

Peace Journalism Principles and Practices

Responsibly Reporting Conflicts,
Reconciliation, and Solutions

Steven Youngblood



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Reconciliation, and Solutions

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Foreword by *Dr. Jake Lynch*, University of Sydney

First published 2017
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Youngblood, Steve.

Peace journalism principles and practices : responsibly reporting conflicts, reconciliation, and solutions / Steven Youngblood ; foreword by Dr. Jake Lynch, University of Sydney. Includes index.

War—Press coverage. | Social conflict—Press coverage. | Mass media and peace. | Journalism—Political aspects. | Journalism—Objectivity. | Journalistic ethics. PN4784.W37Y68 2016

070.4/333—dc232016011822

ISBN: 978-1-138-12467-7 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-138-12469-1 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-64801-9 (ebk)

Typeset in Bembo
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

PEACE JOURNALISM PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

Responsibly Reporting Conflicts,
Reconciliation, and Solutions

Long-time peace journalist Steven Youngblood presents the foundations of peace journalism in this exciting new textbook, offering readers the methods, approaches, and concepts required to use journalism as a tool for peace, reconciliation, and development. Guidance is offered on framing stories, ethical treatment of sensitive subjects, and avoiding polarizing stereotypes through a range of international examples and case studies spanning from the Iraq war to the recent unrest in Ferguson, Missouri. Youngblood teaches students to interrogate traditional media narratives about crime, race, politics, immigration, and civil unrest, and to illustrate where—and how—a peace journalism approach can lead to more responsible and constructive coverage, and even assist in the peace process itself.

Steven Youngblood (@PeaceJourn) is Director of the Center for Global Peace Journalism and a communication professor at Park University in Parkville, Missouri. He has organized and taught peace journalism seminars and workshops worldwide, including in the Republic of Georgia, Kuwait, Ireland, Cyprus, Turkey, Costa Rica, Lebanon, Indian-administered Kashmir, Azerbaijan, Jordan, Kenya, Japan, South Sudan, Austria, Germany, Kyrgyzstan, South Africa, and Uganda.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steven Youngblood (@PeaceJourn) is director of the Center for Global Peace Journalism and a communications professor at Park University in Parkville, Missouri USA. He has organized and taught peace journalism (PJ) seminars and workshops worldwide, including in the Republic of Georgia, Kuwait, Ireland, Cyprus, Turkey, Costa Rica, Lebanon, Indian-administered Kashmir, Azerbaijan, Jordan, Kenya, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, South Africa, and Uganda. His largest U.S. State Department-funded projects were “Peace and Electoral Journalism” (Uganda 2010–2011), “Peace Media and Counterterrorism” (Uganda 2011–2013), and “Reporting Syrian Refugees: Building Communities of Understanding” (Turkey 2015). In 2016, he planned to continue his work on reporting Syrian refugees with journalists and academics in Austria and Germany, and to present a series of reconciliation-themed PJ workshops in South Sudan.

Youngblood is editor of the semi-annual *Peace Journalist* magazine, the only such publication dedicated exclusively to PJ, and author of *Professor Komagum: Teaching Peace Journalism and Battling Insanity in Uganda* (2012). He also publishes the blog *Peace Journalism Insights*.

A two-time J. William Fulbright Scholar (Moldova 2001, Azerbaijan 2007), Youngblood has been recognized for his contributions to world peace by the U.S. State Department, Rotary International, and the United Nations Association (Kansas City World Citizen of the Year, 2012).

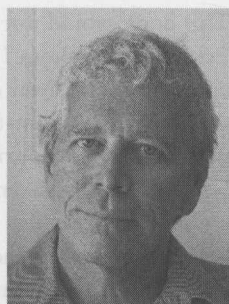


FIGURE A.1

Credit line: John Lofflin

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book would not exist were it not for the vision of Routledge Senior Editor Erica Wetter, whom I “met” online via an email to me in February 2015. In this email, which arrived out of the blue, Erica asked if I would have any interest in authoring a “student-friendly” peace journalism textbook. I quickly (and perhaps naively) said yes. During the entire process, Erica has been outstanding in every way, offering both encouragement and sound guidance. Erica even cheerfully endured my ceaseless heckling about baseball (my team, the Kansas City Royals, defeated her team, the New York Mets, for the 2015 world championship) and about her alleged Trump-esque lifestyle as a New York City book editor (limos, suites at the Waldorf, etc.).

This book would still have been possible without guidance and input from Dr. Jake Lynch from the University of Sydney, but it wouldn’t have been half as good. Dr. Lynch was one of the initial reviewers of the text, and he and I exchanged numerous emails about items in the book. His advice was invaluable. Dr. Lynch’s foreword exceeded even my lofty expectations, and his contributions to the last chapter were extremely helpful in helping me frame and organize my thoughts. When (if?) I grow up, I want to be like Dr. Jake Lynch.

Thanks also to Dr. Johan Galtung, the father of peace journalism and peace studies. I interviewed Dr. Galtung in Virginia in November 2015, and I was bowled over by his intellect. Several times during our discussion, I could tell that Dr. Galtung was dumbing-down what he was saying to help me understand—something that doesn’t happen to me too often. Far from condescension, this was kindness—an empathy that radiated from the man. When (if?) I become an octogenarian, I want to be like Dr. Johan Galtung.

Several friends and colleagues stepped up to read chapters, a selfless service that was on par with helping someone move. Thank you John Lofflin and Chip

Hauss for your assistance and excellent advice. As always, Lofflin, my mentor, was there to answer sticky questions (especially about the politics chapter) and provide moral support. Thanks also to Frank Hamilton and Lora Cohn, who were valuable sounding boards, and to my invaluable reference librarian colleagues Katelyn Handler and Ann Schultis.

At home, I'm grateful as always for my wife Barbara and son Alex. I'm thankful for their support and their willingness to not interrupt me while I'm writing "unless the house is on fire and you're looking for a fire extinguisher" (my exact phrase). My life would not be complete without them or the rest of my family, including my dad Larry and my mom Jeanne, who instilled in me at an early age a love of reading and writing.

Finally, I am grateful to have the support of hundreds of journalists, academics, and students around the world who have been bitten by the peace journalism bug. Their willingness to experiment with this seemingly radical notion, often under difficult circumstances, inspires me every day.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Of the 3,856 challenges in producing this text, none was as difficult as deciding what to leave out. Had I put in everything I wanted to include, this book could have been thousands of pages long and weighed roughly the same as a small car.

Fortunately, there is an alternative to the 3,000-pound text. That alternative, which I recommend, is for students and teachers to think of *Peace Journalism Principles and Practices* as a starting point on a longer, interdisciplinary journey of discovery.

For example, when you're reading the chapter on media and racial narratives, I hope you will explore issues of race on your own by reading more about Ferguson and Baltimore, or by taking a sociology or psychology course that can provide an academic framework for the study of racism. I hope that the chapter on media and elections nudges you into enrolling in some political science courses, or that the chapter on media and crime spurs you to read more about the subject and even sit in on a trial. Discover interdisciplinary courses and readings about media and international relations and media and peace. By all means, seek out peace studies literature and courses, and connect with peacebuilding organizations in your community and internationally. I recommend People to People International (ptpi.org).

Students, here's another radical idea: read. Start by reading Theodore White's *The Making of the President 1960*. Read Barry Glassner's *The Culture of Fear*. Read Ta-Nehisi Coate's "The Case for Reparations" (published in *The Atlantic*). Read Dr. Johan Galtung's blogs posted on Transcend Media Services. Read anything by David McCullough and Nicolas Kristof. And for heaven's sake, read the news, critically, every day.

Your journey of discovery begins in these pages. Bon voyage.

FOREWORD

*Peace Journalism began
In nineteen sixty-five
After the Birmingham protests ban
When King was still alive*

This parody of Philip Larkin's famous poem¹ about the cultural origins of "sexual intercourse" is not as fanciful an introduction to the present subject as it may at first seem.

From a jail cell in Birmingham, Alabama, where he was sent after his arrest on a civil rights demonstration, Martin Luther King penned a famous defense of nonviolent direct action to oppose racism. Peace is not the absence of war, he declared, but the presence of justice: an insight that provides a crucial conceptual underpinning in the field of Peace Journalism.

The latter has often seemed, to journalists and others, a contradiction in terms: how can journalism be *for* something when it is supposed to be objective? To report, and to edit, is to choose, however. The world around us cannot be reproduced in full, even given the 24-hour television news, and practically infinite digital space, into which journalism has expanded. It can only be represented, and representations are inescapably partial—in both senses of that word.

Peace Journalism asks journalists to think more carefully about the choices they make—or which are already made for them by the time they embark on any given story—and the terms on which they are representing issues of conflict, peace, and justice. All reporters should report the facts they meet, honestly as they see them. Only ask, how did I come to meet these particular facts, and they to meet me? Am I always meeting the same kinds of facts? What goes missing, as a result? If patterns of omission develop, what are their effects, on public opinion,

source behavior, political process, and the like? Am I happy to be responsible for such effects? If not, what can I change, and how?

Moreover, as Steven Maras has reminded us, the objectivity that supposedly imbues mainstream journalism in the United States, in particular, with its vocation of social responsibility, was already being questioned in its 1960s heyday. Social and political struggles over civil rights, and the war in Vietnam, raised issues of representation that “cast a cloud over the ideal of objectivity and its relevance as a norm.”² It had already lost its virginity, as it were, by the time the Beatles released their first LP.

So, what happened in 1965, to make it the *annus mirabilis* of Peace Journalism? I claim a personal connection to that year as the one during which I first drew breath in the world, but surprisingly that was not it! The connection with Peace Journalism arises from the publication of a highly influential research essay,³ “The Structure of Foreign News,” by Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge, in the *Journal of Peace Research*.

Galtung is the chief ideas-giver in the field of Peace Research (and an early test-bed of those ideas was the civil rights struggle in the state of Virginia). In the essay, he and Ruge emphasize the influence on news content of certain conventions, or news values, which arise not from the intrinsic merit of the stories but from the organization of the news industry. To take one example: “frequency” refers to the interval between editions, or deadlines. So, a daily newspaper (the dominant medium of the time, and the source of data for the essay) will favor events with a clearly delineated beginning, middle, and end that all take place in a span of 24 hours. This predicates the coverage of conflict toward a narrative of big bangs: battles, bullets, and bombs. But it risks obscuring the processes that led up to them. How did the conflict lead to violence? Who favored such a response, and why? What alternatives exist(ed)?

The prevalence of the Galtung-Ruge news values leads to a dominant form of news that Galtung later called “war journalism.” This has a special meaning and is to be distinguished from the practice of war reporting, which may simply refer to journalism about wars. War Journalism, in Galtung’s terms, helps to make war more likely, unwittingly legitimating and naturalizing violence, or inuring us to ongoing injustice such as that endured, until the 1960s, by African Americans. The Galtung-Ruge essay became an influential text in critical scholarship. Peace Journalism took it a step further, by proposing a reform agenda to compensate for the effects of the conventions on representations of conflict.

At a residential Summer School in 1997, held in the agreeable surroundings of Taplow Court, a stately home in the south of England that was, by then, the UK headquarters of a Buddhist group, the Soka Gakkai International, Peace Journalism was introduced to a group of journalists. My partner and colleague, Annabel McGoldrick, who was coordinating the event, wrote out a proposal on a single side of paper for distribution to participants. And so, Peace Journalism began to circulate. Since then, it has become established as a field of scholarly research in

its own right, as well as continuing to imbue editors and reporters with hope and an impetus for change through such activities as journalist training, which is the chief inspiration for the present volume.

Peace Journalism contains a paradox. “The Structure of Foreign News” contributed to a move away from attribution of influence over news content to the preferences and prejudices of individual journalists. But the chief modes of dissemination for Peace Journalism, as “the policy implications of the study,”⁴ rely on exhorting and empowering individual journalists to change their practices of reporting. To square that circle requires extensive dialogues among media owners, readers, and audiences, as well as journalists themselves. Peace Journalism needs articulate exponents, capable of projecting a reasoned case for change by drawing on current positive examples—success stories as well as honest analysis of problems and failings.

The ideas could, in all of these respects, have no finer advocate than Steven Youngblood. Steven is a rare example of someone who has put in what Australians call the “hard yards”—with tough field assignments training journalists in conflict-affected countries—as well as raising the arguments in his own milieu in U.S. journalism, and who also applies an unflinching analytical gaze. This book is his crowning achievement to date.

Dr. Jake Lynch

Director, Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies,
University of Sydney, Australia

Notes

- 1 Phillip Larkin, “Annus Mirabilis,” 1967, accessed January 15, 2016, <http://www.wussu.com/poems/plam.htm>. The first stanza of the original poem read:

*Sexual intercourse began
In nineteen sixty-three
(which was rather late for me)—
Between the end of the Chatterley ban
And the Beatles' first LP.*

- 2 Steven Maras, *Objectivity in Journalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 4.
- 3 Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge, “The Structure of Foreign News: The Pre-Sensation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus Crises in Four Norwegian Newspapers,” *Journal of Peace Research* 2, 1 (1965): 64–91.
- 4 Galtung and Ruge, “The Structure of Foreign News.”

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