

PREFACE

Journalism has long served as a catalyst to inspire change. Political change, economic change, legislative change and social change have all been sparked because of solid journalism. Yet, despite this pivotal role journalism plays in society, very little has been written explicitly about journalism for social change. This is surprising, given that when journalists are asked what prompts them to carry out their duty as journalists, they often reply, ‘to create change’, ‘to make a difference’, ‘to expose injustice’ or ‘to reveal truth’. However, this altruism associated with journalism has often produced romanticised notions of what the journalist’s profession is like. The reality is that the journalist’s life is anything but romantic. The challenges facing journalists are varied and complex. Journalists work in an environment of competing pressures. Pressures to tell the truth, to report accurately and fairly, to build trust, to respect sources, to be independent and to negotiate with people who are often trying to hide the truth. There are also pressures within the media industry, with media organisations often using subtle, and not-so-subtle, methods to ensure stories align with a prescribed news agenda. Effective journalism for social change is not easy and requires careful reflection on how news is collected, analysed, interpreted, defined and reported. Some of the challenges of producing journalism for social change are summarised by acclaimed photojournalist and war photographer James Nachtwey (2007):

Society's problems can't be solved until they're identified. On a higher plane, the press is a service industry, and the service it provides is awareness. Every story does not have to sell something. There's also a time to give. That was the tradition I wanted to follow. Seeing the [Vietnam] war created such incredibly high stakes for everyone involved and that visual journalism could actually become a factor in conflict resolution – I wanted to be a photographer in order to be a war photographer.

Nachtwey's testimony reveals many relevant points that need to be considered if journalism is to be viewed as an instigator of social change. Firstly, change cannot be enacted unless problems or issues are identified. An important aspect of journalism for social change is that it must identify something that needs to be changed. Whether that is an issue, a problem, an injustice or an abuse, there is a clear need to shine a light on something hidden or not clearly understood. Secondly, journalism for social change is a service designed to alert, inform and educate society. This idea of journalism as a service, rather than just viewing it as a profession or career, gives journalism a clear sense of purpose. Journalism for social change does not just view journalism as reporting but a process through which the presentation of varied viewpoints, ideas and opinions gives society the capacity to make informed decisions about the future. Thirdly, rather than falling into the trap of advertising, journalism for social change does not sell something, it gives society something. This distinction is important, because rather than serving as a platform for entertainment, journalism for social change is often invested in giving society the information tools and mechanisms necessary for making change. Lastly, journalism for social change is about either finding, or at least proposing solutions. For Nachtwey, there is a clear sense that his career as a war photojournalist is not about voyeurism or intrusion into the lives of people at their most vulnerable, but his vocation is part of a complex professional relationship between himself and his subjects, as well as between him and the publishers of his compelling work. This book examines that responsibility by looking at the way human rights abuses such as human trafficking and people smuggling are represented in the media and reported in South and Southeast Asia.

REIMAGINING JOURNALISM WITH A SOCIAL CONSCIENCE

Since the start of the twenty-first century, journalism has faced one of the most profound and complex upheavals in its history. This upheaval, referred to by many as the digital disruption, has forced editors, media bosses and journalism academics to explain, review and predict the future of journalism at a time when traditional publications and business models are collapsing, platforms are rapidly changing because of social media, and new technology is emerging that is changing the way journalists report news, as well as influencing the way audiences consume it. It is a period of immense excitement. It is also a period of immense concern. It is for this reason that journalism needs to be reimagined. Zelizer says:

When a phenomenon is as widespread and as well-known as journalism tends to be, it can seem counterintuitive to look for new ways of thinking about it. And yet finding new ways of thinking about journalism is point-center to ensuring journalism's future. (2007, p. 111)

Zelizer is right. This book seeks to reimagine journalism by positioning it as a crucial source of social change. Placing journalism in this context is important. Since the 1950s, the idea of communication for social change or communication for development has emerged as an important strategy in combatting poverty, injustice, inequality and indifference in a modernising and globalising world. However, in the research that ensued in this area, only fleeting references have been made to the role of journalism in this process. But, as Zelizer points out:

Journalism means too much because it has become a stand-in term for thinking about various modes of mediated communication in the public sphere, regardless of how much they have to do with journalism per se... Journalism means too little because it has never generated the kind of academic interest that attends to all that it is, and, more importantly, all that it could be. (2007, p. 111)

This book seeks to reimagine journalism at a time when global journalism is in a state of turmoil. It will argue that by rethinking how journalism is done, using human rights and social change as a platform, the

practice and purpose of journalism can be reclaimed in a period where its Fourth Estate role as a watchdog and vestige of civic accountability, is constantly under threat. Journalism matters.

BOOK OVERVIEW

This book explores the role and purpose of journalism by reviewing the elements that define newsworthiness. This will be done using human rights as a basis for discussing journalism for social change. Chapter 1 introduces the notion of journalism for social change by looking at journalism as a calling. This notion is explored through the testimony of some of the world's great human rights journalists. It introduces the notion of pragmatic objectivity as a theoretical framework for the practice of journalism in a contemporary context. It also looks at other models of journalism including precision journalism, advocacy journalism and peace journalism. Chapter 2 proposes a reimagining of traditional journalistic news values that are used to define and shape newsworthiness, by suggesting the inclusion of human rights as a news value. This inclusion of human rights as a news value is part of complete review of news values that also proposes a new taxonomy of six human-focussed news values. Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive analysis of the communication for social change paradigm by examining a variety of different 'journalisms', including alternative journalism. The chapter explores some specific examples of emerging mainstream models of human rights reporting such as *The Guardian's* open journalism initiative. It also explores Friere's idea of *conscientização* and how this has influenced alternative forms of media, that are relevant to journalism for social change. Chapter 4 applies these theoretical frameworks in the context of reporting human trafficking and people smuggling. The chapter defines key terms and seeks to propose best practice models of reporting these kinds of human rights abuses. It also looks at the complexity involved in the way the media interprets these accepted definitions and the challenges of reporting human rights. Chapter 5 provides a case study of people smuggling by investigating the migration of ethnic Rohingya from Myanmar, as part of ethnic and religious conflict. The chapter examines how the Rohingya have been framed in the media and looks at the challenge of reporting people smuggling and human trafficking, particularly given the fact the Rohingya have been subjected to both types of abuses. Chapter 6 investigates coverage of armed conflict, human rights violations and claims for

refuge, by highlighting examples from Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. It will look at issues such as persecution and racial discrimination in post-conflict contexts. Chapter 7 provides a human trafficking reporting case study by exploring the way human trafficking has been reported in Southeast Asia. It will look at examples from both mainstream and proxy media organisations and align reports against industry-accepted reporting guidelines. Chapter 8 examines this further, by reviewing the impact public relations campaigns have on the way human trafficking is reported. The chapter explores the complex relationship between non-governmental organisations (NGOs), established to combat human trafficking, and journalists. The chapter argues that often misreporting by journalists is a direct consequence of misinformation from the public relations professionals working for these organisations. Chapter 9 highlights the emergence of human trafficking as a major mainstream reporting issue. It will look at the background to human trafficking coverage and how it has escalated since the beginning of the twenty-first century. It examines the role corporate social responsibility has played in media organisations and their coverage of human trafficking. The conclusion will restate the case for human rights to be considered a news value, based on the evidence presented in the book on reporting people smuggling and human trafficking.

Journalism for social change matters.

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