



Peace Journalism

An Introduction

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.

Peace journalists are not open advocates for peace, but instead frame their stories in such a way as to “give peace a chance.” See more at www.park.edu/peacecenter.

10 Important PJ Principles

1. PJ is proactive, examining the causes of conflict, and looking for ways to encourage dialogue before violence occurs.
2. PJ looks to unite parties, rather than divide them, and eschews oversimplified “us vs. them” and “good guy vs. bad guy” reporting.
3. Peace reporters reject official propaganda, and instead seek facts from all sources.
4. PJ is balanced, covering issues/suffering/peace proposals from all sides of a conflict.
5. PJ gives voice to the voiceless, instead of just reporting for and about elites and those in power.
6. Peace journalists provide depth and context, rather than just superficial and sensational “blow by blow” accounts of violence and conflict.
7. Peace journalists consider the consequences of their reporting.
8. Peace journalists carefully choose and analyze the words they use, understanding that carelessly selected words are often inflammatory.
9. Peace journalists thoughtfully select the images they use, understanding that they can misrepresent an event, exacerbate an already dire situation, and re-victimize those who have suffered.
10. Peace Journalists offer counter-narratives that debunk media created or perpetuated stereotypes, myths, and misperceptions.

How can reporters use Peace Journalism?

Peace Journalism was originally conceived with war reporting in mind. While it is still applicable in war reporting, PJ principles are also useful in many different kinds of daily journalism coverage--elections, crime, neighborhood conflicts, civil unrest, etc.

Examples: PJ/elections; PJ/civil unrest

ELECTIONS: What a peace journalist would try to do in an electoral situation, using the 17 PJ tips (McGoldrick-Lynch) as a foundation.

1. AVOID treating the election like a horse race. Polls and surveys are fine, but they are only a part of the story. INSTEAD, concentrate on issues of importance as identified by the public.
2. AVOID letting the candidates define themselves through what they say. INSTEAD, seek expert analysis of the veracity and logic of the candidates’ comments.
3. AVOID airing inflammatory, divisive, or violent statements by candidates. INSTEAD, edit these comments to eliminate these inflammatory statements. Or, broadcast these comments, and then offer analysis and criticism of what is being said.
4. AVOID unbalanced stories. INSTEAD, seek to balance each story with comments from the major parties or their supporters in the public.
5. AVOID letting candidates use journalists to spread their propaganda. INSTEAD, as you broadcast their statements, include a critical analysis of what is being said.

CIVIL UNREST: Be proactive before violent unrest occurs—engender dialogues, offer a platform to the marginalized, and contextualize reporting about contentious incidents between officials and citizens.

1. Provide analysis and context, not just play-by-play of violent incidents;
2. Give voice to the voiceless;
3. Avoid official propaganda, or at least offer critical analysis of this propaganda;
4. Avoid us-vs-them characterizations (Black vs. White, Christian vs. Muslim, etc.);
5. Report about the invisible effects of violence--economic, social, educational, etc.;
6. Use non-inflammatory, non-sensational language;
7. Report counter-narratives that offer non-traditional perspectives on all the players;
8. Give peacemakers a voice, and report about sustainable solutions (not just cease-fires)

Who practices PJ? How can I get started?

Peace Journalism, while far from being mainstream, is increasingly being practiced worldwide by news organizations (Corresponsal de Paz-Mexico; Innovacion Social-Colombia; Radio Pacis-Uganda; BronxNet-New York) and individual journalists. PJ is promoted worldwide by organizations like Media Association for Peace-Lebanon; Peace Journalism Foundation-Uganda; PECOJON-Philippines, the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies-Sydney, Australia, and the Center for Global Peace Journalism at Park University in Parkville, Missouri USA.

To get started, visit the Center for Global Peace Journalism at www.park.edu/peacecenter. There you’ll find a wealth of PJ resources. You can also email the center’s director, Steven Youngblood, at steve.youngblood@park.edu for more information.