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The Resistance
Applying PJ principles to coverage of
the PEACE JOURNALIST

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 teachers, students, and practitioners of PJ.

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. We do NOT seek general submissions about peace projects, but are instead focused only on articles with a strong media angle.

Deadlines: March 3 (April edition); September 3 (October edition).

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Commentary/Analysis

Media play key role during travel ban resistance

By Monica Curca

This time, for some reason, it wasn't so shocking. I heard the news while sitting at LaGuardia Airport, waiting to board my flight to Los Angeles. The second Travel Ban Executive Order will be enacted on March 16, 2017; more fraternal twin than distant cousin of the first one.

The first one (Executive Order 13769) was a 90-day suspension on entry of certain immigrants from seven countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. In the new Executive Order, Iraq has been removed from the list, and the number of refugees has been reduced from 100,000 in Fiscal Year 2016 to 50,000 in Fiscal Year 2017 (beginning October 15, 2017). We've had a few weeks to become accustomed to this new face of America.

We live in times of fear; of uncertainty. I'm not here to give you a balanced discourse on the virtues of isolationism vs. global citizenship, to argue for or against immigration, or to talk about legislative checks and balances. What I want to talk about is fear - because it's the one thing that unites everyone right now, no matter what side of the fence they're on. And more than that: I want to talk about the media, and how it can be a force for peace in highly tense or potentially violent times.

Robert Manoff from the Center for War and Peace and the News Media at New York University states, "Media's influence is significant and increasingly so, and as a result the media constitutes a major human resource whose potential to help, prevent, and moderate social violence begs to be discussed, evaluated, and where appropriate mobilized." Offering his own typology of the roles of media in building peace, he draws on "conflict management theories of various stripes, negotiating theory in the diplomatic context, and a wide range of other approaches to preventing and managing conflict." Manoff asks, "What would be possible and appropriate, to undertake in particular conflict situations?"

Manoff outlines possible roles for media in conflict situations, including:
- [Accountability] Establish the transparency of one conflict party to another;
- [Mediator] Engage in confidence building measures;
- [Educator] Educate parties and communities involved in conflict and thereby change the information environments of disputes, which is critical to the conflict resolution process;
- [Definer] Identify the underlying interests of each party to a conflict for the other;

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accords that end conflicts by ‘histori- cizing’ them as important public occa- sions to embed the resolution process in shared social memories.

Typically, mainstream media have been a force to increase violence rather than build peace. They often feature what can be called ‘Crisis Porn’ where violence and suffering are highlighted. However, in the case of the travel ban, mainstream media have helped promote peace, because its interests have aligned with the people on both sides of the argu- ment in four key ways: Media as Early Warning System, Media as Advocate, Media as Rumor Control Manager, and Media as Power Broker.

Media as Early Warning System

On January 25, 2017, the director of the local resettlement agency confirmed the news that my fellow ac- tivists and I had been hearing regard- ing the travel ban. While the public and even the media were directly impacted by the executive order such as resettlement agencies were not informed in advance (even though their work would be severely impact- ed), the media reported information about the ban before it was publically announced.

Even in draft form, the media’s early release of the travel ban helped stake- holders spring into action. Soon after immigrants’ rights organizations all received the information, we began to mobilize into clearer advocacy roles, such as calling state senators and congressional representatives. Early warning also helped those immigrants and refugees affected to avoid being detained by delaying planned trips. In fact, in the week following the travel ban, I received numerous calls and Facebook messages from people (who I did not know) seeking advice on their best course of action.

Media as Advocate

Media engaged to bring to bear pres- sure on policymakers and those who support them and/or those who pro- mote xenophobia, racism, and other forms of social hatred.

Upon hearing the news, immigra- tion advocates and refugee resettlement agencies repeatedly called their elected officials like congressional rep- resentatives and senators. The Ameri- can Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, a powerful partner to many in social justice work, issued an action alert calling for a quick and calculated response. Our message spread across social media, prompting our friends and online community to start engag- ing with their elected representatives.

Our network of activists and my orga- nization’s effort called ‘The Beautiful Resistance’ began to collaborate and reach out to allies and partners from the undocumented advocates com- munity, Muslim civil liberties commu- nity, and refugee resettlement agen- cies. These entities planned a joint press conference for the following day in front of the regional office of Immi- gration Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Many of us knew that we needed to have a compelling and cohesive mes- sage to get ahead of the executive order and to compel the media to be reporting on it early, and often. We needed a strong and united voice to

the travel ban.

Media as Rumor Control Manager, Media as Provider of Information

Media can prevent the circulation of incendiary rumors and counteract them when they surface.

On Jan. 25, two days before the ban was imposed, I was interviewed by a local talk radio that broadcasts in the mostly affluent and Caucasian region of Southern California. It was surprising how much basic informa- tion about the issue was not known or understood, such as the fact that refu- gees entering the U.S. needed to run a gauntlet a 20-step vetting process. Having the platform for 40 minutes to teach the audience about the refugee resettlement process was enlighten- ing for me and for the audience. The information I thought was widely understood and know was new and eye-opening for the hosts and audi- ence (based on Facebook comments).

Media can provide a platform for subject experts to educate audiences and provide information that can dispel rumors. By Jan. 27, the media’s presence at airports, and its constant communication with those released from detention, and with lawyers, refugee resettlement agencies, and community organizers, all helped the public better understand the ban.

Specifically, the public was educated that the travel ban not only affected people from countries named in the ban, the but also Indians, special im- migrant visa holders from Afghanistan, green card holders from countries not on the list, and even dual citizens from countries on the list such as Iran.

The media had a front-row seat from which to document the way that the travel ban was being implemented. This included reporting that was sup- ported by personal stories. By Jan. 29, two days after the travel ban was enacted, we and our partners

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from the Arab American Civic Council joined over 7,500 protestors at the Los Angeles International airport (the only port of entry in the greater Los Angeles area) armed with posters reading “Refugees Welcome” and banners that said, “Our existence is resistance.”

During the Sunday protest, a refugee resettlement case manager contacted me to ask whether we would help in a case involving an sickly Iraqi woman reading “Refugee holder that was return- ing from an emergency trip to Iraq to say her final goodbye to her family. I quickly connected the family with the lawyers present at the protest and the gan to advocate for her release. After nine hours in detention, she finally was released. The next day her story was featured in the Los Angeles Times and a local NPR affiliate as an example of how the travel ban was a form of discrimination against already-mar- ginalized communities. Our collective work on this narrative and story that the media would use to dispel rumors that the ban was in fact protecting the United States.

Media as Power Broker

Media can encourage a balance of power among unequal parties where appropriate, or, where the claims of parties are not equally just, strengthen the hand of the party with the more compelling moral claim.

Mass protests and nonviolent direct action are meant to disrupt “business as usual.” When power in a society is asymmetrically distributed (government agen- ment does not reflect the wishes of the people), protests can give the opposition a useful foothold from which to negotiate a re-balancing of power.

Media played a key role as power broker during the travel ban roll- out. In the first days of the executive order, a fascinating chain of events led to actions that halted the ban. The

media’s presence at the airports gave them access to those who were be- ing detained, provided a platform for community organizers and civil rights organizations, and put a vital human face on the refugees and other immi- grants being detained.

The reporting of the protests and stories was key to bringing a network of lawyers to the airport, led by the ACLU-SoCal, which provided families and refugee resettlement agencies ac- cess to instant legal counsel, language translators, and support for releasing those detained.

The constant presence of both pro- testers and the media created the political will for elected officials to act against the travel ban. By Jan. 29, a federal judge in Brooklyn, New York, issued an emergency stay stop deportations of travelers caught up in the ban and ordering the release of travelers with valid visas being held at U.S. airports. Public pressure continued even as Homeland Security Department Secretary John Kelly issued a waiver from the ban for lawful permanent residents (over the reported objections of chief White House strategist Steve Bannon). In ad- dition, on Jan. 30, Washington State’s attorney general sued the Trump administration in federal court, claiming irreparable harm from the ban and asking for a temporary nationwide restraining order blocking it.

At LAX, holders of a Special Immigrant Visa (a visa that is issued to those who supported and worked for the U.S. government in Iraq and Afghanistan) were still at risk of being detained. On Jan. 31, a local refugee resettlement agency in Southern California called me to ask if I could help organize a protest to ensure that a family of six from Afghanistan did not get de- tained. The father in this family had served the U.S. military as a mechanic. For nine hours, hundreds came to LAX protesting the family’s detention. Finally at 9:00 pm, the young parents and four exhausted but bright-eyed children emerged from detention as protesters cheered. It was a small vic- tory in a huge war.

The shock and awe tactics of the Trump administration worked, creat- ing mass chaos and confusion -- just the kind of situation where main- stream media can thrive. With the the new travel ban announced March 16, we know that there will be less atten- tion to the overall goal of making the kind of situation where main-
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"The real story can get lost”
By Valeria Espadas

Student journalist Valeria Espadas has covered the Women’s Day, Immigration Ban, and Day Without Immigrants protests in Kansas City. — Ed

Covering protests, marches, or rallies can be an intense experience. As a journalist you want to cover as much of the situation as possible. Between getting the perfect picture and a variety of quotes, the real story can get lost.

I found this to be true when I was covering the Day Without Immigrants protest. If I knew then that I would be asked to write a Peace Journalism article about the protest, I would have covered it completely different. When I arrived at city hall I wanted to cover the “front page news” story. I wanted to cover the “play by play” of the protest. Later I found out that even though I was there, I completely missed the story.

For example, when I covered the Day Without Immigrant protest, I interviewed a couple different people. I wanted to get brief quotes about why individuals felt the need to be there. Several such quotes came from Mariam Gallan. She is a mother of two boys and a Mexican native who attended the rally outside of City Hall in Kansas City on February 16. When asked about why she felt the need to be there, she said “To support, we asked about why she felt the need to be there.

Mariam continued sharing her story, which is a familiar story for many Mexican immigrants. “We came here for opportunity. We wanted our kids to have as many doors open for them as possible...We came here and worked, we started a life and now people are asking us to pick up and leave.”

Another individual I spoke with was D’asia Williams, a mother of a 2 year old boy, whose father is an undocumented immigrant. Though D’asia is an American citizen she felt the need to be there. “Immigration reform tears families apart...I don’t want my son to grow up without a father, and I don’t want to constantly be worried that he might have to.”

At Park University, I took the Peace Journalism course taught by Steven Youngblood. I read his first book, I looked at Youngblood’s blog and after all that I still never understood what peace journalism was really about and why we need it until I started reporting these events.

I realized that telling the news through personal stories of people directly affected by the situation was the correct way of covering this story. It gives people insight to a reality that many have no idea about. Peace Journalism humanizes the process of deportation, at a time when a part of our society does the opposite. I did not go in depth with either one of the individuals that I spoke with, so when I came to time to write this article, I felt unprepared, like I rushed the process of covering the protest.

Being rushed as a journalist is some-
At the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) conference last November in Sierra Leone, peace journalism took a prominent role.

At a peace journalism commission session, Prof. Jake Lynch, director of the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney and author of many peace journalism studies and texts, discussed his proposed agenda for the future of peace journalism research. Lynch posed the following questions to the overflow crowd:

1. Does PI exist, and if it does, is it a byproduct of “normal” news? 2. Where is PI practiced? 3. What is its impact? Do readers notice the difference, and does it prompt them to take different meanings (from the news they’ve consumed)? 4. Could it be expanded? Could journalists implement it? 5. Is it consistent with objectivity?

Lynch, a co-organizer of the peace journalism commission (interest group), also listed several questions for clarification, including how the definition of violence impacts the scope of PI; if the orientations of PI are coded to provide contextualized distinctions across contexts; and if PI is a re-affirming process or instead a critique of professional journalism. Finally, he laid out several constraints, asking, how is the scope of PI expanded? At what point do journalists encounter ideological constraints? Do efforts to implement PI compromise objectivity?

In a separate plenary presentation, Lynch engaged the audience on the free flow of information and promoting peaceful societies. He pointed out how sustainable development goal #16 is promoting peaceful societies, and that #16.10 is ensuring access to information. Peace, therefore, must have an information component, he said. Thus, there will be increasing opportunities for peace journalism to serve these sustainable goals.

Prof. Brian Wilson from the University of British Colombia discussed sports journalism for peace. He cited research that shows that sports media promotes xenophobia, violence, and militarism. Wilson recommends that sports coverage applies to other areas of peace discourse. His research into peace sports media will identify best practices in peace and sports journalism, and develop pedagogical tools to teach peace sports media.

Prof. Gloria Ooko from Moi University in Kenya discussed how Kenyan media have covered terrorism. Her findings, illustrated with examples like the West Gate Mall attack, showed that news media use a war journalism construct; dehumanize terrorists; use “us vs. them” narratives and profile Somalis as “them”; and adopt a “government mentality” in their coverage. She said the Kenyan public gets only a one-dimensional view on terrorism and how to deal with it. Ooko recommended that media re-think their current approaches.

In another session, Prof. Jacob Udo-Udo Jacob of the American University of Nigeria talked about peace journalism efforts underway in Nigeria. He discussed a recent peace journalism project at AUN (highlighted in the Oct. 2016 Peace Journalist). His study found almost twice as much coverage of Darfur than the ongoing wars in DRC and Darfur. The study found that 50 percent peace framing in Pakistani newspapers, based on a content analysis, was seen in 17% of stories, while war journalism was found in 39% of stories. Later, after sanctions were removed, this flipped, with 65 percent peace framing and 35 percent war framing. War themes found in the stories included the right to attack, “our” losses, U.S. elitism, and the perception of threat. Peace themes in the studied stories were negotiations, “their” losses, and hope.

I presented about the Reporting Syrian Refugees in Turkey project that was jointly administered by the Center for Global Peace Journalism and the University of Istanbul. I discussed the need for PI projects on reporting refugees by citing studies of negative, distorted refugee coverage by Turkish media. I concluded the session with an overview of how the same type of news coverage can be found in other refugee hosting countries like Jordan, Lebanon, Austria, and Germany.
Ebola in Sierra Leone: Reporting a nightmare

By Rexford Johnson

On May 25 2014, Sierra Leone recorded its first confirmed case of Ebola which was traced from neighbouring Guinea. The virus would later spread exponentially to affect all regions, districts and sectors of the nation. The country's health care system was overwhelmed by the outbreak, the government was perplexed and the entire population was traumatised. As the chain of transmission surged across the land, social values were eroded; state and non-state institutions were adversely impacted. The stability and even the existence of the nation were threatened.

The spread of the disease was fuelped by certain behaviour practices, misconceptions, a weak health care system, and a general lack of understanding of the characteristics of the virus even among medics. Social commentators note that the impact of the country’s 11 year civil war pales across the land, social values were overwhelmed by the outbreak, the government was unwilling to involve media in its health education campaign. Quoting the scientists, media reported Ebola to be an incurable disease. Society viewed infected people as victims instead of patients which undermined efforts to mobilize the public to seek medical attention if they develop symptoms. Communication strategies flopped as government sources differed with information from international Medics on the frontline – like MSF. The public was getting confused, fears were heightened, rural communities were in information blackout, and myths were spreading. People in the early affected communities had a general mistrust for medical personnel because their prevention methods conflicted with local culture. Health experts were predicting 1.5 million people would be infected in Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone before the virus could be contained. With the situation rapidly deteriorating, journalists realised that we could not continue with traditional media functions (to inform, educate and entertain) while the communication abyss between key stakeholders and the dying population continued to expand. The media had to shift its focus to a collaborative role.

Role of the media

On July 26 2014, the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists established an Ebola Response Strategy. Forty eight private and community radio stations across the country donated airtime and ran a daily simultaneous broadcast under the umbrella of the Independent Radio Network. The objectives were; “To provide an early response outlet for the Ministry of Health and the Social Mobilisa-

Participants gather as part of the national campaign to end Ebola by Women in the Media Sierra Leone. They were complimenting the efforts of the Sierra Leone Association of Journalist’s (SLAJ) Yellow Ribbon Campaign.

tion Committee, increase the level of awareness and understanding of the virus, and educate the public on action to be taken to reduce and eventually halt the spread of the virus.”

Programs where designed to raise public awareness about signs and symptoms of the virus, to discuss the role of the key service providers and the significance of new medical infrastructures such as holding centres, case management centres, and treatment centres. Control activities like contact tracing, case surveillance, and isolation and stigma issues, were also recurring program themes. While international media highlighting the existing fragile health system, resulting in generating support and resources from other nations, local media focused on information and sensitization, not investigation. The radical / watchdog role was rejected by the journalists who themselves were afflicted with the deadly virus. The design and content of the messages was persuasive as it appealed for safe, healthy practices. Soon radio became the nerve centre in the fight against Ebola.

Challenges

When covering war, journalists have scores of protocols and guidelines to refer to, but not so with covering the Ebola outbreak. There was no code; the Sierra Leonean press had no idea how to cover a health emergency of such proportions. When equipped, we took the gauntlet and learned along the way. Just one month into the outbreak, we had our first casualty. Mohamed Mwalimu Sherrif of Eastern Radio in Kenema died of Ebola in June, 2015. Sherrif had interviewed a Muslim cleric who cared for an Ebola patient at home. It is believed the young journalist contracted the disease at the burial of the infected person. Those were the early days of the outbreak when ignorance was prevalent, but his demise was warning enough. Eyewitness journalism was negatively impacted as a result. We learned from scientists that the virus exists in human fluids. This brought the general fear that the windshield of a recorder or microphone could be a channel for the spittle from an infected person to infect an unsuspecting newsroom. It didn’t take long to develop our personal codes of practice. Mine would have probably read like:

• Don’t touch… Anything or anyone.
• Handshakes were even outlawed.
• Above all don’t touch your face.
• Carry anti-viral gels with you everywhere; and apply often.
• Wash hands frequently with soap and water - mostly chlorinated water.
• Keep a safe distance from people... even when interviewing.
• Don’t interview sick people
• Don’t visit non-essential family and don’t encourage visits.
• Don’t go snooping around treatment centres. Better to cover a community riot over the failing of emergency services to collect a corpse or sick person.
• Maintain a good stock of gloves, food items, medication at home.

Broadcasters discuss Ebola during a live interview session at Independent Radio Network (IRN) studio during the lock down to stop Ebola transmission in 2015

*Eat lots of citrus fruits and spicy foods to boost your immune system.*
*Check for red eyes. We learned that red eyes were a give-away sign of infection; so one has to regularly check their eyes and those of others.*
*Be prepared for round the clock temperature checks and be patient with the check points.

Media houses, like all other public places, practiced precautionary measures like compulsory hand washing with chlorinated water and temperature checks upon entry. All of this was nothing compared to the protective gears and measures of international journalists who were in town covering the crises. It wasn’t rare to see them in personal protective equipment – space suits - around hospitals or treatment centres. The BBC even had a bio-hazard expert working alongside their journalists.

In September 2014, another broadcast journalist lost the battle to the virus together with his wife and young son. Victor Kassim formerly of the Catholic Radio Station - Radio Maria reportedly got the virus through his wife who was a health nurse. Kassim, Sherrif and a health nurse. Kassim, Sherrif and another journalist were the only two Ebola related deaths within the media fraternity.

In the absence of a code of ethics, a few mistakes occurred, especially with pictures of emaciated patients in hospitals or abandoned children or orphans being left in quarantine homes and even corpses in crowded morgues. These were mainly published on social media. Program wise, we had to develop fresh angles to maintain the audience’s attention. Keeping them interested while constantly repeating health information was a huge task. To aid this, a radio drama series was added to the program content. That brought life to key issues being dealt with in the talk show segment, increased the entertainment value of the program, and addressed EVD issues in an engaging manner.

In November 2014, the Social Mobilization Consortium comprised state functionaries, international non-governmental organisations, health and media representatives came together for national EVD messaging dubbed “Big Idea of The Week”. This concept was intended to “improve understanding and confidence messages by developing discussions on a specific key issue for an entire week. It was coordinated with all partners across channels including radio, television, posters, house to house campaigns, print news, SMS text messaging, social media and discussion forums. This meant no more information overload and no more conflicting messages.” It didn’t take long for gains to be realised. By the end of January 2016, infection rates started declining.

On February 14, 2016, the country’s journalism Association launched the Yellow Ribbon Campaign (see graphic, next page) to revitalise the national EVD response which was showing signs of fatigue. Citizens were encouraged to wear yellow ribbons or wristbands as a sign of commitment.
Ebola crisis

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Ebola scourge. The initiative turned out to be a nationwide success.

Reporting a nightmare

Living in Ebola territory was a walking nightmare. Imagine a year with no Christmas holiday, no Easter break, no birthday celebrations, no vacation, no social gatherings, hugs, handshakes, and sometimes no church gatherings. The fear of death was so strong you could almost touch it. Fear of contracting the virus, fear of touching a door knob at the office, fear of using headphones in the studio... fear of headache, fever or worse.

Radio was essential in relaying round the clock info during the two major countrywide lockdowns in Sept 2014 and Mar 2015. It was more than packag- ing reports and anchoring programs; we were giving hope to the nation. At the peak of Ebola infections, we had had 111 new infections in one day. The sadness and despair was clearly printed on every face in the newsroom. Another sad day at the office was when we had to report that the country’s only virologist had fallen victim in the battle. He was like the frontline commander in the fight and many feared the worst with his demise. Nonetheless, we mustered courage and proceeded with the day’s simulcast and encourage the populace that it will soon be over provided we adhere to the preventive protocols. Sometimes you will be receiving text messages on air about abandoned corpses, neglected quarantine homes, and other failings in the health response; you have to filter the information you put out while taking the responsibility to contact the relevant authority off air. All of this proved to be psychologically exhausting.

The Sierra Leone government which at the onset accused the press of fear mongering during the early days of its Ebola crisis, which officially ended just over one year ago in Sierra Leone, several reporters shared their experiences of the fear of using media as a forum for peace during the crises as well as their reportage. In September 2015, the ban on handshake was lifted along with almost all the other restrictions.

SL journalists discuss Ebola reporting, learn PJ basics

Journalism during times of extreme crisis can literally be a matter of life and death. Just ask the 30 journalists who attended my peace journalism workshop last December in Free-town, Sierra Leone.

When discussing their coverage of the Ebola crisis, which officially ended just over one year ago in Sierra Leone, several reporters shared stories of extraordinary peace journalism. A producer/reporter team talked about the lengths they went to to ensure that their listeners got accurate information about the disease and how it is spread. One woman reporter said that on many days, there were actually hourly updates. Journalists here risked their lives bringing reports from hospitals, treatment centers, and Ebola-endemic areas.

In addition to Ebola reporting, we also discussed how peace journalism might apply to electoral and reconciliation journalism here. Though the civil war here ended in 2002, the reconciliation process is ongoing. This process, I suggested, could be assisted by news reports about peacebuilders and through the use of media platforms as forums for ongoing discussions.

--Steven Youngblood

Participants discuss the principles of peace journalism during a November training in Balkh province, Afghanistan.

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PJ taught in Balkh province, Afghanistan

By Masoud Momin

Together with GIZ-Civil Peace Service Program, Mediotheck Afghanistan organized a three-day intensive workshop on Peace Journalism in Balkh province. This training was conducted Nov. 21, 2016 for the lecturers and some students of Balkh University, Faculty of Journalism.

The aim of this workshop was to strengthen the capacity of lecturers to teach the approach of Peace Journalism Principles. Mr. Masoud Momin Media Trainer at the Mediotheck Afghanistan had facilitated this three day training. Participants received theoretical and practical issues in terms of Peace Journalism.

The workshop was the first of its kind to be conducted at Balkh University; therefore it was of great interest for the lecturers and students.

In the course of three-day of the training on “Peace Journalism”, different topics were covered, including basic and good knowledge on peace journalism principles, media and conflict resolution, peace and war reporting techniques and techniques for producing balanced reporting to increase understanding between conflict parties.

The workshop on Peace Journalism combined practical examples with projector screenings, theoretical analysis and in-class exercises and evaluation. During the practical part the participants produced some reports according to peace journalism principles.

The programme involves individual and group exercises as well as input from the trainer. There were many opportunities for the participants to raise their questions throughout the workshop. These approaches were used in the trainings: presentations group work, role play, film show, Individual work, open discussion, and studies. During the training handout on Peace Journalism, was distributed and given to participants as a training material and resources reference which hopefully constantly help them on their knowledge and skills acquired during the three day training. Participants welcomed the workshop as a successful effort and thanked the GIZ- ZFD Civil Peace Service Program and Mediotheck for their ongoing endeavor to help and support Journalism Lectures and journalists in their capacity building programs. At the end of the training, participants were handed certificates of a successful completion.

The evaluation of the participants indicated the training was very successful and outstanding. To a large extent the objectives of the workshop and expectations of participants were met. The Topics for the trainings were very new for most of the participants. The experiences, skills, knowledge and interactive mode of presentation made facilitation friendly and lively.

Masoud Momin

Masoud Momin leads participants in an exercise during a Mediotheck training in November in Afghanistan.

Understanding the role of peace journalism in Balkh province

By Masoud Momin

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Masoud Momin

Masoud Momin currently works with Mediotheck Afghanistan. He began contributing to Afghanistan Today in 2012. He is studying Political Science in Kabul province.
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Community media’s role in peace explored

By Alexander Vojvoda

April 2017

During a workshop in July 2015 on the question of "What is News for Community Media?", eight community-based broadcasters in the southwest region in Cameroon formed a loose working collective to promote community and civil society reporting and to build capacities in conflict-sensitive journalism. Subsequently, this collective has grown to a network with currently 20 members. The network members have started to jointly produce (micro-)programmes, radio dramas, documentaries, call-in shows and discussions on peace building, conflict transformation, and local socio-political, cultural, economic and community issues.

On 21 December 2016, the Community Media Network in the southwest region organised its 8th Community Media Network meeting entitled “The Role of Community Media in Peace and Conflict” to reflect on the role of media in the current civil unrests in the anglophone southwest and northwest regions. In order to support the needs of community journalists and volunteers on the topic of “Peace, Conflict and Community Media Networking”, the network meeting commenced with an input on peace journalism principles and the potential roles of journalists in conflict situations by evaluating whether they consider themselves to contribute to peace journalism in all regions.

The 9th Community Media Network meeting participants discussed the necessity to build a formal structure for the community media network to enable the promotion of conflict-sensitive reporting, conflict management and to create a practice module on peace journalism. Unfortunately, a planned kick-off network meeting in Bamenda, northwest region on 17 February 2017 had to be cancelled as just days earlier several journalists had been arrested and some of the community media network members experienced pressure from government officials not to report on current events related to the protests.

The protests resulted in isolated violent confrontations between protesters and security forces followed by indiscriminate mass arrests. Excessive use of violence caused the deaths of protesters, civilians, and security forces and the government imposed an Internet blackout in the anglophone regions.

In this context, the 8th Community Media Network meeting commenced with a panel discussion with Rev. Moko Mbuta Thomas, the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon's national communication secretary; Kum Leonard, a representative of a Cameroonian journalist union; Esther Oram, vice-president of a local civil society network, and Wolfram Metzig-Esner, an expert on conflict management. They discussed the status-quo of the conflict, the role of the media, and possible ways to enable a constructive and peaceful dialogue.

The panelists concluded that while there is a strong bias in reporting either favouring the protesters or the government, journalists have the right to report on the conflict. It is important in a democracy that media can uncover human rights abuses or brutalization of protesters without having to fear police prosecution. The panel emphasized that violent reactions from all conflict parties need to stop, and that the Cameroonian media have to report responsibly.

The network meeting continued with a self-assessment of the reporting style of the participating journalists by evaluating whether they consider themselves to contribute to conflict reporting, common activities and possible collaborations with the civil society.

During the 8th Community Media Network meeting, journalists split up in groups to work on the roles of media in the current conflict, challenges of conflict reporting, common activities and possible collaborations with the civil society. The network meeting ended with a wrap-up on possible ways forward and recommendations for the work of the community media sector in Cameroon. The journalists addressed the need for further training of community journalists and volunteers on conflict-sensitive journalism, and an intense collaboration with the civil society, human rights organisations, and other partners in support of generating peaceful dialogue.

A Way forward: Peace Journalism and Community Media Networking

In order to support the needs of community media in Cameroon identified during the meeting in December 2015, the Community Media Network in the southwest region organised a two-day follow-up training on the topic of “Peace, Conflict and Communication” from 26 to 27 January, 2017 to build capacities in the areas of conflict analysis, constructive communication, and to create a practice module on peace journalism.

The network meeting continued with a panel discussion with Rev. Moko Mbuta Thomas, the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon's national communication secretary; Kum Leonard, a representative of a Cameroonian journalist union; Esther Oram, vice-president of a local civil society network, and Wolfram Metzig-Esner, an expert on conflict management. They discussed the status-quo of the conflict, the role of the media, and possible ways to enable a constructive and peaceful dialogue.

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Peace photojournalist communicates hope

By Rachel Cerrotti

A beautiful story, one filled with hope and with resilience, and told with compassion, has the ability to inspire action.

The collaboration between photojournalist/photographer, Carey Wagner, and CARE, a humanitarian organization focused on fighting global poverty, is doing just this for Syrian refugees.

During World War II, CARE sent its first packages to European refugees. Today, the once displaced children who received those first packages are paying forward the kindness they received by writing letters to Syrian refugee children living in Jordan.

“I know it is very difficult to adjust in a different country. I feel very deeply for you. There will be better times ahead,” writes Helga, a World War II survivor from Berlin to Sajeda, a 16-year-old Syrian refugee.

Helga Kissell (l) sends a letter to Sajeda. After her father having was killed in an air raid in Berlin, Helga and her mother fled to an uncle’s home in the Bavarian village of Hohenschwangau. It was in her uncle’s camera shop where 16-year-old Helga received her first camera and was taught how to develop film. She became a professional photographer and traveled extensively throughout Europe and beyond, documenting the lives of her fellow refugees. She survived the Russian invasion of East Prussia, the German occupation of Eastern Europe, World War II, and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Her photographs were published in numerous books and magazines. She passed away in 2016 at the age of 92.

Sajeda (right) is 16 years old and lives in an apartment in Zarqa, Jordan, where her mother is raising her and her four siblings alone. She left Syria several years ago, not long after the war broke out, but she still remembers her home. Sajeda goes to school in the community and enjoys playing soccer when she’s able to go outside.

Part of the letter is read out loud in the video Wagner created as well as on the CARE website.

Five years ago, after after spending 10 years working as a staff photographer at newspapers in California and Florida, Wagner made the leap to freelance work. Since then she has been telling stories about women around the world.

“I do feel like woman are extremely strong, but they are taking on so much. I feel like I want to be able to be a part of that, to help women communicate...I think that can only help our world,” said Wagner about her focus. Her ability and her desire to communicate hope within the parameters of her storytelling contributed to her success documenting CARE’s Special Delivery Project.

In early 2016, Wagner traveled with CARE to four cities in the U.S. and then to Irbid and Zarqa in Jordan to film the former European refugees and the Syrian children who were recently forced to flee from their homes.

“Stories, this one included, is editing down the story into a few minutes while leaving in the emotion, complexity and spirit of each person,” Wagner said.

The stories, which have been adapted to fit multiple media, have served as a positive message of hope in a time when so many people are used to only seeing brutal and shocking images.

“The most challenging part of telling stories is to become a political journalist. When Sajeda received a letter from WWII refugee Helga Kissell, she said, ‘Helga understands my situation and she feels for me,’ and added, ‘Helga made me feel like I exist.’ CARE provided psychosocial support to Sajeda through a safe recreational place to draw, socialize with other Syrian and Jordanian peers and engage with professional case workers.

Rachael Cerrotti is a Boston-based freelance photographer and writer, as well as a 2015 iOwth summit attendee. You can follow her on Twitter @RachaelCerrotti or Instagram @RCerrotti.

The recipients of the CARE packages gain a sense of solidarity by hearing the stories and words of those who also once had to flee their own home and adapt to a new country.

Wagner recognizes the importance of identifying the type of work she is producing. Working in newspapers, it is expected that a situation is reported on within the ethics of journalism.

BUT, when it comes to working with a non-profit, there is more opportunity to create a situation in order to tell a story.

“The lines are blurred, but you really should be transparent and be like, hey, this is from this organization and they set this up or this happened in this way,” she noted.

When asked if she thought her work was successful, Wagner replied, “What is the metric on that? Do you want people to write letters? Do you want people to donate money? Is it more about people understanding things in a different way or not just seeing Syrian refugees as this “other”...or is it more about relating to people in the world?”

For the refugees themselves, as well as for many battling with trauma, sharing the story becomes part of the healing process. “I think for some people it has empowered them just by telling their story and I think they had an effect just by releasing their story,” Wagner commented.

She has twice been a fellow with the International Reporting Project. This past summer she traveled to Indonesia where she reported on women in Islam and what their day-to-day life looks like outside of the context of terrorism.

In the past, Wagner has covered gender-based violence in Papua, New Guinea. “When I was there, people were telling me, ‘I have never had anyone listen to me,’” Wagner said.

“We don’t talk about these things. It is not cool to be emotional and complain about something. No one has listened to me."

When looking at Wagner’s portfolio, it is easy to wonder if she gets overwhelmed by the amount of trauma that her subjects have experienced. “I was in Jordan I was playing this game of ice cream freeze with the kids in the street. I mean, it was emotional, but you still have fun and that is the thing that sometimes gets lost,” Wagner said.

The collaboration between Wagner and CARE shows how storytelling not only benefits individuals facing a time of crisis, but also has the power to re-veal resilience. “There are bad things that have happened, but there is joy in life. And, when you see it in a place, in another kind of situation, it is more meaningful.”

--Story originally from IVOH.org

Zaher, center, reads his letter from WWII refugee Gunter Nitsch. All photos by and used with permission from Carey Wagner and CARE.
Police shootings, new tech challenge journalists

By Terry Likes

Police shootings, new tech challenge journalists

In the last two years, newscasts, newspapers and social media posts have often led with stories of someone, often black and unarmed, dying at the hands of police. How does media coverage impact the attitudes of those who consume news? In an era of when media use police body camera footage or video shot from a viewer’s camera phone, what is the impact of this new technology?

Too many news reports sound like this

Television news announcers, of late, have read far too many stories like this, “A traffic stop turned deadly as a police officer opened fire on a black driver.” (CBS 2, New York, 2016, July 7). “It feels like every few weeks, some time every day, another person, often black and unarmed, has died at the hands of police. Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Jason Harrison, Walter Scott, Eric Harris, Freddie Gray, to name a few.” (McLaughlin, 2015, April 15). CNN News Desk Editor, Elliott McLaughlin, says, “The headlines make it look like America is experiencing an unprecedented wave of police violence, but experts say that isn’t the case. We’re just seeing more mainstream media coverage, and for a variety of reasons.” (McLaughlin, 2015, April 21).

Challenges for media coverage

The issue of race relations, police action and the subsequent media coverage may have come to national attention when the National Guard took control of Ferguson, Missouri. Former CNN Washington correspondent, Charles Bierbauer, also hopes for fair media coverage, but sees new technology and social media as a challenge for today’s journalists. “Indeed the ability of every citizen to broadcast on their own, as we saw happen, and one of the shooting incidents imposes a greater responsibility on the media to ensure that they’ve got the story right.”

Comparing then and now

Many wonder how today’s media coverage compares to that of the civil rights movement. Charles Bierbauer, who worked for ABC and later CNN for over twenty years, says it is difficult to compare today’s media coverage to that of the civil rights movement because in the 1960’s consumers only had traditional media outlets. “Today you’ve got a thousand different perspectives, some of which may be legitimate, some of which may be first person, and many of which are just re-tweets,” says Bierbauer. Since 2002, Bierbauer has been Dean of the College of Mass Communication and Information Studies, at the University of South Carolina.

Bierbauer shares how a teaching example can apply to all who consume news. “Indeed I tell my students that if they’re only getting their news from one place, they’re doing themselves a disservice to start with and certainly not doing a service and gathering the story. People have to expect that there’s much of what we see comes from a biased perspective.” Bierbauer adds if you factor in bias, you can extract useful information. “If you take things on face value then the bias is going to run rampant over you. So, I think the challenge for journalists and for audiences is to recognize how complex the situation is now and how much the responsibility is to sift and sort and determine what are really reliable sources of what are the equivalent of your crazy uncle in the attic,” says Bierbauer.

Research in progress

Many of these incidents occurring in cities like Baltimore, Ferguson and Baton Rouge are so fresh that some professors around the country have research in progress. One example stems from the reaction of those who heard news clips like this from ABC News from Charleston, South Carolina. “Remembering the nine people who were shot dead inside that church.” (ABC News, 2015, June 20).

University of South Carolina’s Dr. Kenneth Campbell’s research provides an analysis of first-day coverage of the Emanuel Nine Church Shooting in Charleston and what it might say about journalistic practice. In his research, Campbell wanted to see if the presence of race in a story involving a horrific shooting by a white male at an African-American church had some effect on how the story was treated. “Because of the racial history of the region, the newspapers that we looked at were really sensitive in how they handled this story. They were concerned about telling the story to the public and to the local community in a way that helped move the community forward rather than just focusing on the nature of the crime.”

Campbell says media may be evolving over time to not just reporting what happened but showing compassion and advancing the story. “Media were certainly, in this instance, serving a positive role in the community and when I say media I’m talking specifically about the newspapers that we examined,” says Campbell.

Another research project compares the effects of news media coverage on African-American, Caucasian and Hispanic attitudes toward police. Dr. William Kinnally, an associate professor in the Nicholson School of Communication at the University of Central Florida, is studying how news may affect people in different ways in terms of their attitudes or confidence in police. His initial results show a difference in attitudes across ethnicities.

“Caucasians were more positively, more favorable toward police and law enforcement. African-Americans were least favorable toward police and law enforcement. Hispanics were right in the middle and where there was a statistical difference was between the Caucasians and Hispanics and African-Americans. Thiers was different but not statistically different.” Kinnally adds there is a body of research having to do with the portrayals of minorities in the media. “The way in which they portray affects people’s perceptions, particularly of policies, and so some of the earlier research was looking at the impact of the images, the photographs used in news stories, whether it’s online or in a paper and the way in which people respond to the ethnicities of the people who are presented in those photos.”

More transparency

“The new technology has enabled coverage of this very substantive issue to change dramatically.”

The quote above is from former News Director for WSMV-TV in Nashville, Alan Griggs, who says it was not too long ago when there was no video of a racially-charged event, resulting in he said, he said accusations. Griggs says that changed with the advent of camera phones and body cameras for police. “Not every police officer has one but many do nowadays and so that video is released quite often and so you have an entirely different and changing complexion of news coverage about these events.” Griggs, now the Chair of the Communication and Journalism department at Lipscomb University, admits coverage is much more transparent today than it ever has been. “It creates a new challenge for journalists for broadcast journalists, freelance news outlets, that we should show it but we do not want to be inflammatory about it and I think too many times in this business, television journalists gauge the importance of a story about the strength of the video that they have,” says Griggs.

Technology trumps story substance?

Reflecting on his years leading one of the country’s most awarded news staffs, Griggs says today, even when a story is considered weak, if the video is compelling you’re going to see the video. “So there is a definite advantage to the technology bringing along coverage of this issue but, at the same time, it’s incumbent upon journalists to really make sure that the technology doesn’t get so far ahead of them that it biases the news coverage and I think that’s a real possibility.”

Griggs hopes that today’s journalists weigh the substance of the story before they think about the impact of the technology because he cautions it’s real simple to put that in reverse. For example, he says body camera use is so new that he is not sure if most newsrooms have a policy concerning the use of that video. “We have remarkable video today of those who have been arrested being put in chokeholds, being shot, or being chased and while that video real does add validity to the court case and to the event itself, I’m just concerned...
DRC journalists discuss election experiences

by Christophe Babunga

Forty journalists from publishers, editors, editorial secretaries and reporters from both the print and audiovisual media in the province of North Kivu learned about electoral violence and shared their experiences on peaceful reporting during elections in anticipation of December 2017 elections in DR Congo.

The Goma Press Center, a donation from MO NUSCO (United Nations Organization) for the Mission in Congo served as a host for the event on Monday 4 July. The UNPC, National Union of the Congo Press Section of North Kivu, in partnership with the MONUSCO Public Information Section also co-ordinated the event. Its object was to teach media how to train and inform the public about the electoral process for credible, transparent, and peaceful elections.

The knights of the pen are partners of the CENI, the independent national electoral commission. CENI contributes greatly to the conduct of the elections. One speaker, Kambale Ngayirewama, who is in charge of litigation at the provincial secretariat of CENI North Kivu, discussed the expectation of CENI vis-à-vis the press. “We expect the press to control the content of the electoral law and to raise awareness and give the right information to the population, to participate in the preparation, management and transformation of conflicts (pacifying press).”

Kambale highlighted the main causes of electoral violence, including the choice of an electoral system in a dynamic of conflict, a culture of violence rooted in countries where small arms and light weapons are distributed, a fragile legal system, a lack of resources to train journalists, studying the impact of the positive involvement of the media in the electoral process, promoting pacification media leads to smooth elections, and deontology of journalists was a key issue.

The role of the media during the electoral period, ethical challenges, and the role of journalists was a subject addressed by Touvier Lundi, a provincial director for JED, Journalists for the Defense of the Press. He underlined the importance of the story of the press to control the content of the news reports and the role of journalism for the maintenance of peace in the province.

Also, Tvuer noted that editors should facilitate balanced access to the media during the election period. Journalists must refrain from amplifying the rumors likely to stir up conflict in the political sphere and sow confusion in public opinion. For this purpose, they must observe scrupulously the basic rules of ethics. Articles must conform to the inverted pyramid, in observance of equity, accuracy, honesty, responsibility and above all independence.

Police shootings

The issue of fairness

Many journalists codes of ethics, such as from SPJ and RTDNA, include wording of giving a voice to the voiceless, holding the powerful accountable and seek truth and report it. Griggs says journalists should ask themselves whether they are being fair to every person impacted in any news report but, specifically involving cases like what has been noted above, with new technology allowing us to show police body camera video. “How far should we go in using that video and should any of it be put out? I’m sure that it should be in most cases but I mean that it is such a powerful tool now that I’m afraid it would be easy for us to let it get out of hand,” says Griggs.

Thoughts broadcast from a non-journalist

We have heard from media professionals and top academics weighing in on this subject. Here is a different take. The Daily Show host, Trevor Noah, adds humor to commentary in addressing a police shooting of a minority in Tulsa. “It looked cut and dry to me but the truth is I wasn’t there, none of us were there. We are never there in those situations. We don’t know what happened before the video. We don’t know what the cop expected when they got there. We don’t know if the guy was carrying a gun or drugs. What do we know is this…It seems extremely easy to get shot by police in America…which is not right,” (Noah, September 22, 2016).

Conclusion

While conducting research on racial bias in media coverage, Lisa Wade questions where the cognitive bias lief that black people are dangerous comes from? “Partly, it comes from the media. A new study by Color of Change found that, while 51% of the people arrested for violent crime in New York City are black, 75% of the news reports about such arrests highlighted black alleged perpetrators,” says Wade. McLaughlin says because humans are visual creatures, “videos impact people more than mere words. Black men appear on TV as violent and many experts feel the images help drive coverage of the incidents,” says McLaughlin. In an article about whether America Is Deeply Divided Over How Media Covers Race and Police Misconduct, Ariel Edwards-Leyv, found, “overall, Americans are about equally as likely to say Gray’s case got too much attention as they are to say it was covered the right amount, with few saying the case attracted too little coverage. Most Republicans think his death received too much attention, while the majority of Democrats and black Americans think the coverage was fair,” says Edwards-Leyvy who added, “There’s a similar divide on the coverage given to more broad stories about police misconduct. Nearly half of black Americans say such stories aren’t given enough attention, while just 16 percent of whites agree,” (Edwards-Leyv, May 11).

All agree a strong police force, as everyone loved the police on September 12, 2011. There are some calls for more police training with subsequent requests for communities to engage in surveillance and crime prevention. For media coverage, new policies are needed regarding how to present and cover stories involving new video technology and consumer awareness of potential bias.

References


Indians, Pakistanis write postcards for peace

By Chintan Girish Modi

When I told my Pakistani friend Ziyad Faisal — the features editor of a newspaper called The Friday Times — that I was scheduled to visit Chandigarh and Ambala in northern India to conduct peace education workshops with high school students in both cities, he wrote a gorgeous letter addressed to all the students.

Thanks to Dikshant International School in Chandigarh and Mindtree School in Ambala, almost 60 students from grades 8 to 11 got to read it. Each one was invited to write a personal reply to Ziyad. They were most excited. One of them said, “Sir, please give us more time. I have never written to a Pakistani. I want to put my heart and soul into this.” In most Indian schools, it is not often that students get to work on writing assignments that are addressed to someone other than their teacher. Even if the classroom task is to write a letter to a municipal commissioner, an author, or another kind of celebrity, it is hardly ever sent to that person. Students usually know that they are writing to please the teacher. When they heard that their letters would actually reach Ziyad, they were absolutely thrilled.

Here is Ziyad’s letter:

Hi everyone!

Here is Ziyad’s letter:

Hi everyone!

When you go home today, please Google and read about the “Christmas Truce” from the First World War — when soldiers from both sides of a terrible war stopped fighting on Christmas day, 1914. They realized that on the other side, the “enemy” soldier is just a human like them, and sings Christmas carols like them, and likes chocolates, and has family like them! Generals and politicians on both sides of the war now had a problem — how to make them accept this? Well, I don’t think so, and Chintanbhai does not think so. We work together to try and spread the message that Indians and Pakistanis don’t have to fight.

On both sides of the border — in India and in Pakistan — there are people who believe that a different way is possible. In fact, we believe that the path of peace and friendship is the only way. Won’t you join us?

Well, I can tell you this: a lot of the fault lies with the governments cook for them. Make a list of all the reasons you were ever given to hate Pakistanis. Trust me, the Pakistani students of your age have been taught a similar list by politicians, religious leaders and TV channels waaylay log. And trust me, this stuff is not important. What’s really important are the things you and I have in common — the movies we watch, the songs we like, the fun stuff!

If anyone ever told you that Pakistanis are terrorists and are jealous of India, I can promise you one thing. In Pakistan, the same story is told, but in that story, Indians are the ones creating terrorism in Pakistan. But these stories are not our stories — they are not mine and not yours. They are the stories someone else gives us! We don’t have to accept this stuff.

If you want to know the truth, here it is: our biggest enemies are behind our backs — in our own countries, not across the border. Our biggest enemies are the people who teach us hatred.

The truth is that some powerful people on both sides don’t want peace. They will have to retire if there is peace and friendship between the two countries. So friends, let’s send these people away! Bohat lambi innings ho gai inki, ab bus!

The governments of both countries have done many things to harm each other’s country from 1947 until today. The only people paying the price for this are ordinary people like you and me. Do you think that we really have to go on accepting this? Well, I don’t think so, and Chintanbhai does not think so. We work together to try and spread the message that Indians and Pakistanis don’t have to fight.

High school students at Mind Tree School, Ambala, North India, participate in a peace education workshop aimed at transforming hostility towards Pakistan into friendship, hope, and reconciliation.

Continued on next page

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were young, and thus did not have any hatred. But I also knew the fact that as soon as they grow up, so much hate will be put in their minds by the media and the politicians, and this fact saddens me. Why can’t we love each other and be friends? Why?

Though all the students spoke of the need for cross-border friendships, some had specific political points to make. Want to hear the tough talk? Here you go. “Nawaz Sharif, the President of Pakistan, is not doing anything. Any decision made by him is not followed. I think he is a puppet of the terrorists,” wrote one of them. “If you guys want to fight, then don’t attack on our back. Come face to face and fight. If you will fight on our back while we are sleeping and stuff, it shows your cowardiness,” wrote another. This letter by a seventh grader was perhaps the most intense. It said, “India didn’t attack Pakistan even after the Mumbai attack and so many other disputes but now we bore enough. It is time for you Pakistanis to pay back for all the destruction you have caused. I cannot promise that I won’t fight against you but I will try my best to control my anger.”

The overall mood, however, was one of tremendous hope and goodwill — something that a lot of adults in both countries need to find amidst their overarching cynicism. One of the students wrote, “It is good to know that not all Pakistanis are vengeful and cruel. We have read in school that media can be influenced but it was shocking that all the stuff I have seen or read was a cooked up masalaed (spicy) story for the sake of profit. I can promise that I will never fight against any Pakistani because now that I know that both of us experience same casualties, it will not only be biased but also evil to support such a bloodshed. We have the same cultures, our history before division is the same. If we were one before, we can be one now as well. We can be two peaceful neighbours who grow and progress together, who share and live forever in everlasting harmony.”

This hope should not be mistaken for naivete. Hope is born of the courage to imagine and create a different world. Cynicism is often just laziness wearing a mask. One of the letters addressed Ziyad as “Ziyad bhai.” (“bhai” meaning “brother”) It went on to say, “The people who cook false stories about nationalism and India-Pakistan rivalry are the ones responsible for the mess in which we are today. I would love to visit Pakistan, and I wish that all the problems are solved without war because one act leads to another. Non-violence is a better way to ensure peace and true freedom. The day when this conflict and the virtual border between the mindsets of people ends, I will celebrate it as Independence from backward ideas.”

Another student wrote, “Even I think that all Pakistanis are not terrorists but many a times if I talk of this at home my mom says that I have gone mad. She believes that Pakistanis are not at all trustworthy. I think that such kind of a work shop should be there for adults like my mom even. I’ve tried my best and will keep trying. We all need to work as arbitrators and sit and resolve this matter. It is us, today’s generation, who can bring this change. Even the UN is doing nothing about it. Being frank, I would like to tell you something — I love Pakistanis. Their dressing sense and everything. Especially their language. I would surely like to visit Pakistan if it would have been safe. But as I told before, my mom would kill me if I would tell her about this dream of mine. I wish I could actually meet people like you who have the same opinions as me. The thing I could never speak up about — I have written all that here.”

I sincerely wish that every Indian and Pakistani, especially those who want war, would read the views of these young people who care about nurturing a future that transcends petty politics and old feuds. How can one gloss over the love and innocence contained in these lines? “I read your letter, and I think that we have similar views. The problem lies in the biased news that we, the younger generation, receive. Don’t you think we should do something about it? Because, if this continues, the young generation will learn to hate Pakistan too, and this war will never end. You are an editor, and you can do something. Maybe start up a newspaper in India that actually gives unbiased news on India-Pakistan controversies. Your views are great. You should certainly write such letters to all Indians and Pakistani kids. That will bring a change. I’ll do my part, telling my friends about this letter. I am little, and I can do little. But you can certainly do a lot. I’m glad journalists like you exist.”

This article first appeared on the Postcards for Peace blog, and has been reprinted with permission.
Kenya seminar draws regional, intl expertise

By Gloria Laker

Opening a two day regional peace journalism training workshop in Kisumu, Kenya March 16-17, Dr. Fredrick Ogenga, the founding director of Center for Media, Democracy, Peace, and Security (CMDPS) at Rongo University, asked journalists, “Do you want to make conflict worse or make it better?” This question sparked lengthy discussions by 15 journalists from five East African countries: Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Rwanda, and Tanzania.

The workshop began as Prof. Steven Youngblood, the director Center for Global Peace Journalism at Park University, discussed the basics of PJ and urged journalists to avoid inflammatory language in their reporting. Youngblood also encouraged journalists covering the August presidential election in Kenya to use a peace journalism-style approach to prevent media induced violence.

Participants embraced this message. “As Kenyan journalists, we shouldn’t wait for the general election in August. Instead, we must start conducting internal peace and electoral reporting trainings now to prepare reporters to cover the coming election peacefully,” said Silah Koskgi, a reporter with Standard Group in Kenya.

Later, I shared with journalists the role of peace journalism in ending the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) war (1988-2006) in Northern Uganda. The role of peace media as a tool in ending the LRA conflict began, ironically, with a military-founded radio called “Radio Freedom.” Eventually, Radio Freedom morphed into a much larger, and much stronger-signaled, station called Mega FM, which is widely credited with sowing the seeds of peace in Northern Uganda.

The fact that peace media sprung up alongside military operations against the LRA came as a surprise to attendees. Tyna Mecry, an Eldoret, Kenya based reporter, said, “I am impressed with the Ugandan army’s role in establishing the first ever peace radio in East Africa... I wish other African countries could borrow such rich experiences as a way of opening more room for dialogue during conflicts (so that) more lives can be saved.”

Dr. Duncan Omanga from Moi University in Kenya gave an excellent speech on day one about PJ and terrorism. He analyzed terrorists’ goals vis-à-vis the media, and in the process introduced the audience to the concept of “violence as a form of communication.”

In another session, Dr. Ogenga stressed the importance of promoting African approaches to peace journalism, a view which dominated the two day workshop in Kisumu. He said, “This African-centered approach is called hybrid peace journalism.”

According to Dr. Ogenga, this approach “takes elements of Western journalism and views them through an African lens.” His hybrid peace journalism approach features an emphasis on development journalism as well as offering counternarratives to traditional Western-style reporting which portrays Africa only in a negative light.

At Rongo University, hybrid peace journalism is being manifested through a master’s program in Media, Journalism and Development Journalism, and the Center for Global Peace Journalism club made up of peace journalism students. Also, plans are under way to launch a campus/community radio station at Rongo University dedicated to peacebuilding. “We’re giving students an opportunity to tell their own narratives,” Ogenga said.

Dr. Ogenga insists that peace journalism must be embraced for a better and more developed peaceful society.

Another speaker was Victor Bwire of the Media Council of Kenya. He said “In many cases, peace journalism practice is needed if Kenyan journalists are to rebuild trust with the public.”

Other presenters on day two included Dr. Jacinta Mwende of the University of Nairobi, who discussed media, human rights, and social justice. She articulated several suggestions for reporting human rights, including:

1. No ‘us vs. them’; 2. No worthy or unworthy victims; 3. Report humanity during conflicts; 4. Explore all sides.

At the end of the training, Prof. Youngblood recommended that the journalists unite and form a peace journalism press club in East Africa.

With the different views, one message each of the participants took with them is that peace journalism is good journalism, and can be adopted and used in reporting different themes like immigration, politics, and terrorism.

The two day training was sponsored by Rongo University’s Center for Media, Democracy, Peace, and Security; The Social Science Research Council; The African Peacebuilding Network; and the Center for Global Peace Journalism at Park University.

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Dr. Ogenga from Rongo University discussed hybrid peace journalism at a March conference in Kisumu, Kenya.

Dr. Duncan Omanga from Moi University in Kenya gave an excellent speech on day one about PJ and terrorism.

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Dr. Duncan Omanga discusses PJ and terrorism in Kisumu, Kenya.

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the PEACE JOURNALIST

April 2017

Nobel prize winners for peace, physics, chemistry, literature, medicine, and economics will be announced in October.