick Rowley to co-produce several documentary features for Al-Jazeera's English channel. A book project is also taking shape.

Nothing stays the same, though. If there's one lesson I've learned it's that you have to be flexible personally and professionally, embracing change as it comes. Last fall I became a father. It's added an incredible new dimension to my life but there are extra financial strains on a freelance income and being away for long stretches of time is not what it once was. To find something close to a balance, I've had to become more efficient in the way I work. Instead of, say, trawling for stories in a conflict zone, I go in with a clear-cut plan, get what I need, and get out.

It's early yet. But much like my transition into multimedia reporting, what began out of necessity is starting to have its own distinct rewards. I'm now able to make a decent living, support my family, and be more selective about the work I do—while spending much less time in lonely hotel rooms. ■

*Jason Motlagh is a freelance multimedia journalist based in Istanbul.*



# Trust and Perception: Powerful Factors in Assessing News About War

How the public responded to news reporting about the surge in Iraq was more about what the audience brought with them than what they took away.

BY MATTHEW A. BAUM

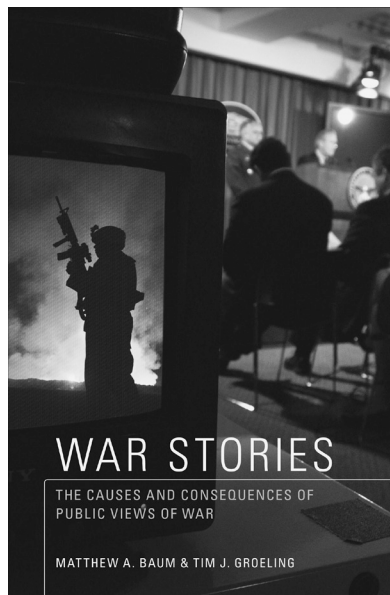
**H**ow Americans absorb news—in this case, news about a war involving Americans—turns out to have a lot to do with what they believe before they hear it. And it matters a lot who is conveying it to them.

That is the conclusion that Tim J. Groeling and I drew from a series of news exposure experiments; surveys of journalists, bloggers and citizens; and news content analyses for our book, “War Stories: The Causes and Consequences of Public Views of War.” Our findings show how and why political affiliation shapes perceptions about the success or failure of the war strategy in Iraq. What we found was that Democrats and independents perceived that U.S. prospects for victory in Iraq had declined from the prior year and that there had been no change in U.S. casualty rates, despite six months of declining casualties. Republicans were far more optimistic.

Reasons for this disconnection reside at the intersection of politics and journalism and relate directly to people’s level of trust and their perceptions.

## The Iraq Surge

In January 2007, President George W. Bush announced a plan for what became the 30,000 U.S. troop surge in Iraq in an effort to reverse the nation’s seemingly inexorable slide into full-scale civil war. The announcement was greeted with widespread skepticism. Developments over the next few months appeared to bolster these critics as U.S. fatalities in Iraq continued to climb, peaking in May 2007 at more than 120. Rising public and Congressional rancor came to a



head in September when the plan’s author, General David Petraeus, appeared before Congress. Democrats and even some Republicans greeted him with skepticism, and the liberal advocacy group Moveon.org placed a full-page ad in The New York Times asking “General Petraeus or General Betray Us?”

Yet by then circumstances had already begun to change in Iraq. In September 2007, U.S. fatalities were roughly half the May peak, and they continued to fall, from 63 in September to 37 in October to 25 in December. Iraqi civilian and military casualties followed a similar trend. Far from turning the domestic political tide, however, the steady decline in violence had almost no effect on news reporting, public opinion, or Congress.

For instance, on the eve of General Petraeus’s Congressional testimony, Senate Majority Whip Richard Durbin declared, “The reality is ... the Bush

surge is not working,” while, during the Petraeus hearing, then-Senator Barack Obama, who as president would later hire him to direct the war in Afghanistan, characterized the war as “a disastrous foreign policy mistake.” As late as February 2008, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi declared the surge “a failure” and added, “... the purpose of the surge was to create a secure time for the government of Iraq to make the political change to bring reconciliation to Iraq. They have not done that.”

Public opinion followed suit. According to The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, between February and September 2007 overwhelming negativity regarding the outcome in Iraq continued unabated among Democrats and independents. Meanwhile, a majority of Republicans said it was going well.

What accounted for this disproportionate skepticism in the face of mounting evidence that the tide had turned in Iraq? The most obvious answer is that after discovering belatedly that prior Bush administration pronouncements regarding Iraq—stretching all the way back to the justifications for the war itself—were at best dubious, Americans were hesitant to accept further claims by the administration of turning points in the conflict. Yet the fact that Republicans accurately recognized the changes in “events on the ground” long before Democrats and independents suggest that this explanation is not sufficient.

## Credibility and Framing

The keys to understanding these patterns lie in two factors: credibility and

framing. Credibility, in this case, refers to the persuasiveness of different types of information emanating from different speakers and news outlets, each with varying partisan reputations. Our experiments show that Democrats were more skeptical than Republicans and independents of “good news” about Iraq announced by the Fox News Channel, which they perceived as biased toward Republicans, but more accepting of the same stories presented by network evening newscasts or CNN, which they perceived as more balanced. Conversely, Republicans were more skeptical of “bad news” stories about Iraq presented by the latter outlets which they perceived as biased toward Democrats but were more accepting of the same news on Fox.

When we analyzed the content of news coverage of the war, we confirmed that early in the surge Fox did offer substantially less critical coverage of Iraq than CNN or the broadcast networks, whose journalists were unconvinced by claims of a turnaround in Iraq. Encapsulating this view, CNN Pentagon correspondent Barbara Starr commented in October 2007: “We’ve had five years of the Pentagon telling us there is progress, there is progress. Forgive me for being skeptical, I need to see a little bit more than one month before I get too excited about all of this.”

This meant that Republicans were relying on relatively more positive Iraq news on Fox while discounting more negative Iraq news on other outlets. Conversely, Democrats were able to ignore or discount the relatively more pro-war news on reputedly conservative outlets like Fox while accepting as reliable the relatively more critical Iraq news on outlets they perceived as more balanced.

These patterns help account for Republicans upgrading their outlook on Iraq following the surge more rapidly than Democrats or independents.

Eventually even skeptical journalists like Starr recognized and acknowledged the post-surge improvement in Iraq and began adjusting their reporting accordingly. This produced a new stream of relatively more positive

coverage of Iraq that Democrats and independents considered far more credible—and hence persuasive—than the earlier pro-war streams emanating from outlets they perceived as pro-Republican.

The second key factor is framing. In the early stages of any conflict, the president and his representatives enjoy a substantial advantage as sources. With few independent authoritative sources, reporters usually depend on government officials for their information. This gives the president great latitude in framing the conflict and helps account for the “rally-round-the-flag” phenomenon. However, to paraphrase a blogger interviewed in “War Stories,” sooner or later reality asserts itself. Over time journalists develop alternative information streams and assess the reliability of the administration’s previous assertions, such as its claims about Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction. Once this happens, the administration has less latitude in framing the narrative.

### Rhetoric vs. Reality

“Elasticity of reality” is the phrase we use to describe the relative size of the gap between the rhetoric and reality that journalists and the public will accept at any one time. It’s always the case that various factions try to frame reality to their own advantage. Sometimes rhetoric and reality tightly cohere, as when events are going well from the administration’s perspective; at other times, not. Yet as the gap between reality and rhetoric expands, the risk increases that journalists and the public will notice and grow skeptical of future rhetoric, even when it better fits reality. As journalists and citizens acquire more and more diverse information over time, the elasticity of reality shrinks.

At the onset of the Iraq surge, this elasticity had collapsed almost entirely; reality appeared bleak and so did most rhetoric emanating from officials in Washington. This made it extremely hard for President Bush to alter what had become the prevailing narrative of Iraq—a fiasco. The only

segment of the public inclined to accept such reframing of Iraq from failure to possible success were Republican partisans, who were still predisposed to trust the president.

Eventually, as the trend toward stabilization and reduced casualties persisted, even Democrats began to reassess. Pew Center data showed a marked uptick in optimism among Democrats by February 2008, a trend that was not apparent in our own survey just two months earlier. That this uptick did not emerge until nearly nine months after U.S. casualties began a steady decline is testament to the difficulty of recasting an event once rhetoric and reality have converged, even given a subsequent stark change in that reality. It also reveals the importance of citizens’ assessments of the credibility of partisan elites, the messages they seek to convey, and the news outlets conveying their messages in determining whether they will rally behind the president. This decision depends on a complex interaction between the perceived motivation of the speaker and the news outlet broadcasting the rhetoric, along with the content of that rhetoric and the perceived interests of the recipients.

In the fall of 2007, President Bush was trapped in an information environment in which his message of a positive turnaround in Iraq was persuasive only to his core Republican constituents. To others, this message was self-serving cheap talk emanating from a discredited commander in chief. The parallel rejection of positive messages by most mainstream journalists reinforced that perception. With such messages relegated to media outlets that were themselves perceived as biased, the rhetoric—and the reality, filtered through perception—was unpersuasive. ■

*Matthew A. Baum is the Marvin Kalb Professor of Global Communications and professor of public policy at Harvard University. He is coauthor of “War Stories: The Causes and Consequences of Public Views of War,” published by Princeton University Press this year.*

# Brutal Censorship: Targeting Russian Journalists

BY FATIMA TLISOVA

*“Everyone shall be guaranteed freedom of thought and speech ... Censorship shall be prohibited.”*

—Constitution of the Russian Federation, Chapter 2, Article 29

**W**idely varying numbers tell a disturbing story about what’s happening to journalists and journalism in Russia, especially when someone in power finds their reporting offensive. First, look at the findings released last year by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), which reviewed the deaths of 313 Russian journalists from 1993 to 2009. IFJ determined that 86 journalists and media workers died in Russia because

of their work while an additional 38 “may have been killed because of the work they did.” Yet Russia’s Ministry of Internal Affairs puts the number of journalists killed during the same period at 19.

The internal affairs ministry is an official source in Russia. The IFJ is an independent group of journalists that published the report, “Partial Justice: An Inquiry Into the Deaths of Journalists in Russia, 1993-2009.” In many ways the difference between the two sources in the number of journalists’ deaths exemplifies the reality of Russian life today: Everything official is constructed to favor the state.

Neither of these sources tells about

the many journalists who, fearing for their lives, fled from Russia to seek safety and asylum in foreign lands. Some suggest that 40 journalists have gone into exile during the past decade. No one really knows, though I know a lot of reporters who, like me, decided to do that. Attacks on news organizations and journalists have increased dramatically, as have abductions. At the same time, criminal and civil prosecutions of reporters and editors have escalated.

Some journalists have been murdered in ways that resemble an execution. And the cruel response of high-ranking officials as they seek to marginalize the victims has convinced



Russian human rights activist Lyudmila Alexeyeva visits the grave of her slain Chechen colleague Natalia Estemirova in August 2009. *Photo by Musa Sadulayev/The Associated Press.*

## Journalists Who Dared to Report—Before They Fled or Were Murdered

*Fatima Tlisova is an independent journalist living in exile after enduring years of intimidation and threats, harassment and arrest by government officials in the North Caucasus region of Russia. Earlier this year she returned to the region and traveled in Europe to talk with journalists about what caused them to flee their country. For her colleagues who were murdered in the course of their reporting, she reminds us of the stories they were working on—the ones that likely led to their deaths. This project was supported by the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting in partnership with Nieman Reports.*

*Tlisova's expanded profiles of these eight colleagues are online at the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting (<http://pulitzercenter.org>).*

**Yuri Bagrov** reported for The Associated Press in the North Caucasus, where he covered the war in Chechnya and the terrorist attacks that were spreading across the region. He investigated corruption in local government and war crimes. He was constantly harassed

for his professional activities. He was arrested, searched and had his passport confiscated by the security services, which restricted his ability to travel across the region. His laptop computer, with data for all of his stories, was stolen. Family members received phone calls promising severe punishment and death. In 2007, he was granted political asylum in the United States.

**Valery Dzutsev** worked as the North Caucasus coordinator for the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), a UK-based nongovernmental organization. In 2004 he reported from the Beslan School #1 on the hostage crisis where more than 300 people died during a rescue operation. In 2007 Dzutsev was accused of tax evasion; the case was never dismissed although the investigation showed that he had paid the taxes. His computers were confiscated and he was warned that the government intended to imprison him for his work with IWPR. In 2008 Dzutsev was granted political asylum

in the U.S. The IWPR subsequently closed its North Caucasus office.

**Natalia Estemirova** was an award-winning journalist and human rights activist based in Chechnya. For more than a decade she reported for human rights organizations and Novaya Gazeta, an independent newspaper that had lost four of its journalists covering the Caucasus. She investigated activities of the “Eskadrony smerti” or death squads. For more than a decade she collected and published video and photographic evidence of the state security services’ involvement in the disappearance and murder of local residents. In July 2009, she was abducted near her apartment in Chechnya. That same day her body was found with bullets in her head and chest. Russia denied the United Nations access to investigate Estemirova’s assassination.

**Magomed Evloyev** was a founder of the Web site Ingushetia.ru, which became the most popular news source in the North Caucasus. Through its use of

observers that these are not random murders. They are a publicly sanctioned punishment for reporters’ efforts to reveal the truth.

Even after journalists are dead, the attacks on them continue. Shortly after Anna Politkovskaya was assassinated in the elevator of her apartment building, Vladimir Putin, then president of Russia, called her an “insignificant” reporter. In reality, she was a courageous investigative reporter within Russia and a journalist whose stories from Chechnya gained international recognition. Soon after the abduction and murder of award-winning journalist Natalia Estemirova, Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov said she was “a woman with no morality.”

Most of the Russian journalists who have been targeted for death

focused their reporting on the North Caucasus. There, as in Chechnya and St. Petersburg, no one who has killed a journalist (or media worker) was prosecuted between 1993 and 2007, and this region accounted for three of the five media-related deaths in Russia in 2008, according to the IFJ report.

For more than two decades, the people living there have endured violence resulting from separatist, ethnic and religious conflicts. People are killed or disappear on a daily basis, but because Russia has virtually closed this region to journalists, stories of these crimes are rarely told. Reporters who are not Russian citizens are required to obtain four to five types of accreditation from government officials, depending on where in the Caucasus they intend to go. Those who

are Russian face intimidation if they ask questions that the government doesn’t want asked.

Of the few news media outlets in the North Caucasus, the vast majority are owned and operated by the state. By law, every TV station is a regional branch of Russia’s state-owned network and this means that government control is certain. Among the local newspapers in the Caucasus only four present any views that are in opposition to those of local government officials. Local businessmen own three of these four papers and the state security service there supports the other one. No criticism appears on their pages of either the federal government or its delivery of local services. These topics remain taboo for regional press anywhere in Russia.

social media, Evloyev's site provided exclusive video and photographs of terrorist attacks and public protests as well as investigative reports about corruption in local government. After he organized a public campaign showing that more than 70 percent of the votes in Ingushetia were fraudulent, the Kremlin organized a court hearing against Ingushetia.ru in which it accused Evloyev of extremism. In 2008, Evloyev was abducted and killed while in police custody. The officer who was found to be responsible was released from jail this year and promoted; he was killed in August.

**Elena Maglevannaya** was a freelance reporter for a local newspaper in Russia's southern city of Volgograd. The city administration issued a libel suit against her for investigative reports about the torture of detainees in local prisons. The court ignored evidence she presented and sentenced her to publish a refutation and pay a \$7,000 fine—an amount of money she had never had in her life. She was attacked by the members of the Russian neo-Nazi group RNU who promised her an

easy solution—institutionalization. In May 2009 Maglevannaya fled Russia seeking political asylum in Finland.

**Zurab Markhiev** reported from Ingushetia—the most violent region in the North Caucasus—for more than six years. He investigated crimes committed by the Russian military and security troops, reported from the scene of a terror attack, and wrote about torture, extrajudicial killings, and the daily disappearance of local people. In 2006 he was abducted by the Federal Security Service (FSB), the KGB's successor, and forced to sign an agreement of collaboration under the threat of death. Two years later, he received a warning that he was targeted for assassination by the FSB. In 2009, Markhiev fled Russia, seeking political asylum in Europe.

**Oleg Panfilov** is an internationally recognized author and expert on media and journalism in crisis zones. He is a founder and chairman of the Center for Journalism in Extreme Situations, a journalist protection organization in Moscow. Long denied access to the

Russian mainstream media, Panfilov in the fall of 2009 bought a one-way ticket from Moscow to Tbilisi, Georgia. What happened to Panfilov represents the strategies of marginalization and alienation—the two methods that the Kremlin uses most often to bring about censorship in Russia.

**Mikael Storsjö** is a prominent Swedish journalist who focuses on Internet freedom. He provides hosting for Kavkaz Center, the most controversial Web site now covering the North Caucasus. Chechen IT specialist and journalist Adam Tumsoev [a pseudonym used to protect his identity] administers Kavkaz Center. This Web site is blocked in Russia as being a platform for local leaders of a jihadist underground. However, in the absence of an independent news media, which the Russian government's aggressive tactics have effectively smothered, Kavkaz Center remains the only and most popular source of resistance information for international journalists. They quote from this Web site when reporting on the situation in the North Caucasus. ■

Journalism is one of the poorest paid professions in the North Caucasus. The average salary for journalists who work in this region is \$200 to \$350 per month. At mainstream news organizations in Russia, average monthly income ranges from \$5,000 to \$7,000.

Only one news Web site in the North Caucasus is legally authorized. That site in Dagestan, charged with extremism, is now under criminal investigation. If people try to go to an unofficial Caucasus-based Web site, they will find on their screen the words “forbidden” or “prohibited” or the browser will redirect them to a pornography Web site.

Since 1998 all Internet providers in Russia have been required by law to install a monitoring system that gives the Federal Security Service (FSB)

unlimited access to users' profiles and allows filtering and remote control of Internet traffic from the headquarters of a special branch of the FSB. This Service of Special Communications and Information (SSCI) was formerly the 16th Directorate of KGB, and it reports directly to Putin, who once directed the FSB and is now prime minister of Russia.

With all of these eyes watching them, North Caucasus journalists who decide to work independently find that reporting becomes a life-threatening pursuit. Word has gotten out about the murder or abduction of some reporters but the story of what happened to many others remains untold as they became targets of official and unofficial harassment and intimidation.

Most local journalists hide their

identity—writing under pseudonyms, as I have—when they report for foreign or independent Russian media. Usually they simply play the role of a source in passing along information and turning over the results of their investigations to colleagues who don't face the same threats. Of course in doing this, they don't reap the professional rewards of their investigative work.

With SSCI's control over all types of communications in the Caucasus, the use of a pseudonym affords only limited protection. In time, the identity of most journalists is discovered. From that point on, that reporter's life changes dramatically. Some of them leave journalism. Some alter their reporting styles while changing their pseudonym. Some flee the country. Others die.

## Telling Their Stories—and Mine

For this project, I returned to the Caucasus early this year and traveled in Europe to meet with journalists who had fled the region. Like so many of them, I, my children, and my extended family left after deadly threats against me took on a level of seriousness that forced me to abandon my home and come to live in the United States. I undertook this journey so that I could talk with other journalists who fled Russia seeking political asylum in Europe or the United States. What they shared with me is chilling testimony to the repression of the press in today's Russia. They also told me about the stories they were reporting, and these accounts provide a roadmap to help us see what the government is afraid to have known.

The stories of my friends and colleagues, Magomed Evloyev and Natalia Estemirova, each of whom was murdered for their work as journalists, represent the apotheosis of brutal censorship in Russia. After the state used all kinds of power against them and still failed to silence their voices, assassination became the ultimate solution.

When I told people about my desire to do this project, they used words like “insane” and “crazy” to try to persuade me not to go. While I appreciated that their concern for my safety was foremost in their thoughts, no one could persuade me that the risk I might be taking wasn't worth the stories I would bring back with me.

For a decade I worked as a reporter in the North Caucasus, and I experienced the full range of what falls under the term “brutal censorship.” Three times I went to court in cases involving government officials accusing me of libel; I won each time. I investigated a civil case that was filed against me by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in which I was accused of illegally receiving a pension; the case was dismissed after I published my investigation in *Novaya Gazeta*. I have been arrested, even when no accusations were filed against me. I've been abducted, tor-

ured and poisoned by the representatives of state services. In 1998 I was severely beaten and hospitalized for two months, yet those who did this to me were never identified. Groups of masked men searched my house and my parents' house. I lived under constant surveillance; after a while I could distinguish which cars following me belonged to the FSB (formerly the KGB) and which belonged to the Russian police force. From 2004 to 2007, I was arrested and detained five times with no legal explanation. My actions were videotaped; what I said on my phone was recorded.

After two top government officials told me in confidence that my name was (and still is) on the list of those sentenced to death, I fled to the United States in 2007. I did this to save my life and my children.

During three years of living in my privileged exile, I received phone calls from friends and colleagues, telling me of their circumstances or about our peers who had been killed, had disappeared, or fled. I've devoted myself to helping journalists from this region by connecting them with immigration services and media advocacy groups. I've testified for those seeking asylum at the embassies in Europe and in the United States, and I've written articles in memory of those whom we have lost.

Yet I grew convinced that I needed to do more by bringing attention to how journalists struggle to report the news in the Caucasus. So in January and February—with the backing of the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting and *Nieman Reports*—I traveled to Europe to meet colleagues who were living in exile and hear their stories. For reasons related to their security, I will refrain from mentioning all the places where we met, and some journalists will be given pseudonyms. There are stories I wanted to tell but can't at this time due to limited resources. Ingush journalist Alikhan Temurziev was eagerly waiting for me in a refugee camp in Eastern Europe, but I was not able to travel to meet with him. [Brief descriptions of the journalists whose stories I am able to tell are in the box on page 74. More detailed

profiles appear on the Pulitzer Center site at <http://pulitzercenter.org>.]

Temurziev was one of Anna Politkovskaya's guides in Chechnya. In a recent e-mail, he gave me permission to tell the story of his abduction by the FSB. When the FSB insisted that he pass on to Politkovskaya only the information that they permitted him to give, he refused to cooperate and he was tortured. Subsequently he was fired from his job, lost his ability to earn an income, and for almost a year lived in a refugee shelter in Ingushetia. As a result of torture, his health is not good. Now the Committee to Protect Journalists is supporting his case in the country where he has resettled.

On my return trip to the Caucasus, I started by collecting information about my murdered friends and colleagues, Estemirova and Evloyev. From the moment I set foot there, I was watched with great intensity. How absurd it must sound that working with legal documents I felt like a criminal and was dependent on friends and others to hide me, as needed. Friends helped me travel from place to place, and they rescued me when I was ambushed and chased. They also let me know whenever the FSB interrogated them to find out about my plans and travels.

Every detail of the trip was thought through. And yet I wasn't able to protect those who helped me from being arrested and savagely interrogated even after I was gone. Among those who risked their lives to assist this project, there was never a suggestion that it was “insane” to attempt the work—a testament to how eager people in the North Caucasus are for a free press, just as they hunger for freedom and justice. ■

*Fatima Tlisova, a 2009 Nieman Fellow, was an independent journalist for nearly a dozen years in the North Caucasus. She is now an online reporter for Voice of America's Russian service. In May 2009, she received the Louis M. Lyons Award from the Nieman Foundation for her “courageous reporting in the face of severe intimidation and physical assaults.”*

## A Journalist's Near-Death Experience in Chechnya

‘... I said to myself, “This is the place where I’m going to die. This is the last thing I’m going to see in my life.”’

*French journalist and author Anne Nivat has traveled to war-torn Chechnya very frequently during the last decade. Since the republic's second war with Russia broke out in 1999, she has covered the events in Chechnya by blending in with the local population and sharing the danger and despair of their lives. In her book, “Chienne de Guerre: A Woman Reporter Behind the Lines of the War in Chechnya,” she told of the nine months she spent there during the war.*

*In September 2009, 10 years after the beginning of what Moscow officials still call an “anti-terrorist operation,” Nivat returned to Chechnya to see for herself the spirit of the “after-war” situation so she could write a story for *Le Point*, a weekly French magazine. What she*

*found was a place that she says is “frozen in time and more violent and chaotic than ever.”*

*Nivat spoke with Nieman Reports editor Melissa Ludtke about what happened when a car in which she was riding was stopped at a checkpoint outside of Grozny. At the time, she was traveling with the parents of her nanny who had received political asylum in France. Nivat was dressed as a Chechen woman, wearing a long skirt and a veil that nearly covered her hair, “the way they wear it in Chechnya,” she explained. After the officer examined her French passport—and took it from her—a man got into their car and drove away with her and her nanny’s mother in the back seat, leaving the father at the checkpoint. Nivat described what happened next:*

Looking at him, I saw that he was not wearing any uniform. He was dressed like a civilian, but he had a weapon. Speaking in Russian, I asked him many times the same question, “Who are you? Introduce yourself, please. Who are you? Where are you driving me? I am a citizen of France. Where is my passport?”

Here I was without my passport in this car, not knowing where I was going, with an unknown driver, who was refusing to answer my questions and who was wearing a weapon. The guy was extremely nervous and shouted at me in Russian, “Shut up. Shut up. I won’t talk to you.” Nevertheless, I kept asking, “Who are you? I am Anne Nivat. I am French. I am a reporter. Where is my passport? Where are you driving me?” And I said to him, “What you are doing is illegal.”

No answer.

I took my cell phone and dialed the number of a friend of mine who is a Chechen woman, one of my many friends in Grozny, to let her know what was happening. In front of this guy I explained to her everything in Russian. Of course he heard when I said, “I don’t know who he is; he is armed. Maybe it’s a kidnapping. How do I know?”

I was also thinking that this was exactly the same way that two different women working for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Chechnya—Zarema Sadulayeva and Natalia Estemirova—had been killed

a few months earlier.

My friend said, “Give him your phone. I want to talk to him.” With his left hand, he took the phone while he drove. This car was a very old car; he was driving very fast. Everything



Women grieve during the burial in August 2009 of slain Chechen human rights activist Zarema Sadulayeva. Her bullet-riddled body was found a day after she was kidnapped. *Photo by Musa Sadulayev/The Associated Press.*



The body of slain Chechen human rights activist Natalia Estemirova is carried to a cemetery for burial in July 2009. Photo by Musa Sadulayev/The Associated Press.

was very hectic. I heard my friend start introducing herself to him in Chechen but he refused to talk to her and tried to switch off my phone yet he didn't know how. He stopped the conversation without having said a word to her.

And he did not give my phone back to me.

So you can imagine my situation. Now I was without any possibility to contact the outside world. The guy kept driving in a totally mad way and I was saying to myself, "If this guy is not giving back my phone to me, that means that he has something in mind, something not good, because how come he doesn't give me my phone back? How come he doesn't want to explain who he is?"

It was really a terrible situation.

I was trying to think about how to act, what to tell him in order to force him to explain what he was doing. I was lucky enough to speak the same language as he does, but he didn't want to talk to me. I kept telling him, "What you are doing is totally illegal. Give me back my phone. Give me back my

phone. Who are you? Who are you?" And the phone kept ringing, because, of course, my friend, who works for an NGO in Grozny, thought I had already been killed and she was trying to get in touch with him.

I repeated to the guy, "I am a citizen of France. If you don't allow me to answer this phone, people will get very anxious. Don't you understand that? Let me answer the phone, let me answer my phone." Of course he didn't care at all.

At a certain point we started fighting because I thought I should get my phone back by force. For him it was not easy because he was driving. I saw his pistol between his legs. At a certain point he stopped the car in the middle of nowhere to the right side of the road. He opened his door and took his weapon in his hand. I was watching every single move of his. I knew he was coming to me. He walked along the car to my door, which was the back right seat door. He opened it violently. I remember the vision of a sunny late afternoon in September, and this was an uncultivated place,

and I sort of noticed just that and I said to myself, "This is the place where I'm going to die. This is the last thing I'm going to see in my life."

I also thought, "I'm going to get killed in front of an old woman who happens to be the mother of the woman who is taking care of my child." This is what I thought about as he was shouting at me. All the minutes before I so much wanted him to talk to me, but at this time I was so obsessed and preoccupied with what he was about to do that I didn't pay attention to what he was saying. He

was insulting me, telling me to get out of the car.

Here we were face to face and I was staring at his hand. He had the gun in his hand, and I know this kind of gun, it's a Russian-made gun. I heard the click of when it's ready. He unlocked it. There was no security anymore.

I said to myself, "Even if he doesn't want to kill me, now he might kill me by mistake." He put the gun on my belly; he touched me. I'm recounting the story slowly, but it all happened very quickly. I just remember what I told him, I said to him in Russian, "I beg you. I am begging you, please. I beg you don't do anything to me because I am the mother of a young boy. That's his picture on the phone."

He finally slowly went back to his seat. He had probably seen the picture on my phone. That's probably why he didn't do anything. I have no idea if it's because of what I told him. I will never know the reason.

We continued driving.

Now it was exactly the same problem except that I was much more quiet in the car. I couldn't speak anymore. I was



terrified, but eventually we arrived on the outskirts of Grozny. At a certain point he was about to stop the car so I opened the door and rushed out. But I couldn't make a move because all of a sudden there were many men like him around me, not wearing uniforms but carrying weapons.

I could see only one man in uniform, so I addressed him, "Major, major (which is a military rank in Russian). Please, who are you? What's happening? This guy almost killed me. What's happening?" He took me and put me into another car in which he was riding, and when I got into that car I saw my nanny's father sitting next to him.

This guy in uniform eventually gave me his last name and told me we were going to the immigration department "to check you." I said, "OK. But who is this guy who took me? Who is he representing? He almost killed me."

He remained silent. Here I was clueless in another car but I was less anxious because at least the guy had told me where we were going. I was still without my passport and without my phone. At this place I met with officers who were not carrying weapons, which was much more comfortable for me. They accused me of not having registered with a police department within 72 hours of entering Russia, which I had done—and I had a stamp on my passport showing I'd done it. This is required of a foreigner. They were trying to find anything to legitimize what they'd done to me.

In the meantime, I didn't know what had happened to my friend, the one whom I had called for help. It turned out that she had called the maximum people she could in the minimum of time because she knew that's how it starts. She knew on which road I had gone. I never go somewhere without saying where I'm going. Chechnya is small and there's just one road going in each direction. She also had called, among others, the member of Chechnya's Parliament whom I had interviewed two days earlier. She was sure that he would somehow help because he had seen me. She told him the story and specified that it would

be very bad if something happened to me. He finally showed up at the immigration department while I was there.

I still was very confused about who was doing what and what was the meaning of all of this. It was difficult to find out who was behind it. I never saw again the guy who had threatened me with his weapon—he just vanished. My passport and my cell phone came back somehow. I don't know through whom, but they were given back to me.

Then the guy in the uniform showed up again and he had a little talk in Chechen with the Parliament member. They talked in Chechen in front of me because they didn't want me to understand their discussion. They knew I don't understand Chechen.

By then colleagues of my friend whom I'd called from the car were present and later translated for me what these two men said to each other. "We had been given an order to stop this car and this young woman in particular inside the car," said the uniformed guy. So it was not by chance: someone somehow gave an order.

That's all I know, and I will not try to find out more because I know this is hopeless. I will never learn the name of the guy who did that to me. I will never know who he was. My guess is that he was some kind of a special security officer working for the Chechen government. He was not a private guy, he was a representative of the state.

So the lesson is that in Chechnya today, 10 years after this war started, we find this sort of violence from the very people who are supposed to defend the citizens. It gives you an idea of the level of arbitrary lawlessness in this place. It is a level not reached before. I have in-depth experience of this country, and I can tell you that it is a very bad sign. It is a sign that absolutely anything can happen in Chechnya today ... and is happening.

What happened to me is happening all the time to Chechen people who are also asking questions. Not only journalists, but citizens asking questions.

While researching my story I spoke

to someone who had said something very intelligent to me. He said, "Why is it that the Chechen people still don't know the names of the people who are committing terrorist acts in the middle of the capital? Why is it that the police don't tell us who they are under the pretext that there is an inquiry going on? In fact, everything is erased as if it never happened." This person went on to say, "We are a very small population and we would like to know what led these people to kill themselves and to kill others. What led them to commit those terroristic acts that are not in the tradition of our society?"

Those kinds of questions are very common in Chechen society today. People want to know what's happening. But they receive no answer to any questions. Everything is kept secret to pretend that everything is all right and under control. Nothing is under control. Nothing.

Well, the state of censorship is under total control, yes. Chechnya is part of Russia, and Moscow pretends that the Russian society is an open society, a democratic society, and that all the problems have been solved in Chechnya. What has been solved? People live with such a level of fear that I've never experienced in my life as a war correspondent. Some elderly people in Chechnya even compare it to the 1930's in Russia.

I was in Chechnya a decade ago during the peak of the war when the level of fear was the level typical of wartime. War activity provokes that. What I have spent my time as a reporter looking at here—and in Iraq and in Afghanistan—is what happens next. What is happening behind the facade of a war terminated? Most of the time the people controlling the situation don't want any witnesses from any country and of any nature, neither journalist nor NGO people, nobody. During the war, these people know other people will be watching. But after the war they believe that no one should be a witness, that no one should see what's happening and be able to talk about it. ■

## Teaching the Science of Journalism in China

‘... I was constantly aware that the journalism they could practice was antithetical to the principles I was teaching, or so I believed until I learned to trust the scientific nature of these principles.’

BY GLENN MOTT

China is a land of stupefying contradictions. One of the best metaphors I know describes it as a Mandarin duck, appearing to float calmly on the surface of the water while its feet are moving as fast as they can underneath. It is a place without the rule of law, where placing limits on free expression becomes the highest form of democracy—the greatest harmony for the greater good—and where authoritarian capitalism is axiomatic, not oxymoronic, and terms like innovation and entrepreneurial are redefined within a system of Confucian hierarchy and state control.

Human rights, democracy and journalism are three of the most transitive terms in the English language when it comes to our thinking about China; we think we understand them until we see that the Communist Party enshrined all of these in its Constitution.

The most voracious consumer of news media in China has always been the state itself, which needs reliable information in order to legislate. Given the Communist Party’s heavy investment in global enterprises, the value of independently verifiable financial news

is just as prized in China as it is by investors anywhere else to assess risk and for markets to function properly. And so the party has expanded the teaching of journalism at Chinese universities (the country now has some 800 journalism-oriented programs) to produce financial journalists capable of more transparent reporting than their predecessors.

As an American lecturing in journalism at one of China’s top universities for leadership candidates in the Communist Party, a political apparatus known for its suppression of information and dissenting opinions, my experiences with students there taught me much about the role journalism and journalists are expected to play.

### Foreign Students of Journalism in China

Business journalism wears a cloak of protection in China; it is a somewhat safer moniker on campuses than journalism unmodified. My graduate students at Tsinghua University were recruited from the Global Business Journalism (GBJ) program that had

been established the year before with funding from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation in conjunction with the International Center for Journalists. As a Fulbright lecturer, independent of the department as a whole, I taught two graduate seminars of rather dubious value to the occupational mandates of the Communist Party committees at the university: opinion and commentary, and narrative journalism. During our time together, my students would come to see how writers such as Michael Lewis, Joan Didion, or, reaching further back, James Agee, could take their financial reporting a step beyond the Bloomberg handbook to a level never contemplated by the ministry of information.

The students I taught came from a diverse group of countries—Australia to Zambia. About half of the nearly 50 students in the program were Chinese nationals, all but four of them female. Just over half of the international students were men; a few had prior experience as journalists, and at least two were working journalists reporting from China.

Foreigners in Beijing would often ask



“Seek truth from facts” is a Chinese slogan that Glenn Mott utilized as a tenet of journalism. Calligraphy by Yingfei Yang.

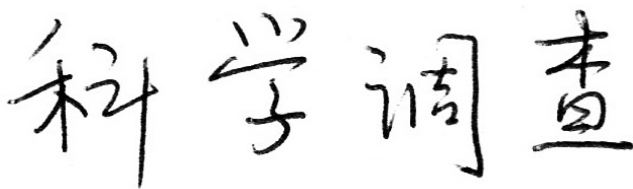
me a variation on the question “What on earth are international students doing studying journalism in China?” It was a question I arrived with and one I hoped my experiences would help me answer. Over the course of the year, I asked my students: “Tell me why are you studying journalism in China?” As the year wore on I gave up on the idea that there was a single satisfactory answer. Instead, I felt that all we could do was to keep asking ourselves this question, as I would do often since as a Fulbright scholar I was studying the Chinese way of journalism as much as anyone. And when I was with my Chinese students, I was constantly aware that the journalism they could practice was antithetical to the principles I was teaching, or so I believed until I learned to trust the scientific nature of these principles.

It turns out that China is a fascinating place to study journalism as a foreigner, if what you are studying is China and the rapid evolution of Chinese media. And few views are more intimate—and revealing—than the one I had inside Beijing’s Tsinghua University with a rare classroom of Chinese and foreign students in a department that was receiving both state and international funding.

It would be easy to take a jaundiced view of Tsinghua’s GBJ program and say that to recruit an international student body and faculty served to validate a form of “journalism with Chinese characteristics” found elsewhere in the School of Journalism and Communication. In Mandarin-only departments like Marxist Journalism, journalism is seen as a profession to serve the goals of orthodoxy. On the other hand, funding from the Knight Foundation, Bloomberg terminals, and an international roster of guests from Tony Blair to Joseph Stiglitz made it possible for the Chinese students to have an unprecedented international experience, grounded by faculty and peers who brought different criteria to bear.

## Chinese Journalism Students

Highly rewarding as this international group was, I wanted more Chinese nationals in my classroom. On leave from Hearst for a year, I hadn’t come to Beijing to do what I might have done as an adjunct at a university in New York. In my travel to other parts of China on the Fulbright, I’d spoken to large halls of Chinese students from all disciplines. Seeing a chance to design a journalism course for non-majors open to Tsinghua undergraduates, I brought my proposal to the dean to design a course we called “Media Culture.” My course description cast a wide



Teaching the “scientific method” helped students understand the Western model of journalism. *Calligraphy by Yingfei Yang.*

net: “... designed for non-journalism majors, we will apply solid journalistic principles to any field of endeavor. ...”

Among the features of this highly popular course—to attract stressed-out engineering, science and economics students—was the extracurricular screening of such journalism-themed films as “Ace in the Hole,” “Shattered Glass,” and “All the President’s Men.” As part of one assignment, a student from the School of Economics and Management wrote:

Had I not taken this course, I would have been more sympathetic [to] the two reporters [Woodward and Bernstein] who were pushed to squeeze out another source of confirmation on the national [Watergate] conspiracy. But after “Shattered Glass,” I have started to understand the importance of fact checking and the crucial role that an editor plays.

Ben Bradlee, *pro vobis*. Is there

anything sweeter than this to an editor’s ears? A finance student, also commenting on “All the President’s Men,” wrote:

Before seeing it, I did not know that two ordinary reporters played such an important role in the whole incident. Unfortunately we rarely see similar responsive and motivated journalists in our country, and it is almost impossible to learn any “insights” from our media. Even if there was someone who encountered intolerable injustice, his or her voice was always dampened.

Few would tell an “unauthorized” story.

In most ways the classrooms at Tsinghua were similar to those on American campuses, though not so well carpeted or loaded with the latest Apple technology. But they were a protected space where any topic is open (behind closed doors),

including, I was told by Executive Dean Li Xiguang, the “Three T’s”—Tibet, Tiananmen, and Taiwan. Nothing, he told me, would be off-limits to student reporting, though he encouraged me to be more discrete in official public gatherings of faculty and students.

But the situation in my classroom is far from what these students would face as working journalists at state-run news organizations. It should be noted here that only a few of the GBJ graduate students will become financial reporters. Most of the Chinese nationals hoped to find a stable government job or go into communications and public relations for private enterprises. Given this, many times I wondered whether these students were all that different from journalism students at American colleges facing the cubicles in corporate media. Among my Chinese graduate students in one class, eight of the 13 went to work for state media; two work in the internal reporting department at Xinhua News Agency where their reporting is read only by party officials, one is with a weekly

magazine published by Xinhua, and five were hired by China Daily.

For my undergraduates, who were mostly engineers, “The Elements of Journalism,” by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel became the core text. I taught these principles as I would anywhere else, but that does not mean my students would be able to practice their craft using the same standards, if they decide on careers in journalism. They will be licensed by the government and have to sit regularly for recertification to ensure they are up on the latest policy decrees from the Communist Party. They might call these core competencies; we would call them something else. And they are entering a field that will not have the capacity to absorb them if they expect to practice the ideals of the profession as they studied it. Add to this the fact that the prospects for a young Chinese reporter are low—compensation and legal protections are inadequate, and none of the requisite professional organizations are in place to assist them.

## Contradictions to Nationalism

Given the current situation, why are so many Chinese j-schools bulging with applicants? As young reporters they will join a force of more than 700,000 Chinese journalists and media workers who face off with editors who will censor their stories in accordance with China’s laws and regulations. And they will be asked to self-censor. Yet under this metaphysical ceiling of orthodoxy, stories abound, reporting sometimes gets through, consumer fraud and official corruption are exposed. A fortunate few will even work at places like the former *Caijing* magazine with an editor like Hu Shuli before she resigned in protest and became a founder and editor in chief of *Caixin Media*, or *Southern Metropolis Daily*, as it had been under the visionary editorship of Cheng Yizhong before he was removed. Increasingly, some will count on being dispatched overseas after dues paying at Xinhua headquarters, assigned to one of its international

units as part of the push for a Chinese CNN to grow its influence over news and information. Or they might find work as news assistants at the foreign bureaus of international news organizations—though the chance that this will be an American publication is less likely as bureaus close.

When censorship of China’s media is decried from abroad, it often sounds shrill inside China. For one, it does not take into consideration how the majority of urban Chinese (those in the Eastern cities) feel—that new media technologies and the ability to tunnel under the Great Firewall have given them access to more world news, Internet forums, and social media tools to speak more freely and more anonymously than they ever did through traditional media. That anonymity may be cold comfort from here in the U.S., where Chinese censorship has another face; here it is regarded as not just a challenge to the liberal-democratic ethos but as a trade barrier. Censorship is keenly felt as media protectionism favoring Chinese clones like Baidu over American entities like Google.

There is a new self-confidence in China brought on by weathering the current financial crisis. Its students are more assertive and less impressed by liberal democratic ideals as models for the developing world. My elite students were the embodiment of this new pride, but I could not help noticing ironies in the aggrieved sense of nationalism promoted by the Communist Party.

For me, there was a weird sense of satisfaction in the prurient thrill my students took in pointing out the supposed licentiousness of American society they got from headline news. They kept me abreast of American TV shows I had not seen, downloading them from the Internet, and eagerly told me about shootings I would have missed in the news cycle (viewing them as proof of the dangers of American life). My students still admired American innovation, technology and higher education, and that democracy can even work amid the bedlam of American power and politics.

But there were many signs through-

out my year at Tsinghua that a desire for freedom and reform transcends the currents of nationalism. Ideally, I told students in my opening lecture, journalists are something akin to scientists of facts, relying on methods that make it possible to practice newsgathering as an objective discipline within the subjective prejudices of the writer.

In the Chinese system, foreign journalists are thought to be biased because we do not confirm our facts with the government, which has processed all the sanctioned particulars into a single version of the truth; instead, our arbitrator is our editor. The Chinese way is imperial in origin. Chinese state journalists are asked to report the truth as it was reported to them, or so it sometimes appears. The ministry of information dictates what topics are sacrosanct and out of bounds to reporters; yet these rules remain mostly unwritten, so each editor has to determine the Maginot Line based on home contingencies and the politics of the local prefecture.

At Tsinghua University, I was teaching journalism scientifically, as a craft with a set of practices for newsgathering and objectivity built into the working model. By approaching journalism in this way, my undergraduate engineers and science majors easily made the connection. After all, they were inculcated in the scientific method of testing evidence and allowing a scientist to bring observation and experience to bear, which is necessarily a subjective stance while still being able to report their findings objectively.

One student sent me this e-mail after that opening lecture:

I really appreciate the first lecture on Monday, and was especially impressed by “Journalists are scientists of facts.” It astonished me that you didn’t say experts instead. Experts could be hired by a company or a country, but the soul and the original thoughts of a real scientist definitely couldn’t be bought by anyone.

Pragmatism is what Deng Xiaoping deeply believed in economy, but also in publicity

word “propaganda”). In different times, the media or basically the press could be “used” in different ways. The tradition lasts long in this old nation that media is always regarded as the mouthpiece of the authority. But I think the willing[ness] of the whole society to seek truth and facts is stronger than any time before. Although there are still many dark sides in journalism or op-ed in China, it’s been a good sign that this kind of willing[ness] and hope continues. That’s why agreement echoed in my mind.

There is nothing like having students to make a person reexamine their own ideas. This is particularly true with foreign students, who reveal the fault line in assumptions of shared values. American scholars come from a pluralistic environment where First Amendment rights are the bedrock on which the media should function. But in China, the press situation is entirely

different. Some Chinese scholars may accuse Western journalists teaching at Chinese journalism schools of conspiring with the Communist Party by teaching future Chinese journalists the best practices of the West without fundamentally changing the monolithic nature of state media. Through interactions like the e-mail exchange with my student, I came to understand that my teaching would result not in the wholesale adoption of American journalistic standards, impossible under Chinese orthodoxy, but rather in my students borrowing and using what could work for them.

By imitation and participation China’s state media are pretending to the world to practice “journalism with Chinese characteristics.” The question becomes whether by pretending to practice journalism is it inevitable that enough Chinese reporters will eventually practice solid principles—and have the support of good editors who are equal to them. Whether by imitation and participation, they will necessarily

come to a point where the choice is to uphold the principles of the profession or deny their own credibility.

To be a student journalist in China is to be sufficiently pragmatic, cooperative and comprehensive. To teach journalism in China is to be agnostic about the application of scientific principles of journalism, to trust the critical skills of the craft. If one of my students who is a member of the Communist Party should use her journalistic faculties in the service of her country, at least we will have a higher level of discourse with which to engage each other in the future, and this will necessitate that we, too, hold our professional practices to the standards we profess for American journalism. ■

*Glenn Mott, who is the managing editor and director of publishing at King Features Syndicate, a unit of Hearst Corporation, taught journalism at Tsinghua University as a Fulbright scholar.*

## An American Observes a Vietnamese Approach to Newsgathering

‘Consider this a content sharing agreement, with the “agreement” part being implicit, at best.’

BY SAM BUTTERFIELD

### EDITOR’S NOTE

We have made the decision to remove from our online publication “An American Observes a Vietnamese Approach to Newsgathering” based on a number of concerns raised both within VietNamNet and by credible observers subsequent to its publication.

Sam Butterfield portrayed his summer internship through personal observations. However, we now believe that his experience should have been placed in a broader context. Had this been done, this story would have more fairly represented for the reader the general practices of VietNamNet and provided a truer sense of the limited vantage point out of which he wrote.

Since he does not read or speak Vietnamese, he worked on VietNamNet Bridge, the news organization’s English-language Web site that is considerably smaller than the Vietnamese site. Due to this circumstance, he was not qualified to characterize the entire news organization in the way his story suggested.

Melissa Ludtke, Editor  
Jan Gardner, Assistant Editor



# Investigative Journalism in the Arab World

‘Why not create a ProPublica-like news organization here to give the public more watchdog journalism?’

BY JUSTIN D. MARTIN

Arab news organizations largely report visible events, rather than uncover news about what isn't. Investigative journalism has never taken off in the Arab world as it has in the West. To put it mildly, government officials in this region don't look favorably on the idea, not that their counterparts in Western democracies always appreciate the stories watchdog reporters produce. But in Arab countries journalists face a barbed maze fraught with intimidation, demotion, incarceration and sometimes even death.

The most common way that Arab governments stifle investigative reporting is by applying financial pressure. Arab states are intimately involved in the economic well-being of many Arab news organizations so they apply pressure in several ways, most notably through ownership or advertising. In return, they get homage. Perhaps the best-known example is Al-Jazeera, funded by the Qatari royal family and which broadcasts nary a report critical of Qatar's government. But there are others. Egypt's Al-Ahram newspaper, the country's largest in circulation, is owned by President Hosni Mubarak's regime and is dutifully pro-government. Jordan's largest circulation daily, Al-Rai, is also partly owned by the ruling government, and its devotion to the monarchy is similarly clear.

Some Arab governments also heavily subsidize or buy advertising in privately owned news outlets which, should they publish something the government finds unseemly, could suddenly find themselves without one of their largest



Despite having the necessary permit, Ian Lee was told by a plainclothes policeman outside the Cairo headquarters of the government-owned Al-Ahram newspaper to stop taking pictures—even of these flags. *Photo by Ian Lee.*

clients. Most major newspapers in the United Arab Emirates, for example, if not owned outright by the regime, receive heavy government subsidies.

The result of this patronage isn't surprising. To put a contemporary twist on what George Bernard Shaw observed: A government that pays Peter to write about Paul will always be pleased with coverage of Paul.

So from my perch as a journalism professor in Cairo, I have wondered whether as nonprofit investigative journalism becomes more prevalent in the West, donation-driven journalism might create and sustain a more independent and investigative press in Arab countries. Could nonprofit journalism organizations in the United States, such as the longstanding Center for Public Integrity (CPI) and the more recently founded ProPublica, serve as inspiration for investments in the Arab world that would promote investigative reporting? After all, these

two nonprofits, along with several even newer ones with similar missions and funding streams (a mix of foundations and individual donors), have given investigative reporting a significant boost at a time when many cash-strapped news organizations aren't able to support it as they once did. ProPublica won a Pulitzer Prize this year for its coverage of the life-and-death decisions of exhausted doctors at a Katrina-battered hospital in New Orleans.

Throughout the Arab world, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) fund efforts to promote economic development. Why not create a ProPublica-like news organization here to give the public more watchdog journalism?

## An Arab Nonprofit Center

Here's what I envision. Financially, a nonprofit center for investigative journalism would be set up in ways similar to CPI and funded by foundations and individuals. An initial grant to fund this organization would come from a place like the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation or the Carnegie Corporation with the hope of generating long-term support from other groups and individuals. (It wouldn't work to have money from either a government agency or labor union as part of the mix.) Once the center starts to publish investigative reports that Arab citizens find useful, then more funding would find its way to supporting this effort. There is no shortage of Arabs who, in despair over the lack of government accountability, might give to a nonprofit center that

has demonstrated the demand for more of it.

Other than financial leverage, one way that Arab governments control the press is through licensing requirements. Many Arab journalists must obtain government permits to work and can lose their credentials if they get too pushy. In Egypt, for example, journalists shooting video footage must get a series of government permits, which, once obtained, often don't stop the regime from physically blocking newsgathering. And in Iraq, the government is also trying to impose licensing on journalists. Such a center, then, would probably have to be based initially in Lebanon, an Arab country where journalists have relatively more freedom and whose government doesn't impose a draconian licensing system.

The center would be staffed with Arab and non-Arab reporters and editors. It would likely be necessary to have a few reporters of other nationalities working there, too, such as Iranians and Turks, to cover some regional issues. All publications would be made available free online in both Arabic and English, with occasional reports in French and Persian. The center would also need reporters with Arab-American or Arab-European

dual nationality to file reports from Israel and the Palestinian territories, to which many Arabs cannot travel.

In the words of anti-corruption group Transparency International, this center would devote itself to investigating the "abuse of entrusted power," whether in government or in political, religious or financial institutions. Such reporting could involve the monitoring of presidential elections in Egypt, following the trail of foreign aid in Jordan, and screening the activity of banks in Lebanon.

Of course, even an investigative journalism center based in a country such as Lebanon or Jordan would face government limitations. These countries have at times either imprisoned journalists or imposed punitive fines on them, and if reporting duties took them into other countries, they'd confront an even harsher climate of resistance. Still, an internationally funded journalism center would be hard for these governments to contain. As a way to buttress their work—and perhaps create greater protection against government intrusion—these journalists could team up with global news outlets like The New York Times and Reuters on joint reporting projects, just as ProPublica has done with print

and broadcast news organizations.

Investigative journalism does exist, to some extent, in Arab countries. The independently owned Al-Ghad newspaper in Jordan, for example, takes its watchdog role seriously, and opposition papers in countries such as Lebanon and Egypt routinely push boundaries. Also, Arab bloggers reveal scandals while citizen journalists have used mobile cameras and social media to bring videos of official torture in Egypt and other countries to digital outlets such as YouTube.

But sporadic investigative reporting in this autocratic region isn't enough. There need to be independent news organizations in the Arab world with the sole mission of monitoring and making known abuses of power. Right now power in the Arab world resides mostly in the governments and their intelligence services, not with the people or the press. It doesn't have to be this way. ■

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## Taking Those First Small Steps

“You mean it's OK in your country to tell a leader what to do?” a few of them asked.’

BY MADELEINE BLAIS

Some invitations are hard to refuse. The one that professors Sandra Earley and Phelps Hawkins sent me was especially enticing. I'd spend a week in March teaching journalism at American University in Bulgaria (AUBG), working in classrooms in what used to be the headquarters of the local Communist Party, spending time with students who come from countries with virtually no tradition

of free speech. Located in Blagoevgrad (Blago, for short) which is about a two-hour drive from the capital city of Sofia, AUBG was founded in 1991, soon after the fall of Communism. The university enrolls more than 1,000 students, just over half of whom come from countries outside Bulgaria. Classes are taught in English.

Teaching journalism in a post-Soviet bloc country is challenging because

the concept of openly speaking your mind is still foreign, despite the fall of Communism more than 20 years ago. A student from Turkmenistan told how the dictator named the months of the year after members of his family. A Bulgarian student talked about statues disappearing and how she never knew who would be honored in the town square one day and replaced the next. Coming from places of secrecy



and shifting sands, it is not so easy for these young people to imagine the free trade in barbs and opinions that we enjoy in Western-style media, even if even if it is sometimes fraught and imperfect.

Here, we worry about whether journalism has a future; in Blago, the students and their teachers worry about whether it has a present.

Sandra shared with me an incident that happened in her class when a diplomat visited. In an interview with a student, he said something that the student would only characterize as “harsh.” This student refused to tell Sandra any more about even the content of their conversation because of feeling the need to protect the diplomat. Nor would this student consider having what he said be published. Sandra could not begin to imagine what this visiting dignitary had told the student. Only after much prodding did the student confide, in a soft halting voice that almost choked on its own fearfulness, that the diplomat had said that it might well be in Bulgaria’s best interest to more openly promote the rights of gays, women and the Roma.

“I find the anecdote rather sweet and, unfortunately, typical,” Sandra told me. “Students from the former Soviet republics don’t seem to feel entitled to information as journalists or as citizens. They often ask permission when they don’t need to. When they ask for information, particularly from public officials, they don’t expect to get it. They expect to be told no, with no explanation, and public officials are often only too ready to fulfill their expectations. Student reporters seem to have a hard time understanding that they stand in the place of their readers and are entitled to information to pass on to citizens via the media.”

When I told the students about a column I’d written in *The Boston Globe* giving President Obama advice about what he should do and how he should conduct himself during his vacation last year on Martha’s Vineyard, they were wide-eyed.

“You mean it’s OK in your country to tell a leader what to do?” a few of them asked.

“Of course it is,” said Sandra. “We have an expression in English, ‘A cat can look at a king.’” She explained that no one is so important that an ordinary person cannot look at him or her. When she asked if any of their countries had a similar saying, the students offered blank looks. Where they come from, cats can gaze upon cats. (Maybe mice too, if they are lucky.)

My advice to Obama was jocular in spirit. I shared excerpts and then Sandra and I suggested that they come up with their own directives should Obama ever visit their countries.

One evening I gave a talk in the library and I hoped the students who came were drawn there by more than just the promise of refreshments afterward: “White wine, red wine, and water.” Hearing them ask questions convinced me that they were. One student asked if I regretted being a journalist.

This question took me by surprise. “Regret? Oh, no,” I answered, “Just the opposite.”

Later, I asked Sandra what she thought prompted the question. “Probably a variety of things. It contains an undercurrent of something very Eastern European and post-Soviet, a kind of fatalism or regret that is almost a default position in that culture. Where these kids come from, journalism pays next to nothing. You can get into a lot of trouble for doing it. There is no culture of a free and open exchange. The idea of it as a profession is frightening.”

But, she added, these students are trying. “Baby steps,” she sighed.

As if to prove her point, after I left, Phelps was in touch with the following message: “I just received the following e-mail from one of my freshmen students. Isn’t it dear?” Here’s the e-mail:

Hi, professor! I wonder why journalists write in one article two different points of view. Moreover, these two parts contradict each other. Is it because the journalists want to show us all the truth and all sides of this or that issue?

It gets to you, Bulgaria. It is isolated. The terrain is a perpetual challenge. It has a veneer of mystery in its silence, of a vast hidden bank of unspoken thoughts and dreams.

Even after my short visit, it lives on. I will always take cheer from the answers the students came up with in the basic newswriting class when we asked them to offer their own advice to President Obama if he were to tour their homelands. A Bulgarian student said, “Do not be surprised by bad roads and people always frowning.”

Other Bulgarian students quickly added that once the president recovered from those perceptions, he should explore the Seven Rila Lakes and watch a traditional folk dance and he would definitely see some smiles. He should also enjoy some rose petal jam. And he should try some rakia, an anise-flavored spirit popular in the Balkans, as well.

A young man from Athens said, “Expect riots and protests if you go to Greece. This is Greece in general. It is not personal.” Another student: “In Russia, wintertime might be a bad idea. In good weather, go to St. Petersburg, not Moscow. St. Petersburg is real Russia. Try the Borscht.” A student from Kazakhstan said, “Go to private house for good dinner.”

As a group they agreed on several points. In certain countries Michelle Obama must wear a headscarf. “Religion,” a girl said in a quiet voice, “is very important.” But above all, the president, they said, should avoid looking like a tourist: “Mr. Obama, remember, no sandals with socks and no camera dangling from your neck,” one student advised. “In big crowds, watch the wallet. Wear something nice: Calvin Klein or Burberry. Be good looking.”

This wasn’t exactly hard-nosed reporting we were seeing. It was, however, one of those encouraging baby steps. ■

*Madeleine Blais, a 1986 Nieman Fellow, teaches journalism at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst.*

## In South Africa, Connecting With a Wealth of Nieman Fellows and Finding Signs of Hope

A first trip to the former land of apartheid is a time to renew friendships and ponder the nation's future.

BY NANCY DAY

**M**y Nieman class (1979) included two fellows from South Africa: John Mojapelo and Donald Woods. Getting to know them while studying the nature of prejudice kindled an interest in visiting that country, one I was finally able to fulfill earlier this year during an academic sabbatical.

In 1978, John was on leave from his job as a reporter for The Rand Daily Mail. Donald had been editor of the Daily Dispatch in East London, where he became friends

with the anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko. Donald uncovered evidence that torture in police custody led to Biko's death. After these stories were published, he and his family were threatened. The South African government "banned" him for five years, and he fled the country with his wife and children. Donald died in London in 2001, but earlier this year I was able to visit with John, who is a lawyer, and his wife, Elizabeth, a school principal, in Lady Selborne, west of Pretoria.

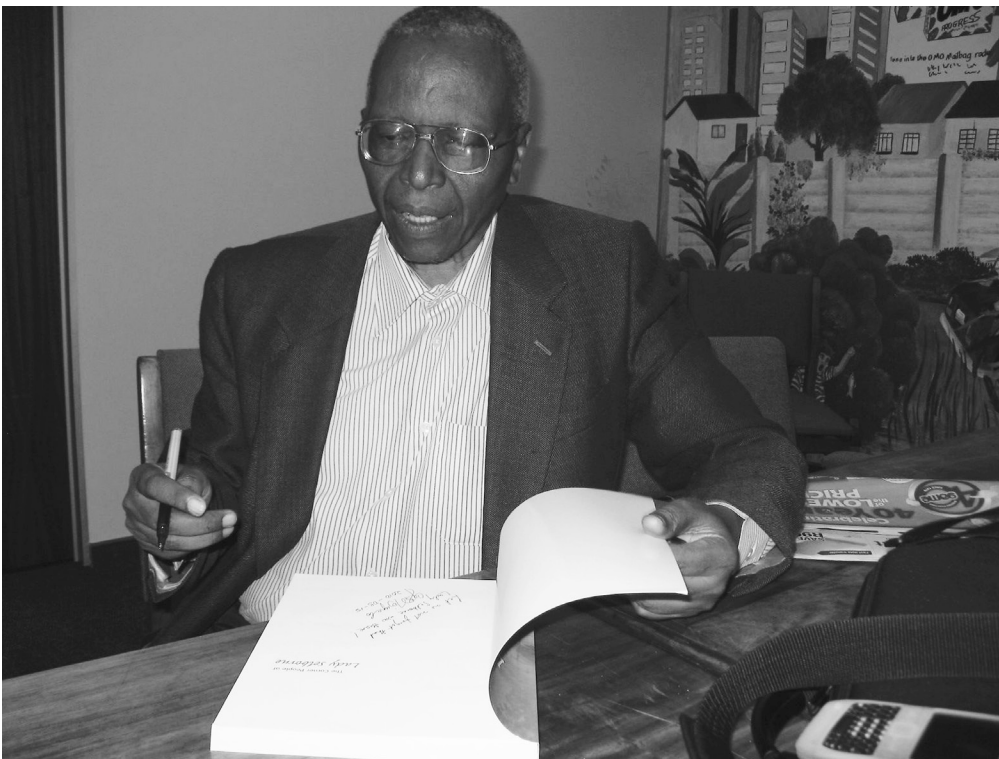
It would be "un-African" to meet in a restaurant, John assured me, and so they prepared a traditional braai for me at the energy-efficient home they built on repatriated land once seized from the Mojapelo family and thousands of others under the apartheid government's Group Areas Act.

I spent more than four weeks in South Africa, writing about women in leadership roles, and meeting people, including as many Niemans as possible, in Johannesburg, Durban, the Eastern Cape, Stellenbosch, Cape Town, plus rural and township settlements in between.

### A Question of Leadership

In all of those places, I saw South Africans reading newspapers. Thabo Leshilo, NF '09, who was named the first public editor of Avusa Media, which publishes the Sowetan, Sunday World, and the Sunday Times, told me why. "We lag behind the U.S. in terms of technological developments driving newspapers into bankruptcy," he said. "Internet penetration is very negligible and the vast majority of the populace is not techno-savvy enough to ditch newspapers."

I also saw plenty of people armed with mobile devices so the pressures on print media are intensifying. For now, however, "newspapers remain powerful in



John Mojapelo, NF '79, inscribes his memoir, "The Corner People of Lady Selborne," published last year.



Thabo Leshilo, NF '09, is the first public editor of Avusa Media.

South Africa and their views matter,” Thabo told me. He cited the case of Julius Malema, president of the African National Congress (ANC) Youth League, who is under investigation for local government contracts awarded to his company that, according to Thabo, performed “shoddy work building bridges and roads. These have had to be redone, costing the taxpayer more. This [rebuilding] would not have happened had the media not exposed the shenanigans.” News stories when I was in the country accused Malema of interfering in the delicate diplomacy between South Africa and Zimbabwe and inciting anti-white violence by repeatedly singing a song that literally translates into “Kill the Boers [farmers].”

I asked Zwelakhe Sisulu, NF '85, once a crusading journalist and later the first black to head the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), about the apparent absence today of idealistic leaders of the caliber of Archbishop Desmond Tutu or Nelson Mandela. Zwelakhe and I met informally at Lippmann House in 1985. The next time I saw him, he was greeted by wild applause as he triumphantly entered Harvard's

Sanders Theater during the Nieman's 50th anniversary celebration in 1989. He had been in detention in South Africa; it took the intervention and pressure of influential Americans to get him released, and few in the room that evening were sure that he would show up.

Today Zwelakhe is a prosperous entrepreneur. His sister, Lindiwe, is defense minister; his brother, Max, is speaker of the National Assembly. As he reflected on my leadership question, he noted that his late father Walter, who cofounded the ANC Youth League, and Mandela were products of missionary schools. Each was brought up with a strong moral code, which sustained them during long imprisonments. Zwelakhe credits his mother, Albertina, with holding many families together while parents were jailed, banned and exiled.

“Our home was really a community center,” he recalls. People left clothes to help out the families, so he found himself as a boy literally in the “big shoes and big suits” of struggle leaders. With the clothes came stories: “This was so-and-so's who was sentenced ... .” Life was hard, but inspiring. “It was not just the sense of the extended

African family, but the extended ANC family,” he said.

After Mandela was released from prison, he asked Zwelakhe to leave the New Nation newspaper he'd founded and join him as his communications liaison on his world tour. In 1993, the ANC tapped him to transform the SABC from a tool of apartheid into a true public broadcaster to help the country prepare for its first democratic elections a year later. South Africa has 11 official languages, one of many logistical and philosophical challenges he faced in that role. He is still involved in broadcasting, through Urban Brew, which is the biggest content provider for SABC, and a number of other industries, including book publishing, solar energy, and mining. A project close to his heart is Soweto TV, what he calls “the first community television channel in this country.”

“A lot of our presenters are kids who live off the streets,” he said, but the endeavor is not social work. “I would say in the next 12 months Soweto TV will be financially viable.”

## A Rallying Point

The effects of apartheid are still harshly apparent in the huge disparities in economic well-being, educational attainment, and job prospects. Yet the cultural context of South Africa's young people—the Born Free—is quite different from that of their elders. The generation who grew up during the struggle had many “assembly points”—in prisons and in impassioned strategy sessions, for example. Today's young people have none. A program of national (not military) service might be a way to teach job skills, teamwork and discipline to this younger generation, creating a common purpose. Perhaps, Zwelakhe suggested, Soweto TV and similar ventures he plans to launch in other urban centers could be future community assembly points.

He described Mandela's leadership as “this big tree under whose shade we all lived,” while acknowledging President Jacob Zuma's charisma. But the country will not advance significantly without creating more jobs. “You

need a leader who is going to be very sophisticated economically,” he said.

“One of the great things about the new South Africa is that media and journalism are thriving,” said Zwelahke, who praised the diversity of views and choices, even if, as he acknowledges,

the quality is not always the best. He is confident that expanded broadband capacity and more access will accelerate change. He commended today’s journalists, for standing up “to all sorts of threats, direct and implied, without buckling under.” ■

*Nancy Day, a 1979 Nieman Fellow, has chaired the Journalism Department at Columbia College Chicago since 2003. Previously, she was an associate professor at Boston University and a journalist in Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.*

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### 1943

**Frank K. Kelly** died on June 11th in Santa Barbara, California at the age of 95.

He was a soldier and reporter in World War II, a speechwriter for President Harry Truman, and a cofounder and senior vice president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, according to a tribute by foundation cofounder David Krieger published in the Santa Barbara Independent.

His writing career got off to an early start with a science fiction story published in *Wonder Stories* when he was 16. After graduating from the University of Kansas City, he worked for *The Kansas City Star* and *The Associated Press* in New York City.

Kelly was a speechwriter for Harry Truman during his 1948 presidential campaign against Thomas E. Dewey. Forty years later, in an oral history interview for the Harry S. Truman Library & Museum, Kelly talked about the campaign and a phrase he wrote to sum up the issues: “peace, prices and places to live.”

Following his stint as a speechwriter, Kelly held a number of positions in government and public policy organizations, including assistant to a U.S. Senate Majority Leader and vice president of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions. In the early 1950’s he directed a national campaign against book censorship and held a leadership role in the Study of World News, conducted by the International Press Institute. In 1956 he became the vice president of the

Fund for the Republic, a nonprofit organization founded by the Ford Foundation to fight McCarthyism and promote freedom of expression.

He and his family moved to Santa Barbara when the fund established the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions there in 1959. For 17 years he worked closely with Robert Hutchins, the center’s president. Kelly wrote a number of books, among them “*Court of Reason: Robert Hutchins and the Fund for the Republic.*”

His wife, **Barbara**, to whom he had been married for 54 years, died in 1995. Kelly is survived by two sons.

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### 1954

**Robert C. Bergenheim** died June 5th at his home in Naples, Florida. A Navy veteran of World War II, he was 86.

He got his start in the newspaper business at 17 as a copy boy for *The Christian Science Monitor* in Boston, then moved into a reporting job after the war. After his Nieman year, he returned to the *Monitor* as a reporter before becoming city editor. Eventually he became manager of the *Christian Science Publishing Society*, which not only published the *Monitor* but books and magazines as well.

He was publisher of the Hearst-owned *Boston Herald American* from the mid-1970’s until 1979.

Two years later he founded the weekly *Boston Business Journal*. In an obituary published in *The Boston Globe*, journalist Peter Kadzis, who worked with Bergenheim on the

launch, said, “Bob Bergenheim was a newsman who combined vision with integrity. Long before most others, he saw that business news was going to be a bigger player than ever before.”

Bergenheim’s son Roger, who was working at the *Boston Phoenix* at the time, told the *Globe*, “He called me and said ‘How would you want to set up a business journal?’”

In 1986 the Bergenheims expanded the franchise, launching the Providence (R.I.) *Business News*. Roger remains the paper’s president and publisher.

The following year Bergenheim sold half-ownership of that paper along with full control of the *Boston Business Journal* and *Boston Business* magazine to a Minneapolis-based publishing company. He bought back full ownership of the Providence weekly in 1990.

He is survived by his wife, **Elizabeth**, four sons, and two daughters. Another son died in 2008.

In lieu of flowers, the Bergenheim family has asked that donations be made to the Nieman Foundation.

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### 1956

**Robert L. Healy** died June 5th at his home in Jupiter, Florida. He was 84.

A veteran political journalist, Healy spent more than four decades at *The Boston Globe*. He covered nine national elections, beginning with the presidential primary in New Hampshire in 1952, and wrote a column on the op-ed page for 26 years. He had been executive editor, Washington bureau chief, and political editor.

Born in Boston, Healy started as

a copy boy at the Globe, where his father worked as a mailer for 50 years. The first newspaper story he covered was the scene at the mortuary where families of victims of the Coconut Grove nightclub fire went to identify bodies.

After serving in the Army Air Corps during World War II, he returned to the Globe in 1946, attending college full time as well.

Among the big stories Healy covered over the years were the Brink's robbery, the sinking of the Andrea Doria off Nantucket, and Mayor James Michael Curley's release from federal prison.

In the obituary that appeared in the Globe, Jack Driscoll, a former editor of the Globe, said Healy "was best known for his political instincts and passion. Political conventions and campaigns were his bread and butter. He was a whirling dervish during those times."

Healy broke a couple of stories that were difficult for the Kennedys. In 1962 when Edward M. Kennedy was running for the U.S. Senate for the first time, Healy learned that Kennedy had been expelled from Harvard as an undergraduate for cheating on a test. The Kennedys agreed to cooperate on the story if it was played below the fold on Page One. It ran under the headline "Ted Kennedy Tells About Harvard Examination Incident."

In 1965, Healy played a key role in a Globe investigation into the qualifications of a lawyer who had been nominated for a federal judgeship. The nomination was withdrawn and the Globe won the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service in 1966.

Healy is survived by his wife, **Mary**, four sons, two daughters, two stepdaughters, and three stepsons.

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1963

**Victor K. McElheny** has written his third book, "Drawing the Map of Life: Inside the Human Genome Project," which was published by Basic Books in June. In an e-mail, he discussed the project: "So here we are, a few years away from complete human DNA sequences for the price of a CAT scan.



Nieman Fellows Francisco Santos, left, and Juan Manuel Santos flank then-President Alvaro Uribe during a ceremony in Bogota in 2007. Photo by Fernando Vergara/Associated Press.

## Niemans Entering and Leaving Office in Colombia

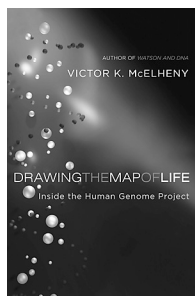
**Juan Manuel Santos**, NF '88, was elected president of Colombia in June, and he was sworn into office in August. Santos, who received 69 percent of the votes, had been the country's defense minister from 2006 until 2009 under President Alvaro Uribe.

Meanwhile, his cousin **Francisco Santos**, NF '92, who served as vice president under Uribe, has returned to journalism, taking on a new role as

director of the morning news program for Colombian broadcaster RCN Radio.

The Santos family has long been involved with Colombian politics and media. Juan Manuel's granduncle Eduardo Santos was president in the 1930's and 1940's, and the family owned Colombia's largest daily newspaper, *El Tiempo*, until 2007, when it sold the majority share to a Spanish media company. ■

As I told Salon.com, "We're going to be doing a lot of growing up in the way we think about genetics in the next decades." I began covering stories about DNA even before my Nieman year, when I first met the DNA pioneer, Jim Watson." McElheny's book, "Watson and DNA: Making a Scientific Revolution," came out in 2003.



McElheny continued in his e-mail: "It took six years of study, scientific conferences, and interviews, a year of writing, and half a year of post-production" to get "Drawing the Map of Life" into bookstores in June. "Early reac-

tions have been friendly," McElheny wrote. "The reviewer for Science said the book 'cuts fresh paths into recent history.' The Economist's reviewer said, 'Mr. McElheny knows almost everyone involved and describes their motivations fairly.'"

Founder of the Knight Science Journalism Fellowships at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the longtime science journalist is in his 13th year as a visiting scholar in MIT's Program in Science, Technology, and Society.

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1988

**Eileen McNamara** is writing a monthly column for Boston magazine.

## 1987 Niemans Gather in D.C.



Nieman Fellows and affiliates from the class of '87 gathered in D.C., on the couches from left: Betsy Lamb, Martha Matzke, Chuck Alston, Lois Fiore (former longtime staff member at the Nieman Foundation), Jamie Lamb, and Susan Dentzer. Others from left: Rick Carns, Al May, Valerie Hyman, Ira Rosen, Libby Cumming, and Doug Cumming.

An impromptu reunion took place in Washington, D.C. in May. Four '87 Fellows are D.C. area residents: **Al May**, **Martha Matzke**, **Chuck Alston**, and **Susan Dentzer**. Two others had plans to be in town: **Jamie Lamb** and his wife, **Betsy**, as well as **Valerie Hyman**. When word of this confluence got out, other Fellow families decided to join the party: **Ira Rosen** and his wife, **Iris Schneider**, came down from New York, **Doug Cumming** and his wife, **Libby**, drove over from Lexington, Virginia, and **Linda Wilson** and her husband, **Rick Carns**, flew in from Castle Rock, Washington. Al and his wife, **Carol Darr**, welcomed the group

to converge on their home for four days of eating, drinking, shopping, touring, cigar smoking, and the traditional poker game. Jamie made his famous cioppino and Chuck wowed the bunch with quiche and biscuits at the concluding brunch at his and Susan's home. Hyman writes: "Ours is the class that has continued reunions without pause since our graduation. Once annually, now biannually, we have seen each other through weddings, divorces, illness, job changes, and children. It's a rare group of any kind that remains connected as our class has, and we're grateful for this lifelong blessing. Next summer: Woodstock!" ■

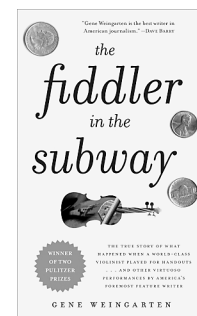
It debuted in the "Best of Boston" issue this summer. Formerly a columnist at The Boston Globe, she was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for Commentary in 1997. Since leaving the Globe after nearly 30

years, McNamara has been teaching journalism at Brandeis University.

**Eduardo Ulibarri** has been named Costa Rica's new ambassador to the

United Nations. It is his first diplomatic posting. Ulibarri is the former editor of La Nación, Costa Rica's leading daily newspaper, and has taught journalism at the University of Costa Rica. He also serves as the president of the Institute for the Press and Freedom of Expression in Costa Rica.

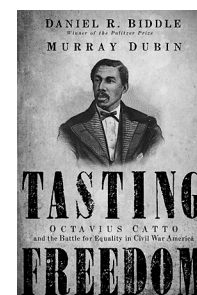
"For me this is totally unprecedented," Ulibarri said after his appointment was announced. "I am not a specialist in diplomatic matters nor do I have systematic training in international themes, but I have always been studious and I have an understanding of the extended world."



**Gene Weingarten's** "The Fiddler in the Subway," a collection of his profiles, columns and feature stories for The Washington Post, was published in July by Simon & Schuster. The book

takes its title from the piece—about a world-class violinist playing for change in a Washington, D.C. Metro station—that won Weingarten his first Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing. Other pieces in the collection include "The Great Zucchini," his profile of a troubled but extremely successful children's entertainer, and "The Armpit of America," about his search to find the worst city in the country.

1990



**Daniel R. Biddle** is the coauthor of "Tasting Freedom: Octavius Catto and the Battle for Equality in Civil War America," published in September by Temple University Press. Biddle, the Pennsylvania editor for The Philadelphia Inquirer, wrote it with Murray Dubin, his longtime colleague at the paper.

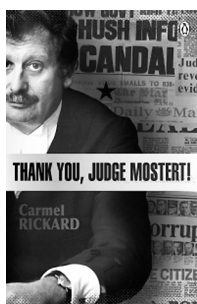
Catto, an activist for equal rights for blacks, was murdered during an election-day race riot in Philadelphia in 1871. In an e-mail, Biddle wrote: “Dubin and I stumbled onto this story and realized right away it had all the elements: It was full of drama and amazing characters; it had not been widely told; and it could make a difference. All that remained was to research and write—for seven years! We became library rats, poring over archives and combing old newspapers. We learned of men and women who anticipated Rosa Parks, Jackie Robinson, and Martin Luther King, Jr. by nearly a century. They sat down in whites-only streetcars, challenged baseball’s color line, and marched through hostile crowds to proclaim their right to vote. The story of their struggles has changed my understanding of America’s racial history. I hope it does the same for readers.”



**Monica Flores Correa** is the author of “Agosto” (“August”), a collection of short stories written in Spanish. It was published this year by Artepoeética Press. A resident of New York City, she teaches literature and Spanish at the Cervantes Institute and the Queen Sofia Spanish Institute.

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1992



**Carmel Rickard** has written a book, “Thank You, Judge Mostert,” being published in September by Penguin Press in South Africa. Anton Mostert was one of South Africa’s youngest judges when he was appointed in 1978 to head an investigation of financial regulations. It unearthed evidence of massive government corruption involving some of the nation’s power elite.

## Nieman Reports Editor Receives Yankee Quill Award

**Melissa Ludtke**, NF '92, editor of Nieman Reports, has been selected by the Academy of New England Journalists to receive the Yankee Quill Award recognizing a lifetime contribution toward excellence in journalism.

In a letter to Ludtke announcing the award, academy chairman William B. Ketter wrote that the selection “was not based on any single achievement but rather on the broad influence for good you have had on New England journalism over your career. This includes your distinguished history of fighting for equal opportunities for women sportswriters, your deft editing of one of America’s most thoughtful journalism publications, and your conscientious involvement with children’s and other social organizations.”

Ludtke, who has been editor of Nieman Reports since 1998, began her journalism career in the 1970’s. As a reporter for Sports Illustrated, she was the lead plaintiff in a lawsuit that gained women in the media equal access to baseball locker rooms. As a correspondent for Time magazine, she focused on children and family issues. She is the author of “On Our Own: Unmarried Motherhood in America.”

Ludtke has been active in a number of organizations devoted to the welfare of children, including Families with Children from China and Roots & Shoots, a program of the Jane Goodall Institute.

The Yankee Quill Award was established in 1960 as a way to honor extraordinary journalists who work to better their communities.

Ludtke was nominated for the award by **Bob Giles**, NF '66, curator of the Nieman Foundation, who said, “Melissa is a gifted journalist. She works effectively with a network of writers to tell reflective, informative and inviting stories about journalism in a time of extraordinary change. She has creatively enlarged the reach of Nieman Reports, finding a voice for the magazine in the conversation about the future of journalism through digital and social media outlets.”

Ludtke is the third staff member of the foundation to be inducted into the academy, Ketter said. **Louis M. Lyons**, NF '39, was inducted in 1963 when he was curator. **Dwight Sargent**, NF '51, was inducted in 1978, six years after stepping down as curator. ■

In defiance of Prime Minister P.W. Botha’s order, Mostert released all of the evidence.

Rickard writes a syndicated column from the Trading Places bed and breakfast she runs in the Free State. Her column is published in all of the Independent Group’s morning titles—the Star, Pretoria News, Cape Times, and the Mercury as well as on the Independent’s Web site. She explained the scope of her column: “I have a wide brief, but usually write about the intersection of law and politics, or clean governance issues or—and I really love this—what life is really like in the post-1994 platteland [rural areas], what it’s like for a city person to live here, what you notice

... how democracy is working at the grassroots level.”

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1993

**Michael Skoler** joined Public Radio International (PRI) as vice president for interactive media in June. He plans to expand PRI’s reach into online communities and develop new initiatives in digital media. Skoler was previously with American Public Media in St. Paul, Minnesota, where he developed the Public Insight Journalism model.

“I’ve learned that culture is even more important than strategy for success in today’s networked media world,” Skoler said of his new position.

## Nieman Foundation and Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting Join Forces to Strengthen Global Health Reporting

A new collaboration between the Nieman Foundation and the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting will support international reporting initiatives with a special focus on global health coverage.

The partnership also will bring Pulitzer Center journalists to Harvard for presentations and discussions on underreported international stories and provide an annual workshop for fellows that will explore the center's strategies for using multimedia platforms effectively; placing news stories in the media for maximum impact; and employing social media, educational networks, and other innovative techniques to engage the public in important global issues.

The new collaboration grows out of the Nieman Foundation's fellowship in global health reporting, which was established in 2005 and includes a four-month reporting project at the end of the Nieman year.

Once intended to provide major news outlets with funds to send fellows

to the developing world to learn and report about health issues, the global health reporting fellowship has become a metaphor for the massive changes affecting journalism and international reporting in particular. Within just a few years of the program's inception, placing these well researched, groundbreaking international health stories in mainstream media outlets has become a challenge despite the global health fellows' journalistic experience, connections and success in learning new media skills at Harvard.

Based in Washington, D.C., the Pulitzer Center funds, promotes and publishes international reporting projects and has built a reputation as an innovator when it comes to keeping global affairs on local radar screens. In collaboration with the Nieman Foundation, the center's staff will support global health fellows as they plan their trips and try to place their stories. The Nieman Fellows also will be part of the center's outreach program.

The new partnership is underwritten by a three-year grant from the Pulitzer Center, which will cover the cost of fieldwork for 2011 global health fellows **Antigone Barton** and **Helen Branswell** as well as for their counterparts in the 2012 and 2013 classes.

The collaboration between our two organizations is apparent in other ways, such as this issue of Nieman Reports, with articles by Pulitzer Center director Jon Sawyer ("The Sometimes Bumpy Nonprofit Ride Into Digital Foreign Correspondence" on page 45) as well as journalists funded by the Pulitzer Center, Kwame Dawes ("Bearing Witness: The Poet as Journalist" on page 21), Jason Motlagh ("From War Zones to Life at Home: Serendipity and Partners Matter" on page 69), and **Fatima Tlisova**, NF '09, ("Brutal Censorship: Targeting Russian Journalists" on page 73). Nieman Reports is serving as the publishing partner for Tsisova's reporting about Russian journalists who have fled the country or been killed. ■

"PRI has both—a creative, risk-taking culture and a clear-eyed strategy for creating value. It is a terrific group of people and a very exciting platform for leadership in digital media."

1994

**Maria Henson** has been appointed associate vice president and editor at large at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. A 1982 graduate of the university, she oversees the Wake Forest University Magazine and manages a number of editing and writing projects. The university plans to launch a blog later this year and Henson will be among those writing for it. Her duties eventually will include teaching. "I hope to mentor students in the way I was guided by my professors," she

explained in an e-mail.

Henson's previous job was deputy editorial page editor at the Sacramento Bee. She left that position in May 2009 to return to South Africa and Botswana, where she had been on sabbatical the previous year.

On her most recent trip there, she pursued her idea of writing a book about a botanist and mapmaker who had lived in a tree in the bush of Botswana for nearly a decade. "After a time I decided to drop the book idea because I felt my protagonist was too private to share her story unless she wrote it herself," Henson wrote. "I enjoyed the rest of my time in Africa, going back to the bush and also spending time with Nieman classmate **Barney Mthombathi** in Johannesburg who invited me to accompany him on a trip to impoverished rural areas to deliver books to schoolchildren."

1995

**Michael Riley** has been hired as managing editor for Bloomberg Government, a new paid subscription Web site that will report on and analyze the business implications of government actions.

Since January, Riley has been hiring a team focused on health care policy, and he's hopeful that the enterprise will expand significantly during the second half of 2010 to cover other important subject areas. "It's great to be hiring talent for an innovative journalistic enterprise," says Riley, "so if you know some top-notch journalists with an entrepreneurial bent looking to work in D.C., please let me know."

Earlier this year, Riley left his position as the editor and senior vice president at Congressional Quarterly.



1997

**Deborah Seward**, the Paris bureau chief for The Associated Press (AP), has been named an assistant managing editor for the news cooperative. Seward will help oversee the AP News Center in New York City. The center works closely with the AP's regional and department leaders worldwide and works on new storytelling methods and content for new products and devices.

"Debbie brings strong news experience, plus a sharp awareness of how AP's customers worldwide use and interact with our journalism in all forms," said senior managing editor Mike Oreskes, in an AP story announcing the job change.

Seward, who began her career with AP in Warsaw, Poland, in 1988, has been Paris bureau chief since January 2009.

2000

**Andreas Harsono** is the recipient of the West Papua Advocacy Team's John Rumbiak Human Rights Defenders Award for 2010. He is the first Indonesian to win the annual award established in 2008 to recognize an individual or institution making a substantial contribution to the protection of human rights in West Papua, which has been part of Indonesia since 1963.

In an e-mail, Harsono highlighted two of his major writings on the subject. "Criminal Collaborations? Antonius Wamang and the Indonesian Military in Timika," coauthored with S. Eben Kirksey, was published two years ago in *South East Asia Research*, a peer reviewed journal based in London. It focused on the murder of two American teachers and one Indonesian teacher during an ambush in Papua in 2002. "We revealed the possible collaborations between a Papuan fighter, Wamang, and the Indonesian military in the killings," Harsono wrote.

For "Prosecuting Political Aspiration," a Human Rights Watch report published in June, Harsono visited more than a dozen prisons and

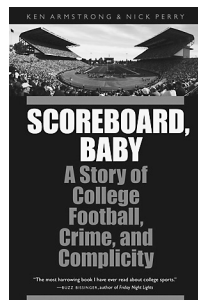
interviewed more than 50 political prisoners in Papua and the Molucas Islands. "We revealed that the Indonesian government keeps on prosecuting minority activists who aired their political aspirations peacefully," Harsono wrote. Some prisoners died after being tortured; many had no access to medical care.

**Michael Paul Williams** received the George Mason Award from the Virginia Professional Chapter of the Society for Professional Journalists in June. The award is given annually to journalists who provide "significant, lasting contributions to Virginia journalism," according to the group.

Williams, a longtime reporter and columnist for the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* who frequently writes about minority issues, spoke in his acceptance speech about his work: "I got to speak out on behalf of the poor, the unemployed, the disenfranchised and marginalized. On behalf of the rights of gays and lesbians to equal protection under the law. I've tried to spark or perpetuate conversations about race, and have been gratified to see how much we've progressed in our ability to hold such conversations.

"Our fundamental calling is to afflict the comfortable and to comfort the afflicted. This is the gospel of journalism. It's a religion America will always need."

2001



**Ken Armstrong** is the coauthor of "Scoreboard, Baby: A Story of College Football, Crime, and Complicity," published by Bison Books in September. The book, written with Nick Perry, shows how a community's blind embrace of the University of Washington football team compromised judges, prosecutors, police agencies, the university itself, and the media. **Buzz Bissinger**, NF '86, author of

"Friday Night Lights," called "Scoreboard, Baby" "the most harrowing book I have ever read about college sports." The book expands on a 2008 series in *The Seattle Times*, "Victory and Ruins," that Armstrong and Perry wrote about the University of Washington football team, which won the 2001 Rose Bowl even though at least two dozen players had been arrested.

2002

**Jabulani Sikhakhane** is the new spokesman for the National Treasury of South Africa. Sikhakhane formerly worked for *Destiny Man*, a business and lifestyle magazine, while also writing on a freelance basis for *Business Day*, the *Saturday Star*, the *Weekend Argus*, and the *Sunday Tribune*. In addition, he took two online classes, in music theory through Berklee College of Music and in the history of medicine through Oxford University.

On joining the government, Sikhakhane wrote: "After the end of my contract with *Destiny Man*, I was

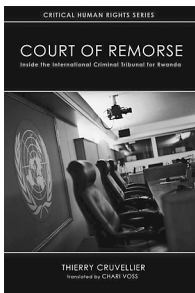
## Nieman Fellows Enroll In Kennedy School's Mason Program

Two Nieman Fellows, **Kalpana Jain**, NF '09, and **Alejandra Matus**, NF '10, are enrolled this fall in the Mid-Career Master in Public Administration Edward S. Mason Program at Harvard's Kennedy School. Students from developing and newly industrialized countries earn a master's degree while taking part in a year-long program in which they meet with leading thinkers and practitioners in political, economic and social development. A number of Nieman Fellows have graduated from the Mason program. ■

approached by the National Treasury to join the team as the spokesperson for the department and the minister of finance. The National Treasury is a good vantage point from where to view the whole of government because 99.9 percent of what the rest of government does must, at some point, pass through the National Treasury. Most importantly, it's a good place to learn about the South African economy and politics!"

2004

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**Thierry Cruvellier** has updated his book, "Court of Remorse: Inside the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda," for the English edition, which was trans-

lated from French by Chari Voss and published by the University of Wisconsin Press in August. In an e-mail, Cruvellier wrote, "My apologies to non-French speakers as it took four years to have it available in English."

He updated the new edition with what he called the most important judgment to be issued by the tribunal: the conviction in December 2008 of Colonel Theoneste Bagosora on charges of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

Cruvellier, who covered the tribunal from 1997 to 2002, draws on interviews with victims, defendants, lawyers and judges and his observations during the proceedings to take readers inside the courtroom to witness the complex dynamics. The book focuses on the men charged with the mass murder of Tutsis as well as the history leading up to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and the challenges facing the emerging international justice system.

Based in Phnom Penh, Cambodia for the past three years, he is working on a book about Duch, the former head of the infamous detention and torture center in that city during the Pol Pot regime in the 1970's. "He is also

the only senior Khmer Rouge to have admitted his responsibility," Cruvellier writes. "Because it was essentially a guilty plea in a legal system that does not have plea bargaining and therefore allows a full trial whatever the plea of the accused, I found the Duch trial to be a unique opportunity to hear the voice of the perpetrator." Cruvellier covered the eight-month trial in 2009. His e-mail closes, "... the book, for sure, will not be published before next year ... in French first!"

2005

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**Alma Guillermoprieto** is the recipient of the 2010 Lifetime Achievement Award from the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF). The award honors the careers of women who "elevated the principles of journalistic practice and became worthy role models for young women—and men—in newsrooms around the world." Past recipients include Barbara Walters, Helen Thomas, Katharine Graham, and Molly Ivins.

"Actually, when I first was notified of the award I went into a funk," Guillermoprieto wrote, "because, as is well-known, lifetime achievement awards are generally given to people who are about to drop off the hooks. But [Nieman Foundation curator] **Bob Giles** [NF '66] saved the day by sending kind congratulations with the caveat that a mistake had been made, and I'd gotten the award much too soon! So with that as my article of faith I feel really delighted and honored."

Guillermoprieto has written extensively on Latin America for *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post*, *Newsweek* and *The New Yorker*. She has covered conflict throughout the Americas, and in 1982 reported on mass killings in El Salvador that were carried out by a U.S.-sponsored Salvadoran army.

The IWMF will make the official presentation at the Courage in Journalism Awards ceremonies in New York and Los Angeles in October. "I hope I can use both occasions to call attention to the desperate situation of Mexican journalists covering the drug

beat," Guillermoprieto writes. "The CPJ [Committee to Protect Journalists] has just come out with a truly chilling report that I hope will be read by many of our colleagues abroad. Simply staying alive is the true achievement for too many reporters working the drug beat today."

2006

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**Guillermo Franco** has written a report, "The Impact of Digital Technology on Journalism and Democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean," for the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas at the University of Texas at Austin and the Open Society Foundations Media Program.

The report, based on discussions and proposals from the 2009 Austin Forum at the University of Texas, examines the long-term effects of increased broadband penetration and the diffusion of media and government power through social media, among other topics. It also features an introduction by Knight Center director **Rosental Alves**, NF '88. The entire document is available in English and Spanish at <http://knightcenter.utexas.edu/digitaltech.php>.

2006

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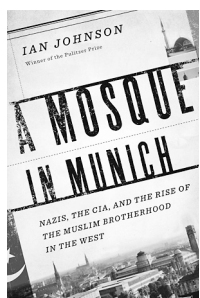
**Zippi Brand Frank** directed and co-produced "Google Baby," a documentary about the globalization of the fertility industry that premiered on HBO in June. It focuses on a clinic in India that pairs egg donors in the United States with gestational carriers in India where some view surrogacy as a form of prostitution. A process that can cost \$100,000 in the United States can cost as little as \$6,000 in India.

During an interview on NPR's "Talk of the Nation," Frank said she wanted to draw the public's attention to what is a rapidly growing business that raises ethical questions. She said she initially felt the arrangement was exploitative of women, yet her attitude changed after hearing the feminist views of the Indian doctor and seeing

how the income improved the lives of the surrogate mothers.

2007

**Alagi Yorro Jallow** is a Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy, a private nonprofit in Washington, D.C. During his fellowship, he is evaluating the role of the news media in The Gambia. On the 16th anniversary of the military takeover of The Gambia, he wrote an essay, published on the Nieman Foundation's Web site, in which he concluded, "A free press is unlikely to emerge in The Gambia unless and until the country adopts and sustains a solid democratic culture, an independent judiciary, and a respectable, apolitical military that is eager and willing to serve under a democratic commander-in-chief."



**Ian Johnson's** book "A Mosque in Munich: Nazis, the CIA, and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West," published in May by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, has a strange cast of characters. As Johnson himself put it, "The people involved are so bizarre that they sound like the start of a joke: you have a brilliant Nazi linguist, a CIA man who's a nudist, and a radical Muslim on the lam..."

Johnson wrote in an e-mail that the book grew out of an investigative piece he did for *The Wall Street Journal* in 2005. "I took book leave, visited archives and then had the Nieman year to learn more about the issues and ruminate on the structure. I benefited a lot from that year, especially the narrative writing class and the chance to use Widener Library, where I had a wonderful carrel facing south on the sixth floor.

"The book is mainly a work of history, tracing three efforts to instrumentalize Islam. Starting in the Nazi era, it looks at how Germany tried to use

Islam to fight the USSR. The CIA took over this project in the 1950's, which became based around a mosque in Munich. Eventually the project was run by the Muslim Brotherhood, which made the mosque its first overseas base." More information is available at [www.ian-johnson.com](http://www.ian-johnson.com).

Johnson, who won the 2001 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting for his coverage in *The Wall Street Journal* of a popular religious uprising in China, has returned to that nation where he is accredited through *The New York Times* bureau in Beijing and is again looking at religious issues.

**Craig Welch**, an environmental reporter for *The Seattle Times*, has won a first-place beat reporting award in the print category of the Society of Environmental Journalists' annual contest. Twenty-nine winners in 11 categories were selected from 216 entries. The judges wrote that what set his entry apart was his "ability to bring together solid reporting on a wide range of topics, from the demise of local shellfish industries to conflict between wolves and ranchers, and deteriorating levees, with superb writing. Welch used a wide variety of voices to tell compelling local stories that tie into larger regional or global issues. His stories broke news, were surprising and readable, the trifecta in beat reporting."

2008

**Kate Galbraith** joined the staff of the *Texas Tribune*, a nonprofit Web site that covers public policy, politics and government, in June, six months after getting laid off by *The New York Times*. "(A layoff is a badge of honor in journalism these days, right?)" she wrote in an e-mail about her new part-time position. "I'm based in Austin, and my beat is energy and environment. Texas is fun to cover, because the issues are generally important and slightly weird, and often overlooked by the national press. The *Texas Tribune* ([www.texastribune.org](http://www.texastribune.org)) is a young, lively, welcoming operation, and I love

it. I also enjoy not being subjected to 100 PR pitches a day (green staplers! solar panels that will save the world!), as I was at the NYT; life is much more balanced now."

She is still writing a monthly column on green issues for the *International Herald Tribune*. Her e-mail continued, "I've also been working on a longer project, together with another Austin journalist, about the Texas wind-power rush: how George Bush, Enron and a bunch of Texas tinkerers helped the oil and gas state become the national leader (by far) in wind power. It's a totally improbable tale, and that's the allure."

**Christine Gorman** is the new health and medicine editor at *Scientific American*, as of August 30. Prior to taking the job, she was freelancing. Among her assignments during that period was writing a major report for the Institute of Medicine on the future of nursing. It is due to be released in October.

In an e-mail, she wrote, "The past two years of freelancing have been great. I proved I could do it and make a living. ... I loved being able to set my own schedule—although I did end up working all the time. And freelancing allowed me to houstrain our puppy (Zeke is our 6-month-old Havanese and a bundle of joy).

"I am very excited about this next phase. It will be great to interact on a daily/in-person basis again with a group who care about the news."

This fall she will again teach a course at New York University on press ethics. ■

## Correction

In the Summer 2010 issue, an article titled "Categorizing What Works—So We Can Apply Those Lessons to Future Endeavors" failed to identify *The San Francisco Examiner* by its full name. ■

## A Texas Border Community Grapples With Illegal Immigration

The Victoria Advocate's multimedia reporting about a tragedy involving human trafficking elicits vociferous criticism *and* civil conversation in community events.

BY CHRIS COBLER

**F**ive years after what remains the nation's worst human trafficking tragedy, our community wanted to forget. The nation already had.

Nineteen illegal immigrants baked to death in the back of a tractor-trailer headed from the Mexican border to Houston on May 14, 2003. When the driver finally stopped to see what was happening to his human cargo, he was outside a truck stop called Chubby's near Victoria, Texas.

A slow-paced and friendly city of about 65,000, Victoria

struggled to respond to the human toll dumped in its backyard. Victoria lay along a well-traveled route from Mexico to the nation's fourth-largest city, but the community had largely ignored immigration issues. Mexican Americans, including many who have lived in Victoria for generations, like to observe that the border crossed them, not the other way around.

The city's roots trace back to the Spanish expedition of Cabeza DeVaca in 1530. In 1685, French explorer La Salle established what

became known as Fort Saint Louis near what is now Victoria, and a European battle for control played out across the Texas Gulf Coast. Only after Victoria was officially founded in 1836 as part of the Republic of Texas did Anglos begin to dominate the culture and power structure.

At the Victoria (Tex.) Advocate, the state's second-oldest daily newspaper, we decided to explore the lessons learned, if any, from the immigrants' deaths. In 16 installments published monthly, we first looked at how the community responded to the tragedy and then dug deeper into the many unresolved questions posed by illegal immigration.

Public service editor Gabe Semenza led the "Fatal Funnel" project, which the Society of Professional Journalists awarded the Sigma Delta Chi prize for non-deadline reporting by newspapers with circulations of less than 50,000. Some members of the community, however, offered a much lower opinion of the series, accusing the Advocate of dredging up bad memories and promoting illegal immigration.

We went to great lengths in the series to



Law enforcement personnel begin their investigation into the deaths of 19 illegal immigrants being transported in a tractor-trailer. Photo by T.C. Baker/Victoria Advocate.

do original reporting never done or not possible when the tragedy occurred in 2003. With each installment, our multimedia team produced a video to complement the multi-page print piece, which included an opinion page devoted to that month's topic. On the opinion page, we attempted to span the political spectrum, inviting columnists ranging from spokespeople for the Minute-man Civil Defense Corps to Mexican Americans Joined in Community Affairs.

Semenza's reporting took him to the border town where the human smugglers first packed up to 100 immigrants into the back of the trailer and locked the door. He traveled into Nuevo Laredo to learn how powerful drug cartels have seized control of all trafficking, making the border even more dangerous than it was in 2003. He captured the voices of ranchers along the border who recalled the days when immigrants came to work without all of the crime and violence that now scar their border homes. He went along the border wall, which many Texans oppose because they see it as a multi-billion-dollar boondoggle. Many want the border secured, but the economic, cultural and geographic complexities of illegal immigration defy easy answers. Texas Governor Rick Perry and other state politicians blame the federal government for failing to enforce its laws, but generally back away from endorsing an Arizona-style approach.

## Heated Debates

The subject of illegal immigration proved to be as polarizing in South Texas as in the rest of the nation. The series earned the newspaper both new and more diverse sources and critics who remain vocal even after the project has ended. The chorus of critics rose again when we reported on the small ceremony marking the



Construction of a border wall has begun the near the town of Granjeno, Texas. Photo by Frank Tilley/Victoria Advocate.

seventh anniversary of these deaths at the makeshift memorial that remains alongside the truck stop. Unseen visitors leave bottled water, stuffed animals, and crosses on the side of the gravel road, but the community provides no official memorial of the painful day.

That's not to suggest that the community doesn't care. Victorians packed two community events the newspaper organized to discuss illegal immigration. At the event marking the end of the series, Tim Hudson, then president of University of Houston-Victoria (UHV), debuted a song he wrote honoring the 19 dead called "Souls from Victoria."

The community event also featured Macarena Hernández, the Victoria Advocate endowed professor for humanities at UHV. An award-winning journalist, Hernández is managing

director of Centro Victoria, a literary center based in UHV's School of Arts and Sciences. One of her first projects with author Dagoberto Gilb, the center's executive director, was to develop "Made in Texas," a bound guide to help teachers incorporate more Mexican-American authors into their lessons.

At the community event, Hernández spoke of growing up in the Rio Grande Valley as a child of Mexican immigrants and encouraged the community to maintain the civil conversation started through the forum. One of the audience members put it this way: "I think it's a really good idea for it to start locally because we are profoundly affected by immigration where we are. I think we have been having a national conversation, but it's become rather abstract. Here it's very concrete, very specific. It touches people's lives."

Hudson's band, Coastal Bend, still performs around the city at venues like Greek Brothers restaurant and in De Leon Plaza, named for the empresario who established a colony under Spanish rule and named it Victoria after the Mexican president. In Coastal Bend's song, Hudson's plaintive cry still rings out:

Open up the gates  
Give them water  
Souls from Victoria  
Shouldn't have to wait ... ■

*Chris Cobler, a 2006 Nieman Fellow, has been editor of the Victoria Advocate since April 2007. In 2009, he received the Texas Daily Newspaper Association's Editorial Achievement Award recognizing "courage and commitment to the newsroom and leadership in the community in advocating and pursuing openness and accessibility to government." This project is at [www.VictoriaAdvocate.com/FatalFunnel](http://www.VictoriaAdvocate.com/FatalFunnel).*



At a service on the fifth anniversary in 2008, the grandmother and sister of Jorge Mauricio Torres Herrera mourn his death. *Photo by Christina Burke/Victoria Advocate.*



An unofficial memorial pays tribute to those who died in what remains the nation's worst human trafficking tragedy. *Photo by Frank Tilley/Victoria Advocate.*



Sheriff T. Michael O'Connor stands near where the bodies were found in a truck. *Photo by Christina Burke/Victoria Advocate.*

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