Planting the seeds of peace journalism in Cyprus
What is Peace Journalism?

Peace Journalism is when editors and reporters make choices that improve the prospects for peace. These choices, including how to frame stories and carefully choosing which words are used, create an atmosphere conducive to peace and supportive of peace initiatives and peacemakers, without compromising the basic principles of good journalism. (Adapted from Lynch/McGoldrick, Peace Journalism). Peace Journalism gives peacemakers a voice while making peace initiatives and non-violent solutions more visible and viable.

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Workshop: Post conflict transformation in Colombia, pg. 11.

A recent peace journalism project in Cyprus was launched in hopes of planting the seeds for the wide scale practice of peace journalism in Cyprus. "This may be a small project, but it will be a step for the future activities," said Assistant Prof. Dr. Metin Ersoy, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) in Famagusta, North Cyprus.

Planting the Seeds

The 2014 Spring Peace Journalism Cyprus mission was led by Steven Youngblood, director of the Center for Global Peace Journalism and associate professor of communication at Park University in Parkville, Missouri USA.

The project began with a lecture by Youngblood on Monday, March 10, at EMU. The lecture on Monday included some challenging questions from communications department faculty. One attendee was peace journalism teacher and PhD student Ayca Atay, who will use the lecture to enhance her teaching at EMU.

"I think it was a good seminar which renewed my knowledge on peace journalism," she said. "Currently, I am teaching peace journalism on the undergraduate level in Turkish. I am going to translate and use Professor Youngblood’s content analysis rubric in my class. In times of peace, media may not have powerful effects on the formation of public opinion, but in times of conflict, especially violent conflict, media’s effects amplify as people depend more on the information flow from the media.

"The traditional journalism tends to add fuel to fire with its news values that prioritize violence over nonviolence. ‘If it bleeds, it leads’, as the saying goes. We need to work more for peace journalism to gain a stronger peace oriented, and feature perspectives from both sides instead of one. Peace journalism taking hold in Cyprus could be a start in breaking the current negative narratives, and establishing a foundation for resolution and eventually peace.

The Peace Journalist is a semi-annual publication of the Center for Global Peace Journalism at Park University in Parkville, Missouri.

The Peace Journalist is dedicated to disseminating news and information for and about teachers, students, and practitioners of peace and conflict sensitive journalism.

Submissions are welcome from all. We are seeking shorter submissions (300-500 words) detailing peace journalism projects, classes, proposals, etc. We also welcome longer submissions (800-1200 words) about peace or conflict sensitive journalism projects or programs, as well as academic works from the field.

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Mediterranean University. A second lecture for students was held on day two of the Cyprus Project at EMU. The students were high-energy and eager to learn. The students learned the foundations of peace journalism at a fundamental level, not through a textbook, not from a flyer, but from Prof. Youngblood’s hands-on lecture. The room full of 33 inquisitive and adept minds included doctoral graduate student Elaz Nasehi. She remarked, “I didn’t have a rich academic background in peace journalism, and this workshop brought some new interesting ideas to me. I appreciate Professor Youngblood’s efforts to travel around the world to spread the idea of PJ.”

The second half of peace journalism training was held in Nicosia, the capital of the Republic of Cyprus, at the Cyprus Community Media Centre (CCMC). The CCMC is located in the United Nations controlled Buffer Zone—a sort of no-man’s land between north and south Cyprus. The PJ seminar was held on Thursday March 13 and Friday March 14. The purpose of the training was to teach the fundamentals of peace journalism to the participants, who were a mixed group from both north and south. The attendees included NGO professionals, journalists, and graduate students. Attendees were taught to seek social responsibility in reporting, and to ask themselves some key questions: “Am I going to cause a riot? Will what I write drive a wedge between conflicting parties?” These are questions that help journalists understand their role in peace building in Cyprus.

Participants were also introduced to the idea of breaking stereotypical media narratives in the Cyprus conflict. Participants noted that press treatment of “the other side” is usually negative and distorted—that the northern media are negative about the south, and vice-versa. “Because of our culture we think there is this one truth; we don’t have a lot of critical thinking skills. We are no good at conflict…lack of empathy, maybe it’s a Mediterranean thing, has to do with everything here, it’s all politicized,” said seminar participant Eleni Christodoulou, political science PhD student.

Professor Youngblood worked with the participants on how to apply principles of peace journalism in practice. The journalists expressed their hesitation that it is hard to report in a peace sensitive fashion for fear of being labeled boring, and that sometimes you have to report in a sensational way so that you will get printed. Youngblood countered by saying that sensationalism isn’t necessary and that there will always be a market for good peace journalism style storytelling.

On Friday, the last day of the training, the participants were assigned to interview refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers, and begin to create a story that acted as a counter-narrative to the usually negative stories about refugees. What they came up with were compelling stories about a refugee and his cat; a Pakistani student discussing Cyprus and how it welcomes immigrants; an asylum seeker from Togo; and a Syrian immigrant discussing Cyprus and how it welcomes asylum seekers, and begin to create a story that acted as a counter-narrative to the usually negative stories about migrants. What they came up with were compelling stories about a refugee and his cat; a Pakistani student discussing Cyprus and how it welcomes immigrants; an asylum seeker from Togo; and a Syrian immigrant who is working hard to assist those escaping the mayhem in Syria.

Later, participants created proposals for a large-scale peace journalism project in Cyprus. Project goals included raising public awareness on commonalities between the two sides, increasing interaction between the two sides, and creating a peace journalism website for Cyprus that would include articles on current events, educational resources, profiles on prominent figures, photos, videos, PSAs on peace, and re-writing of mainstream media pieces.

“The (CCMC) training was valuable for me to see the responsibilities of the journalist contrary to dealing with PJ as a utopia academic venture,” said attendee Cem Cicek, public information officer for UNIFIC. “Going out of the classroom to practice PJ was the most valuable for me as it allows me to form a relation with what is written in the books and with the work of journalism. As a reader in Cyprus, I believe that we have been trained to accept only one view - the view of the elite. In this regard, as readers we have to start demanding other views however in order to start demanding, the journalists must give us the taste of other views. Therefore the journalists must have the awareness to ‘give a voice to the voiceless,’” Cick added.

The future for peace journalism in Cyprus is bright. Recognizing the benefits of organizing as a unit, CCMC seminar participant John Theodore-Edeu offered an idea to form a Turkish-Cypriot Greek Cypriot journalist group, and call it Association for Peace Journalists in Cyprus (APJC). Some of the group came together after the seminar to form the APJC, which will soon be hosting an organizational meeting. In addition, the Center for Global Peace Journalism, EMU, and the CCMC have started making plans for a more comprehensive peace journalism project in Cyprus.

The seeds have taken root.

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April 2014
Jake Lynch: East meets West in Myanmar

By Jake Lynch in Yangon

East meets West, along with competing ideas of the societal role of journalism, in this conference titled Challenges of a Free Press, being held in Myanmar, the southeast Asian country formerly known as Burma and now emerging from decades of military dictatorship.

Journalists and professionals involved in media development heard an opening statement from presidential spokesperson (and deputy Information Minister) U Ye Htut, in which he emphasised his government’s commitment to freedom of expression, and promoting media reform as “a vital process for the evolution of democratic culture.”

“Any country that enjoys both a free press and a public debate of rare sophistication over journalistic ethics, is the Philippines,” he emphasised.

A vital process for the evolution of democratic culture.

Another speaker here, Melinda Quintos de Jesus, is Executive Director, Center for Media Freedom & Responsibility. She described a prevailing climate of fear in Myanmar, with soured press freedom also conferring responsibility on journalists to come “between the roles of a newly freed media as an independent voice in the media,” a problem that those elements could be put back in.

Delegates here include many who are keen to help. In one important respect, they have a local tradition on which to draw. Repression of the press in Burma is an artefact of colonialism. Back in the late 19th Century, the penultimate King, Mindon, promulgated 17 articles of press freedom, encouraging the nascent local journalism profession: “If I do wrong, write about me.”

As an early statement of willingness by rulers to submit to judgement in the public sphere, it still takes some beating. And it could easily feed into a context in which Peace Journalism initiatives could take root.

The International Media Conference in Yangon, on March 9-12, was organised by the East West Center with partner-by the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

Note: Jake Lynch was a guest and keynote speaker at the conference. —Ed

Jake Lynch: East meets West in Myanmar

By Jake Lynch in Yangon

April 2014

Continued on next page

Jake Lynch is Associate Professor in the School of Communication of Sydney, and a Senior Research Fellow at the School of Communication of the University of Sydney. His book, A Global Standard for Reporting Conflict, was recently published by Routledge.

http://routledge-ny.com/catalogs/routledge_research_media_and_communication/9780415808003

The PEACE JOURNALIST

PIJ, press freedom in Asia

From Pg 6

April 2014

Melinda Quintos de Jesus

Pl, press freedom in Asia

Free press, and a public debate of rare sophistication over journalistic ethics, is the Philippines. Another speaker here, Melinda Quintos de Jesus, is Executive Director, Center for Media Freedom & Responsibility.

People there are exposed to multiple dimensions of violence, and in need of raised awareness among, and engagement by internationals – in solidarity with their own nonviolent action for their rights and freedoms – if there is to be any prospect of peace with justice.

Myanmar, too, brings into its new era a set of regional and ethnic conflicts that are essentially unresolved. There is a risk that development, now proceeding apace, may both exacerbate those conflicts and bring new ones. The country’s ambition to achieve rapid industrialisation will require new sources of energy, and the newspapers in the papers given away in delegate packs at the conference, Myanmar Times, contains a special pull-out section on the burgeoning power industry.

However, the Shan Human Rights Foundation has raised the alarm over six new foreign-owned hydropower plants now planned for the Salween River, since locals have not been consulted, the area is divided between government troops and rebel forces, and thousands of farmers stand to lose land, access to water, or both.

Fully 99% of Myanmar’s media industry is reckoned to be concentrated in the main city, Yangon. Minister Htut acknowledged that “minority and marginalised groups are losing their voice in the media,” a problem that risked deepening inequalities, and re-
Some Pakistan media seek inter-faith peace

By Dr. Navras Jaat Aafreedi

Realistically speaking, it is least expected of a Muslim publication to greet Jews across the world on their new year, Rosh Hashanah, but you expect the unexpected from Weekly Press Pakistan (WPP). It even published an article showcasing Israel’s achievements on the sixty-fourth anniversary of the creation of the modern Jewish state and wished her a happy birthday.

It is very unusual for a Muslim publication to do so, but WPP is sincerely and strongly committed to doing everything it takes to bring about reconciliation between Jews and Muslims.

Hatred thrives on falsehood. The best way to combat falsehood is to spread knowledge through the dissemination of correct information, and this is what the online bilingual (Urdu and English) news magazine WPP has devoted itself to.

WPP sincerely tries to present before its predominantly Urdu speaking South Asian Muslim readers in India, Pakistan and in their diaspora, an alternative image of Jews and Israel, in English as well as in Urdu, the lingua franca of almost all South Asian Muslims. And what is particularly noteworthy is that it does so without any support from any organization and that too at the great risk of being perceived as a Zionist propaganda tool.

WPP set its tone of peace journalism from the very first story it published on December 11, 2012. This was a report on the Golden Jubilee session of the Christian-Muslim Forum of Canada, jointly established by the Muslim founder, owner and editor-in-chief of the WPP Tariq Khan, and Pastor Tony Zevelo, held on August 24, 2000.

WPP entered into an agreement with the Israeli news agency Tazpit in July 2012, and thus became the first ever Urdu publication to do so, for which it was severely criticized in the Iranian media. The Iranian press propagated that the Zionist media after acquiring control of Saudi Arabia were trying to control the media in other Muslim countries, like Pakistan. However, the Jewish media warmly welcomed the collaboration.

WPP brings into sharp focus not only the sessions of Muslim-Christian and Muslim-Jewish dialogues co-led by its owner and editor Tariq Khan, but wherever in the world such dialogues take place. Khan knows very well that the call to dialogue is at the heart of Islam, as the Turkish Islamic scholar Fethullah Golen says, advocating dialogue as a step towards peace. “Gulen insists...the basic Islamic sources advise Muslims to engage in dialogue with other faiths”.

WPP believes in making peace the story to give peace a chance, taking cue from the veteran Israeli journalist Danny Rubinstein, who said…”A big terrorist attack would make a good story. But peace negotiations will be relegated to the secondary place. My conclusion is to give peace a chance (and to) make peace the story.”

Conscious of how the lack of history and perspective on an issue distorts people’s understanding of a conflict, WPP has formed an international advisory board made up of eight renowned and eminent scholars of Judaism and Islam and of their histories.

Aware of the anti-Jewish bias of the Urdu press and equipped with a lifetime of experience as a journalist, Tariq Khan invested all his savings in bringing out the WPP upon his migration from Karachi in Pakistan to Toronto in Canada in 2000. The goal was to bring to his fellow South Asian Muslims news of the Jewish world.

Tariq Khan was invited to join the advisory board of the Daniel Pearl International Journalism Institute, the Interdisciplinary Centre in Herzliya, Israel, when it was established in April this year, i.e. 2013. He is the only Muslim on the board originally from Pakistan, where the Wall Street Journal’s South Asia Bureau Chief, Daniel Pearl, an American Jew, was brutally killed in 2002.

There has been a lot of news related to the Jewish world which the WPP has been the first to break. The path WPP has chosen for itself is certainly not an easy one to tread. This can be gauged from the often passionate comments its articles often attract.

Given the fact that it caters to the Urdu speaking South Asian Muslim population, its significance and importance can be realized by what the New Delhi based eminent writer and filmmaker Arshad Amaullaah says, “The Urdu journalism, in its essence, is ‘views oriented’, as its role in moderating Muslim public opinion is simply incomparable to the other vernacular press”. Freelance journalist Joity Punwani, who specializes in communal issues, finds the Urdu press openly biased: “The Urdu press refuses to even acknowledge that Muslims can be violent...Far from compulsion, the Urdu press’ bias has more to do with the beliefs held by Urdu journalists.”

But the successful Urdu journalist Shahid Siddiqui who has also been an elected member of the Indian parliament, blames reader comprehension for his indulgence in yellow journalism after the failure of his first news magazine in 1972. This was right after the Indo-Pakistan war that created Bangladesh in 1971: “I went to Bangladesh at that time...I wrote the truth, which was not acceptable to Muslims, because for them the creation of Bangladesh was a turning point, because [it was] the destruction of the idea of Pakistan, the two nation theory.” The very next year he founded Nai Dunya and benefited from a similar chance, the Arab-Israeli War of 1973. The rise in circulation to 30,000 in just a few months time set its course of anti-Israel, anti-Zionist and anti-Jewish rhetoric. This anti-Zionist or anti-Israel rhetoric is actually a characteristic of the Urdu press.

The fact that WPP has already started influencing the South Asian Muslim attitudes towards Jews and Israel is indicated by the number of likes (2,248) its page has received on the social networking site Facebook and also by the frequency at which its stories are shared by its readers on Facebook and Twitter. This is certainly indicative of their gradually opening up to an alternative image of Jews and Israel, even if not of an absolute change in their attitudes towards them.

What is significant is that most of those who like the pages are Muslims, which shows willingness on their part to learn about Jews and Israel things very different from what is fed to them in the name of news by their Muslim press. Among the many examples of anti-Semitism in the Urdu press, here are a few from Lucknow, a centre of Muslim scholarship. In 2009 the two most popular Urdu daily newspapers there published front-page length stories denying the Holocaust and calling it a hoax with the aim of sabotaging the then ongoing Holocaust films retrospective there, which happened to be the first ever in South Asia. Such Anti-Semitism in the Muslim press is not confined to their Urdu press, but is also found in their press in other languages.

In December 2012, the English weekly The Lucknow Tribune published an article on Jews in Lucknow by the present author under a title different than what had originally been submitted. This article was illustrated with an anti-Semitic caricature. In response to a number of letters of protest from the present author and several scholars, the LT republished the article without the illustration, but neither published an apology nor those letters of protest.

When checked on 27th August, 2013, eight of the ten most popular articles of WPP were related to Jews or Israel or to both in some way or the other. It is of great significance as its readership is predominantly Muslim. It is unprecedented for any Muslim publication to have eight of its ten most popular articles to be about Jews or Israel. WPP maintains a Google group, subscribed by more than 16,193 journalists, mostly Pakistanis, but also of other countries.

Members of its Google group regularly republish WPP stories in their respective publications which greatly multiplies the readership of its articles. According to WPP’s own estimate 43% of its readers are in Pakistan and India, 38% in the USA and Canada and the remaining 19% in the rest of the world. It is estimated that there are over twenty million internet users in Pakistan and seventy-four million in India. It is the third largest internet user after America and China. A survey conducted by two Pakistani websites in July 2013 among 1,100 respondents across Pakistan, found that 75% of them regularly used the Internet for news.

The case of WPP presents before us a role model for journalism.
Crisis porn: The power of content curation

By Monica Curca

In early October 2013 a boat filled with African migrants sank off the Italian island of Lampedusa, killing at least 111 people, and more than 200 are still missing. Friday the 4th of October 2013, was declared a day of mourning in Italy. The event has brought much introspection and concern. News and Media, not withstanding has of course told the story of these migrants. Sometimes the content is important to educate, inform, or even to advocate, but on Friday the 4th of October 2013, I think the Guardian went too far.

All kinds of content is written or created to show different aspects of the tragedy on Lampedusa; maps, pictures, interviews, video etc. Each one tells the story supposedly from the perspective of those involved or affected by this tragedy. But, when the Guardian published a click through photo slideshow of found photographs of those that were lost at sea, I think they went too far. In simple terms, the Guardian bought, bartered or received photographs of family and of migrants, which were recovered at sea and somehow acquired by the La Stampa news agency, and reposted the images with one or two sentences of assumptions, questions or random thoughts.

Photographs of migrants lost at sea on their way to Lampedusa: Faces of ambition and hope are seen in this poignant collection of photographs washed up on beaches or found in wreckage.

I see this as Crisis Porn… an offshoot of poverty porn. It is when tragic images and stories of people are told to the benefit of the storyteller, in this case a news agency.

Here is my logic:

1. Unless they hired a fortune teller to speak with the dead I seriously doubt either La Stampa or the Guardian acquired permission to publish the pictures. The issue of ownership is a real one and calls into question the journalistic practices of La Stampa and the Guardian.

2. The security of the victims of this tragedy are not considered, nor of their families. The pictures and identity of the victims could lead to unforeseen consequences by others who might prey on the family or even by those that might have lent/loan-sharked money to the victim or her/his family to get to Europe for work. Al Jazeera reports on what actually happened to these migrants after it is not pretty.

3. I am not convinced that the goal of humanizing the victims is a good argument for this story since there is no (real) information about their humanitv that is offered. Either the journalists are lazy or simply not ‘on the ground’ to collect the real stories (or worse money was not invested by their news agency) which further highlights the ugliness in my last point...

4. Why do a click through? We know that news agencies receive advertising dollars based on clicks and page views. What a ten image click through slide show does is multiply one view times ten, and soon we can all see the money rolling in.

In the end “Crisis Porn” or “Humanitarian Aid Porn”, or “Poverty Porn”, at their core are all about power. When the powerful tell the stories of the powerless to gain more power… that is unethical. When the powerful, be they news agencies, humanitarian aid organizations, or charities use the images and stories of their subjects for their own enrichment, that is unethical. No matter how noble the cause, I believe that a story becomes exploitative when the subjects are not involved in the creation and therefore not empowered which can often lead to the same paradigms that began their oppression. For the sake of space and your sanity, I won’t even dive into the festering waters of the “white man telling the black man’s story” or how this information technology is re-colonizing the global south. That will have to be for another post.

Journalists learn post-conflict tips in Colombia

By Samit Jadin Vergara

In Colombia, IOM Colombia and government partners have trained more than 150 Colombian journalists on the importance of effective journalistic practices in a post-conflict environment.

The series of workshops titled How to Narrate Peace, Peace Building, Historical Memory and Reconciliation, were held in five cities around the country: Medellin, Pereira, Cali, Cartagena and Monteria.

According to Marta Ruiz, workshop leader and editor for the influential political magazine Semana: “The sessions were important spaces in which to analyze the challenges confronted by journalists in the post-conflict stage, including all the difficulties that the new context implies, and new and relevant questions that each journalist must ask when reporting. The workshops were also a space for dialogue, creativity, and consideration for journalists as storytellers.”

The workshops were designed to respond to the country’s need for journalists with the necessary training to play a role in the post-conflict phase, following the demobilization and reintegration of men and women who were part of illegal armed groups.

“It is important that we as journalists change our mentality and think about how to narrate peace in a post-conflict scenario. In the workshop, we were given the opportunity to analyze how we can begin to discuss these processes and how to inform those who watch or read our media outlets,” said Ricardo Gaviria of TeleAntioquia Noticias, who attended the workshop in Medellin.

Other trainers included Peruvian expert Javier Curiliraza, Director of the International Crisis Group, Latin America and the Caribbean. Curiliraza was Executive Director of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Peru between 2001 and 2003, and was in charge of informing the journalists about transitional justice and the importance of truth and memory in a similar context.

“Attending the workshop implies understanding what has happened to us as a society. It also helps us to understand the topic of historical memory, and how the men and women who have left the war are going to help build that historical memory,” added Catalina Puerta, a journalist who attended the workshop in Monteria.

The How to Narrate Peace workshops are an initiative of the Colombian Reintegration Agency (ACR), the Attorney General’s Office, and the National Center for Historical Memory - the entities in charge of implementing the reintegration law which helps ex-combatants with psychosocial treatment and assistance to return to school or job training. In exchange they agree to tell the truth about their involvement in armed groups, commit to non-recidivism, request for forgiveness, and perform community service activities.

IOM Colombia, with support from USAID, supported the workshops as part of its communications strategy Paso a Paso. This aims to strengthen the capacity of government institutions involved in the reintegration process to encourage demobilized persons in the process of reintegration, receiving communities, and the media to better understand related Government initiatives and to generate processes that facilitate national reconciliation and peace.

Monica Curca is a strategic communications consultant and trainer with expertise in conflict and peacebuilding. Communications, marketing, branding, social marketing etc. These are my specialties. Her passion, experience and education is in Peacebuilding, International Development and Conflict Resolution.

Samit Jadin Vergara works for the Press and Public Information office of the International Organization for Migration’s (IOM) mission to Colombia. He collaborates with the Community Oriented Reintegration of Ex-Combatants (CORE) Program which works on issues like reintegration, reconciliation, peace and conflict. Vergara is based in Bogota, DC (Colombia).
Twitter influences peace, social change

By Craig Zelizer

Since its founding in 2006, Twitter has rapidly become one of the most powerful online platforms for connecting hundreds of millions of individuals and organizations around the world. As the estimates vary, Twitter estimates they have over 100 million active monthly users of the platform and almost 500 million registered Tweeters, with several hundred million tweets sent per day (see http://www.mediabistro.com/alltwitter/twitter-statistics-2012_b18914). The service is experiencing exponential growth and has rapidly changed the Internet (see the bottom of the guide for an infographic that has more detailed info/statistics on Twitter).

This resource guide provides an introduction to Twitter, discuss the role it can and has played in peacebuilding and social change and offers key resources to begin actively using the platform. Over the past few years, Twitter has rapidly become a powerful tool for connecting social activists fostering political reform and change in many regions of the world. From the Arab spring countries, to Occupy Wall Street in the US, to how individuals inform and connect on serious issues such as organizing political movements, documenting resistance, reporting on violence, to more lighthearted uses such as connecting groups around common issues, ranging from education to humor, Twitter has and will continue to have a tremendous impact. It is important to note Twitter is part of the larger movement of using mobile tools for social tools, such as the field of crisis mapping.

What is Twitter?

Before getting into specifics, first it is important to define some of the key terms related to Twitter. According to the company, “Twitter is a real-time information network that connects you to the latest stories, ideas, opinions and news about what you find interesting.” The central aspect of Twitter is Tweets, which are similar to SMS messages of less than 140 characters and can contain text, links, pictures and other media. While 140 characters might sound absurdly short, a Single Tweet by a high profile Tweeter (someone who does the Tweeting) can reach the world within a few minutes and have the possibly mobilize millions to take action and/or put pressure on a government, company or some other institution to change their unjust actions.

How does Twitter work?

Anyone who has internet access can setup a Twitter Account by going to Twitter.com and registering (it is free). A key organizing feature of Twitter is that users can be connected and follow each other. One of the most powerful features of Twitter is that any user can “Retweet” or repost instantaneously in a second a “Tweet” that is compelling. When a user Retweets the message is distributed to all of the user’s followers and this can create a chain that sends a particular Tweet viral and go from 100 people reading to 1 million in a short time frame.

Users can also create lists of Tweeters who Tweet on similar topics to help organize access to information. A newer trend is creating Twibes, which is “a group of Twitter users with a common interest” http://blog.twibes.com/twitter-tools/what-is-a-twibe

A key organizing feature of Twitter is the use of Hashtags which Twitter defines as “the # symbol, called a hashtag, is used to mark keywords or topics in a Tweet.

How to find interesting Tweeters to follow

There are several main ways to find Tweeters to follow. The first is if a user has a friend or institution that she would like to follow on Twitter it is possible to search Twitter and find the account (Twitter accounts are written with the @ sign). To follow a user go to the profile page on Twitter and click on follow. Second, Twitter provides some general categories such as music, news, and food that can help to identify interesting Tweeters. Third, Twitter also has wonderful suggestions for accounts to follow based on a user’s particular interests. For example, if a user starts following Twitter Accounts from leading news outlets such as Al Jazeera English or AlertNetTwitter will recommend other key news sources.

How can a user get others to follow her account?

One of the key ways to attracting a healthy number of Twitter followers is to create a clear and compelling profile page (which is a user’s public profile). Second, to post regularly updates about key news, events, inspiring news stories, etc. It is important to experiment and find a Tweeter identity as one gets comfortable with the platform.

What is the connection of Twitter to peace and social change?

A key question is can a single Tweet create peace? While it is unlikely that one tweet will create sustainable peace, one posting can go viral and create significant pressure on a regime, company or other institution to pay attention and take corrective action.

There are countless examples of how Twitter has helped to Tweet for Change. However, there is a very healthy debate in the field, where some scholars and activists believe Twitter and other online platforms do not have much of an impact. They are critical of the lazy person’s approach to social change by clicking or Retweeting at a computer instead of doing the long difficult work needed to create an impact. For example, as Malcolm Gladwell comments, “This revolution will not be Tweeted.”

On the other hand, there are countless organizations and individuals that are effectively using Twitter as a tool for new forms of organizing, connecting and creating change. Twitter has curated a collection of stories where the platform has had a tremendous positive impact on individuals, communities and the world (see http://stories.twitter.com/). Examples include Wael Ghonim, a prominent activist in the Egyptian revolution, who was imprisoned after and a global campaign for his release took place largely through Twitter and other social networks. Upon his release Ghonim stated, “If you want to liberate a government, give them the Internet.”

By Chris Strouth

Twitter influences peace and social change

In Kenya, Village Leader Francis Kariuki uses Twitter to stop crime

Dr. Craig Zelizer is the Founder/CEO of The Peace and Collaborative Development Network (PCDN). He started the network in June of 2007 and it has rapidly become the leading online network connecting peacebuilders and change agents from around the globe. Dr. Zelizer is also the Associate Director of the MA in Conflict Resolution within the Department of Government at Georgetown University. PCDN can be found at http://www.internationalpeaceandconflict.org/
Peaceful Twitter accounts from Pg 13

1) @PCDNnetwork - news, networking, careers and resources for individuals in int'l affairs, development, peacebuilding, social change and related fields.

2) @Masterpeace2014 - Grass Roots Peace Movement! Empowering People From All Over The World To Use Their Talents to start Creating Peace. Together.

3) @SocialEdge - Global online community by social entrepreneurs, for social entrepreneurs.

4) @Ning - Ning lets you easily create a social network for just about any purpose.

5) @NickKristof - New York Times columnist, two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, co-author @Half the Sky.

6) @msromisoncohen - Founder of @globaltolerance. Champion of media ethics & communications with conscience.

7) @OpenSociety - The Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant, inclusive, & community-driven societies emerging out of conflict & poverty.

8) @Ashoka - Ashoka is an international programme see http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/ictsj/ for Peace. Together.

9) @PeaceJourn - The Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation and Social Justice (http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/ictsj/) at Queen's University Belfast, and its newly appointed Professor of Post Conflict Studies, Professor John Brewer (http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/ictsj/), as part of ICSST's commitment to civic engagement and outreach, organised an all-day workshop on peace journalism on Friday 29th November.

10) @USIP - Created by Congress, the independent U.S. Institute of Peace works to prevent, mitigate and resolve international conflict through nonviolent means.

11) @ushahidi - We are a nonprofit tech company that specializes in developing free and open source software for information collection, visualization and interactive mapping.

12) @SkollFoundation - Driving large-scale change by investing in, connecting, & celebrating social entrepreneurs & innovators dedicated to solving the world's most pressing problems.

13) @GlobPeaceIndex - The Global Peace Index aims to go beyond a crude measure of wars and systematically explore the texture of peace.

14) @globalvoices - Calling attention to the most interesting conversations and perspectives emerging from citizens around the world.

15) @AWID - Association for Women's Rights in Development: Strengthening the impact, voice, influence of women's rights advocates, organisations and movements globally.

16) @ThePCF - Israeli and Palestinian Bereaved Families Supporting Peace, Reconciliation and Tolerance.

17) @Love_Forgive - The Feiter Institute's Campaign for Love & Forgiveness encourages bringing these practices into the heart of individual & community life. Converse. Take Action.

18) @rotary - Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation, an organization of more than 1.2 million business, professional, & community leaders.

19) @TechChange - We train leaders to use tech for sustainable social change. #ICT4D #EdTech and much more.

20) @APIPeacebuilding - The Alliance for Peacebuilding (AFP) is a coalition of diverse organizations & professionals working together to build sustainable peace and security worldwide.

21) @EmmanuelAL - I do not know how to start or end this bio, but just to put it short, I am an ex child soldier turned into a recording artist.

22) @JaredCohen - Director of Google Ideas & Adjunct Senior Fellow at CFR. Author of the books Children of Jihad, One Hundred Days of Silence, & forthcoming The New Digital Age.

23) @Gens_for_peace - Generations for Peace is using sport for peace, to start or end this bio, but just to put it short, I am an ex child soldier turned into a recording artist.

In an article titled "Best in Journalism: 151 Twitters Worth a Follow," Journalismdegree.org lists "Journalists, bloggers, and news organizations that are pushing the limits of what can be accomplished with Twitter." The accounts cited include @NRTimes, @Knightfdn, @Pewresearch, @Mediagazer, and @Peacejourn, the account of the Center for Global Peace Journalism at Park University (this magazine's publisher).

The writers said that @Peacejourn focuses on "ethical and coherent" journalism. Of course, it is also heavily peace-journalism themed as well. - Steven Youngblood

John D Brewer, is Professor of Past Conflict Studies at Queen's University and a member of the United Nations Roster of Global Experts for his expertise in the sociology of peace processes. For further details see http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/ictsj/Staff/ProfessorJohnD-Brewer/.

The speakers were strategically invited because of the variety of their experience in different types of media, including new social media, and as a cross section of genders, ages and work locations. The event was designed to promote an interrogation by Northern Ireland's media of the relevance of peace journalism. The audience mostly comprised local journalists.

The journalists attending the conference discussed the term. Peace journalism was thought to be relevant to war zones, where it might encourage media to help search for, and assist in promoting peace. Journalists did not feel it applied well to post-conflict societies where the problem is dealing with legacy of conflict. They saw it as an infringement of strongly held principles of media freedom and autonomy, and the idea was responded to emotionally rather than calmly.

This emotional reaction resonated with the largely masculine culture of Northern Ireland's 'conflict journalism', and the idea was described on Facebook as 'leftie, tree hugging shite'.

This emotion clouds the response to it, for peace journalism still has professional currency and is still talking truth to power. It was explained to the audience as a style of journalism that was not so much about topics, but about balance in news content and a way into exploring the values that underpin the editorial choices media make in societies emerging out of conflict.

It was emphasised by academics that peace journalism asks about the choices that need to be made between 'good' and 'bad' news, between a focus on the past and future, between emphasising continuity or change, between developing a sense of crisis and hope. And it asks about the values that should influence this choice and about the responsibilities journalists have to help shape a better society when emerging out of conflict.

It was emphasised that it does not mean ignoring crisis, or continuity, or bad news; it is about balancing them with the other focus. It is about questioning the assumption in conflict journalism that hope, forgiveness and reconciliation are uninteresting and un-newsworthy. It is about using the

Continued on next page
Website promotes peace in Caribbean

By Francis Belle

As a High Court Judge and lawyer based in the Eastern Caribbean, with an undying interest in conflict resolution and peace building, the website regionalconflictinsights.com. (“Regional”!) became a useful outlet for the enthusiasm and ideas generated concerning peace building issues at home and abroad, of a legal and non-legal nature.

At “regional” we try to speak to conflict all over the world by providing links to other journalistic work, along with occasional commentary and analysis of our own. On our home page we list what we consider to be the major conflicts of the month as our main feature. This feature we believe to be important and current.

Under the headings Analysis and Dialogue we present the thinking of various contributors on topics which we believe to be important and current. To enrich the dialogue we also include ourous contributors on topics which we believe to be important and current.

We hope one day to enhance this role with direct contributions from reputable peace journalists.

In terms of areas of interest, various conflict scenarios which gain global recognition are relevant to our circumstances. Among these are the consequences of racism. We also have a great deal of interest in conflicts on the African continent because a high percentage of the populations of the Caribbean islands and diaspora are of African descent.

We are a totally voluntary and non-profit entity. We are not able to promote our website vigorously. But having discovered The Peace Journalist we feel that we are on the right track and wish to be more involved in peace journalism, become more professional and attract peace journalists to submit articles to our website.

By using a format which sets out the issues arising in the Caribbean Region where we are based.

By Francis H. V. Belle is a High Court Judge Conflict Analyst, and trained mediator who chairs the Court Connected Mediation Committee on the island of Saint Lucia (Eastern Caribbean) which manages the Court Connected Mediation programme.

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power of the media to improve lives rather than pander to base hatreds, stereotypes, myths and beliefs because they sell newspapers, raise listening figures or represent the natural constituency of some newspaper readers.

The workshop was useful in asking journalists to think about their role in a society emerging out of conflict and whether or not they should reflect a society that is struggling to move on or resort to the same old ‘extreme news’ agenda associated with the conflict. They reflected on what might be ‘socially responsible journalism’ in Northern Ireland’s fragile peace; it did not persuade them that the term should be adopted.

The workshop generated a considerable response on Twitter and Facebook, which was much more favourable, and was covered in BBC Radio Ulster’s Evening Extra news programme (Friday 29th November), on BBC Radio’s Sunday Sequence current affairs programme (Sunday 1st December), where John Brewer took part in a panel discussion on the theme of peace journalism, and by Alex Kane, one of the participants in the workshop, in his column in the Newsletter newspaper (Monday 2nd December), who is an opponent of the idea of peace journalism.

Justice Francis H. V. Belle is a High Court Judge Conflict Analyst, and trained mediator who chairs the Court Connected Mediation Committee on the island of Saint Lucia (Eastern Caribbean) which manages the Court Connected Mediation programme.

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Center assists exiled Somali journalists

By Burhan Farah Hassan

For the long catastrophic situation in Somalia, 3/4 of population in Somalia fled across borders and lived overseas just to escape from deadly conditions. Journalists were among the people fleeing, but the worst time for journalists was when Al-Shabab and other political groups targeted media houses. Horn Afrik Media Corporation and GBC Radio were among the radio stations destroyed by Al-Shabab.

During these raids, Somali-Canadian founder Ali Iman Sharmarke was killed. This was a blow to the birth of the free media that was born after a long period of warlord dominated media in Somalia. Horn Afrik was the first radio station that has show relative freedom and a chance to give the public a freedom to call a station and demonstrate an idea.

Freedom of Expression became a direct target in Somalia

The Committee to Protect Journalists warned that only in 2012, more than 20 journalists were directly killed and the number of outcast journalists in the neighbourhood countries was increasing. This means that every month one or two journalists were killed in front of the public by Al-Shabab terrorists. Mohamed Hajji, a Somali journalist-

Burhan Farah Hassan—In his own words:

“I was born in Mogadishu in 03-01-1983. In 1985, I was admitted to SOS-Children’s Village in Mogadishu due to circumstances of losing both parents. In 1993, I was shot down by an stray bullet and I escaped death threat...After the wound my foster mother took care of me at a hospital...In 2004, I was a working as a journalist in Mogadishu. In 2005 August, I evacuated and crossed the border of Libya, Kenya. In Buruburu, I asked the SOS-Children’s Villages Kenya to help and SOS supported me to go to a college. After a fixed term of short courses study, I arrived in Eastleigh in Nairobi where I joined many urban refugees. In Kenya, I have been in a difficult life in Eastleigh town where many urban refugee Somali stay...I volunteered to be a peace journalist during my urban refugee status. I also volunteered at many radio stations during my refugee status in Nairobi.

(We founded the) Center for Peace and Journalism CEPJO in 2014. I have still a dream that poor journalists get assistance in their work in suffering countries like Somalia. Our ambition is to open two houses in both Mogadishu and Kenya. In this year, I am both struggling for my personal development and the development of my organisation.”

A full house of Somali journalists enjoy a CEPJO event in Kenya.

In this horrific situation, there were few journalists that worked for the welfare of others. That changed when we launched the Center for Peace and Journalism (CEPJO) in 2008. We were three young journalists who were thinking about this in Mogadishu, but unfortunately we three were evacuated to Kenya at the same time.

The Center for Peace and Journalism has two goals: to help traumatized journalists evacuating from Somalia, and to train journalists in Peace Journalism so that no journalist would biased.

In Nairobi, CEPJO did not had any support. We donated small money each from our pockets. We have still not asked public or private entities for funds. Our main idea was to relieve the murder and attacks against journalists and for the world to hear our voice. Sometime later, the center took steps to increase trainings in Kenya so that journalists can improve their knowledge and skills.

We have succeeded to persuade society that press members are conveying important messages to society. Press releases, direct consultations and messages have been conveyed to political parties back in Somalia. Our center’s coordinators constantly asked killers to give up fighting and to return captured journalists to their families.
Review: Journalism, Conflict in Indonesia

By Dr. Lora Cohn


Journalism and Conflict in Indonesia lays out, through the example of conflict in the Maluku region of Indonesia, a careful argument for the power of communication—finding that journalists’ words are perhaps the most powerful weapons in any war. Sharp suggests to reduce the likelihood of factional violence reporters merge the “democratic skepticism” that any single group can make the best decisions representing the people with the principles of peace communication (peace journalism/conflict-sensitive journalism) in reporting. Additionally, focusing on community participation in developing and disseminating media messages would allow for consensus building and lessen the likelihood that stories will be framed in ways that fan violence.

The book is a careful, academic exploration of the role of reporting that the author presents in the sub-region of Melanesia—so-called ‘arc of instability’. Tensions suppressed during colonial rule surfaced gradually after independence, with the post-cold war period marked by a rash of violence in Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu. With conflict regarded as the ‘predominant’ threat to sustainable development and a risk to Australia’s $1 billion regional aid program, calls have been made on the media to consider presenting news in ways that could avoid escalation.

Dr. Lora Cohn is an associate professor of Communication at Park University in Parkville, Missouri. She has a PhD from the University of Kansas in Communications Studies.

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Sadly, Somalia is still unsafe for journalists. One example—journalist Mohamed Mohamoud Timada’de. He returned to Somalia in 2013 from exile. He killed up to 9,000 people in 1999 and 2000. Chapter one introduces the conflict and the author’s hypothesis that journalists and their writing/photography help development of political discourses that fuel violence. Chapter two focuses on how media narratives affect the way violence occurs. Scholars will find the review of the literature on communication and culture in this chapter thorough if brief. The chapter weaves that study and leads to his conclusions. The book makes the conflict in Indonesia understandable and offers a model to young scholars.

Studying the media theory.

The study set out to prove or disprove that media may be exacerbating conflict by the use of inflammatory language, but it stumbled upon an apparently more significant problem—under reporting of critical economic issues often at the heart of conflicts. This could be an unacknowledged and unresolved problem in Fiji—a possible causality of the ‘only if it bleeds, it leads creed’. Moreover, the research set out to look for evidence of manipulation of journalists by those with privileged access to the media. It found this, and more. The manipulation seems to be a two-way rather than a one-way process, in that some journalists seem ‘willing’ to be ‘manipulated’ to gain easy access to news sources. This arrangement holds potential all around benefits for all: regular coverage for politicians, ready supply of stories for journalists, and cost-saving for media companies. The scenario is consistent with this study’s political economy of the media theory.

A strong, emergent theme is that while journalists are habitually blamed for alleged misreporting, there is far more at stake. The ‘evil’ journalist is but part of a much larger, media industry complex and society buffered by internal pressures, and external forces, such as globalisation.
PJ: Transforming the field of journalism

By Keith Brown & Marta Lukacovic

This article addresses the future of the peace journalism concept within two environments; the mass communication research and the practice of evolving and transforming the field of journalism.

Research-Empirical Basis

Empirical evidence could equip peace journalism with important tools to face the challenges of the contemporary era. Peace journalists, educators, and theorists must effectively assess and react to fast-paced transformations of the modern mass media landscape. A promising course for peace journalism as a useful model for the field stems from appropriate incorporation of research-generated knowledge. Peace journalism can be supported by a robust body of media effects knowledge that has been established. This article addresses the future of the peace journalism community, where it fits well within evolving areas of current mass media research. Further research is crucial for strengthening the foundation for development of peace journalism’s theory building, educational efforts, as well as for practice-oriented initiatives.

Research Advancements

Leading scholars of peace journalism Lynch and Gal-tung acknowledge in their 2010 book that research and empirical testing are running behind theory and practice at this point. Thus far, few academicians took up the role to quantitatively test the effects of peace journalism on audiences, nearly Lynch and McGoldrick (2012) and Kempf (2005). The reported results suggest that effects of peace journalism indeed occur as predicted; peace journalistic coverage impacts audiences’ evaluations of a situation in directions of creative conflict resolution. This promising start should motivate additional research.

Future Research Prospects

An example of inquiry area that is rapidly evolving now and that includes fertile grounds for testing peace journalism’s propositions is studies of effects of new digital media. The lively academic debate about effects and lack of effects of new media translates into fruitful research programs.

Peace journalism is a concept that may and arguably should find itself within the debate as well as within the subsequent research. The body of empirical literature that focuses on the political effects of user-generated content that appears through new online media is still rather slim, however it is proliferating. The concept of peace journalism could serve as a template for conditions for experimental studies of the effects of user-generated content, to name just one potential type of study.

Practice-The Objective Model

Based on the current historical and philosophical literature, there remains a great divide, and debate, among scholars and practitioners of contemporary journalism in regard to the objective and advocacy approaches to the craft.

Since the nineteenth century, the principle of objectivity has been considered a bulwark of American journalism. It has remained a staple of mainstream media ideology, partly because media consumers have grown accustomed to the familiar third-person mode of reporting based on an alleged absence of bias. Until the 1970s, the objective model was largely unquestioned and generally accepted. However, since that time scholars and practitioners of American journalism (Tuchman, 1972, Gitlin, 1980, Bagdikian, 2004) have become emboldened in an ongoing and contested conversation regarding the basic notions embedded in objectivity.

The tenets of objective journalism include a detached perspective with an emphasis on balance, and information gleaned from multiple sources, many in elite positions of power and authority (Entman, 1993).

Advocacy

The idea of advocacy in American journalism is as old as the country itself. In 1776, for the first time in history, according to Streitmatter (2008), a few colonists showed their discontent could “swell into open rebellion.” Writers of this movement crafted “prose that demanded freedom behind the alternative press, new media outlets and the international community in a producing a real, and valuable, brand of new journalism.

The main objective of this book is to provide journalists with an in-depth understanding of peace journalism and conflict sensitive journalism. This genre of journalism is not well understood. Most journalists practice traditional journalism, which lacks the conflict sensitive attributes.

Peace journalism prepares journalists and reporters to report from violent conflicts in a constructive manner, carefully chosen wording, and cover the conflict from various angles, because incorrect and reckless wording can exacerbate the conflict and stir violence.

Like journalism in its all forms, conflict sensitive journalism particularly stresses impartiality, objectivity and neutrality. Because of this, Mediothek Afghanistan conducted eight workshops in eight provinces of Afghanistan since 15th of January until 15th of April 2013. Mr. Massoud Momin selected, compiled and translated the materials and resources. The GIZ-2FD Civil Peace Service Program supported this initiative.

Massoud Momin currently works with Mediothek Afghanistan. He began contributing to Afghanistan Today in 2012. He is studying Political Science in Kabul province.

Research from Pg 20

The activities have acted as social change agents in efforts to abolish slavery, get women the right to vote, enact Progressive era reforms, document the 1960s’ Civil Rights and Anti-War social movements, and engage in ongoing activism through truth.

Give Peace a Chance

Looking at the objectivity and advocacy models of journalism, is there the possibility of developing a hybrid model that will better serve the public, combining the tenets and principles of peace journalism, a form that is evolving into a bona-fide movement? It’s a question worth pondering, as the mainstream legacy media seems to lag behind the alternative press, new media outlets and the international community in producing a real, and valuable, brand of new journalism.

Manual introduces PJ to Afghan journalists

By Massoud Momin

Mediothek Afghanistan has been proving capacity-building programs for journalists and reporters across the country through its media houses located in different provinces. So far Mediothek has trained, on different capacity levels, more than 2300 journalists via different workshops and capacity-building programs in the capital and provinces.

Additionally, Mediothek has been consistently working on the provision of educational and training materials, and as a continuation of these efforts, Mediothek recently translated and published a manual on “Peace Journalism.” The manual is a handy help and reference for both journalists and educators.

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Nigeria: Journalists’ role in peaceful elections

By Rosemary Okoh

Background

The incremental waves of violence during elections in Nigeria make it crucial for journalists to be actively involved in fostering peaceful elections across the country through objective journalism. In Nigeria, elections provide the avenue for interested politicians to compete under various party umbrellas. Unfortunately, the contest often takes violent dimension due to perceived incompatible goals of parties which have diverse manifestos.

Since democracy is a system that naturally functions by the consent of the governed, it is thus expedient for the media through journalists’ reports to objectively bridge the information gap between the public and politicians during this crucial electoral process.

Theoretical consideration, Objective Journalism in the Electoral Process

Ramadham Shamsia (2013:14) notes that media generally are significant actors in conflict prevention and peacebuilding especially when they campaign for peace and avoid reporting issues that could generate violence. This article espouses media dependency theory as propounded by media. This article also espouses peacebuilding especially during elections, given the reality that some media organisations carry out their role demands that journalists work are either owned by government or private bodies that are loyal to the government. Nigeria as a nation stands to gain where journalists are offering competing one-dimensional narratives about the situation in Ukraine. The resurrection of these cold-war media narratives began with coverage of the Kiev protests in February. One astute observer, Iryna, a former peace journalism training participant, wrote me about these narratives. She said, “When I watch the news reports...I often remember our discussion about peace journalism. While Western media mainly focus on the overall situation often presenting the information from both sides of conflict, Russian media go with the official version of Ukrainian government and declare all Ukrainian protesters to be ‘terrorists.’” An examination of several news websites confirmed Iryna’s observations.

On the website of Pravda, a semi-official Russian newspaper/web-site, articles in February about the protests in Ukraine did toe a discernible line, one that often placed blame squarely on the protesters. The story “Civilians killed, death toll grows” used the inflammatory language “extremists” and “radicals” to describe the protesters. While it did contain one sentence about “alleged” police shootings, the bulk of the story is from Ukrainian officials (from the former government) decrying the violence. Pravda’s coverage included a story titled “Kiev snipers shoots 20 law enforcers.” This would seem consistent with Pravda’s effort to paint all the protesters with the same brush—murdering radicals and extremists.

A Pravda editorial, “Ukraine-Some questions,” clearly articulated a slanted viewpoint. “Western media outlets demonizing the Government, bulldoys of thugs being ferried around the country, we see the US Secretary of State speaking to the “Opposition,” namely armed criminals and agents provocateurs, hooligans and an ex-boxer.”

Others in Russian media are also took a bellicose tone. In Pravda’s effort to paint all the protesters with the same brush—murdering radicals and extremists. “Russia threatened its much smaller neighbor with trade war in response to the invasion; the West responded with sanctions.”

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As gatekeepers, journalists not only decide the aspects of information they offer to the public through print media, electronic and social media. Carrying out their role demands that they objectively give balanced reports.

However, the biggest challenge being faced by the Nigerian media which is also affecting the reports of journalists is the issue of ownership and control. This is a major factor that has coloured the writings of journalists especially during elections, given the reality that some media organisations are offering competing one-dimensional narratives about the situation in Ukraine. The resurrection of these cold-war media narratives began with coverage of the Kiev protests in February. One astute observer, Iryna, a former peace journalism training participant, wrote me about these narratives. She said, “When I watch the news reports...I often remember our discussion about peace journalism. While Western media mainly focus on the overall situation often presenting the information from both sides of conflict, Russian media go with the official version of Ukrainian government and declare all Ukrainian protesters to be ‘terrorists.’” An examination of several news websites confirmed Iryna’s observations.

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Scholarly Definition of Media Narratives

The world is full of stereotypes and generalized ideas for nearly every topic. The media is obligated by society to share stories to the public without said stereotypes and non-inclusive information, thus giving an unbiased approach. Because each individual is not perfect, it is nearly impossible to do this.

Media narratives are just that: the way that the media tells and portrays a story based on the preconceived notions and stereotypes associated with the story’s topic. This, in theory, may make a more compelling story since it is built upon the “knowledge” that most individuals have on the subject; however, media narratives do not always contribute to an accurate story.

Examples of distorted media narratives include black women being “welfare queens” and Latin Americans having an association with negative behavior and/or drugs.

Media Narrative: Homosexuals in Rwanda

Homosexuality is continuously becoming more accepted in the United States as well as many other western countries. This trend has encouraged education and understanding. However, this is not the case for many other nations. A strong example of the lack of tolerance for homosexuality is the African country Rwanda, where, although homosexuality is not currently considered illegal, recently the threats of banning homosexuality have become more frequent (“Rwanda: Situation Update”). Persecution is also abundant, and, unfortunately, the Rwandan media portrayal of homosexuals does nothing but fuel the enmity against homosexuals.

The majority of recent Rwandan news stories regarding homosexuality involve neighboring countries’ policies or articles discussing trends in general. For example, the very recent signage of the anti-gay bill in Uganda is presently a hot topic in the Rwandan media. Although none of the articles reviewed regarding the new Uganda law state that the journalists, Rwandan people, or Rwandan government agree with the law, no defense was made for homosexuals either. Only quotations from the president of Uganda justified the passing of the legislation were including in the article as well as one-sided information from the scientific study, which was also used to justify the new enactment (Muramira). Another article discusses the trends in Rwanda for 2013. The topics mentioned in the article are all controversial and tend to have negative visions in the Rwanda culture including body art, eccentric hairstyles, and drug addiction. The introduction to the article is as follows: “The closet is not a province exclusive to gay people, there are as many closets as there are things to come clean about and accept, things society will commond or disgrace. At times we emerge out of the closet (or chose to be open about the things we do) unaware and other times we are well aware of our actions, brushing aside what society will think about the matter” (Mwai). The introduction brings light to the fact that homosexuality is not accepted in Rwandan society and, in a sense, compares all of these other “shameful” trends to homosexuality.

One of the most startling articles discovered is a lengthy piece beginning with a small amount of information regarding homosexuality followed by 200 statements from the presidents of Uganda, Zimbabwe, and Kenya. The article then states that although Rwanda has not voiced its stance on homosexuality, “it is certainly against the practice.” “Blame” for homosexuality is attributed to those who used rape during the Rwanda genocide to engender fear. Europeans and others from Western nations are also “blamed” for homosexuality in Africa. The article concludes by stating that there are several reasons that citizens should “worry about homosexuality” including that it threatens the survival of society (Rwembeho).

Based on the first two articles mentioned, the media took a more tactful approach in portraying homosexuality as unnatural, heinous, and something deserving of shame. However, despite hiding behind analogies and the actions of others, a strong, brushful media has not easily be uncovered. The final article mentioned does not attempt to hide the message that the journalist wants conveyed. It is clear that homosexuals are portrayed as outcasts to the society and perpetrators of wrong. All of the new narratives are incorrect portraits of individuals who identify as homosexual.

The most important aspect to realize is that homosexuality is a more recent topic in Rwanda. This means that although many people have already formed opinions about it, many others have yet to decide how they feel. Whether the Rwanda media is directly slandering homosexuality through news stories or reporting on other nations’ slandering, the only information the public is receiving has a negative context. Essentially, the Rwanda media is planting seeds of hate and alienation into minds of citizens who have not experienced the truth that people who are homosexual are people just like them.

Media Narratives vs. Peace Journalism

The media narratives regarding homosexuals in Rwanda are highly incongruent with peace journalism. Not many Rwandan news stories regarding homosexuality are transparent enough to state a position, but various aspects of peace journalism were violated in all articles evaluated. Fortunately, however, because most stories did not come right out and state that Rwanda is antigay, there is plenty of room for peace journalism to be applied.

In “Museveni now signs anti-gay Bill into law,” Muramira writes about the passing of an anti-gay law by the Uganda government. The justification for the law, made by the president of Uganda, is also discussed in the article, and includes a scientific experiment conducted on the president’s orders. The results are said to prove homosexuality is the result of “mercenary reasons on account of the under-developed sectors of our economy that cause people to remain in poverty” or by the individual’s upbringing (Muramira). There is no mention, however, that other studies have been conclusive with different results. For example, some studies have shown that a homosexual male’s brain is more similar in size to a heterosexual female’s brain, and a homosexual female’s brain is more similar in size to a heterosexual male’s brain due to the amount of various hormones, which would lead one to the conclusion homosexuality may be biological. Also, information from sources other than the president would enhance the legitimacy and peace journalism tendencies of the article. Perhaps a discussion with an anonymous member of the LGBT community in Rwanda regarding his/her feelings on the legislation in Uganda would provide a more balanced view of the issue.

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“Rwembeho and Mutara create a strong emotional article by using the inflammatory statements from presidents of three near countries to put readers in the mindset of their cause. It is clear that the news story is one-sided and does not mention any similarities between homosexuals and heterosexual. This particular article opposes peace journalism much more than the previous article, and thus would need to be completely rewritten to be held at a peace journalism standard. A good start would be the elimination of a quote by the president of Zimbabwe, which states that homosexuals are “worse than dogs and pigs” and “are sexual perverts” (Rwembeho). Another positive change, as discussed for the previous article, would be to show the truth about homosexuality by including interviews with people who identify themselves as homosexual.

Overall, peace journalism is not practiced with regard to media pieces covering homosexuality in Rwanda. Negative stereotypes are being created in part by the influence of political leaders from other nations. Very few of the stories regarding homosexuality are balanced, unbiased, non-inflammatory, without blame, or focused on similarities instead of solely differences. If the media began including the components listed, the general Rwandan public would be more fit and educated to make their own decisions based on their personal, untainted beliefs regarding homosexuality, which is exactly the service that the media is, in theory, supposed to provide as a public service.

Works Cited


By Ashley Harbin

Ashley Harbin studies mathematics and computer science at Park University. She is also a member of the Honors Academy. Ashley plans to study peace building in graduate school with hopes of helping decrease African tribal conflicts.

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