OPC Welcomes Newly Elected Governors During the Annual Meeting

BY CHAD BOUCHARD

The OPC announced results of this year’s election for the Board of Governors at the club’s Annual Meeting on Sept. 3. The slate this year included 10 newly elected or reelected Active board members and two Associate board members, each elected for two-year terms.

OPC President Pancho Bernasconi, who is serving the second year of his term, welcomed new governors and thanked OPC leaders for their contributions. He lauded the efforts of Executive Director Patricia Kranz and the success of Awards Dinner Committee chair Sarah Lubman in getting dinner tables filled and boosting donations despite what he called the “increasingly difficult environment journalism organizations find themselves in.”

He also gave a hat tip to Bill Collins, head of the Press Freedom Committee and newly elected Associate board member. “Bill and the work that he’s doing have made a difference and is engaging in the arena of social media to make sure that our voices are heard.”

Bernasconi closed his remarks with a quote from Marty Baron’s keynote speech in April, “I want to make a point about the work we honor here tonight, while this is journalism we admire, even more important it is work we need. Americans need to know about the wider world they live in, and because of you they can know, and they do.”

Kranz welcomed the OPC’s new office manager, Emily Brown, who started working part time over the summer. She formerly worked as weekend editor at the news aggregator Digg, has a degree in religious studies from Bard College, and wants to pursue journalism. Her first bylines for the OPC appear in this issue of the Bulletin.

The OPC Foundation’s executive director, Jane Reilly, introduced her new associate, Katri Reilly, who is helping out with the organization’s daily operations. She mentioned this year’s 16 scholarship award

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Journalists Share Stories About US-Bound Migrant Caravans

EVENT RECAP

BY CHAD BOUCHARD

In late 2018, a caravan of migrants embarked on a journey that would span more than 2,500 miles from Central America to the U.S.-Mexico border. It was far from the first such caravan, but this one gathered particular attention as its progress straddled U.S. midterm elections. President Trump used it in campaign rallies to fan supporters’ worries about immigration, ordered troops deployed to the border, and claimed without evidence that MS-13 gang members and “unknown Middle Easterners” were travelling with the group.

In such a highly charged political environment, journalists covering the caravan faced extra challenges in putting the story in context, avoiding ethical pitfalls, and revealing the underlying humanity of those involved.

On Sept. 16, the OPC and Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism co-sponsored a program with two journalists who were in the ground and followed the story closely.

Carolyn Van Houten, a staff photojournalist at The Washington Post, spent most of the last year covering issues surrounding immigration and asylum in Central America. She presented a slide

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Panelists Call for Change as Hong Kong Protests Intensify

EVENT RECAP

BY EMMY BROWN

SINCE the passage of Hong Kong’s controversial extradition bill in June, the country has seen massive protests against the government. The bill was withdrawn, but demonstrations aren’t stopping anytime soon, and their methods are only growing more sophisticated. On Sept. 19, author and journalist Philip Bowring joined New York-based activist Anna Yeung-Chung to discuss the future of Hong Kong in a panel moderated by OPC governor Pete Engardio, called “Can Hong Kong Survive?”

Bowring, a British journalist based in Hong Kong since 1973, is a two-time president of the Hong Kong Foreign Correspondents Club and a former editor of the Far Eastern Economic Review. He has been a correspondent for the Financial Times and Asian Wall Street Journal and columnist for the International Herald Tribune. Yeung-Chung, a Manhattanville College professor and Hong Kong native, is a member of Global Solidarity, a group that helps activists organize rallies, chat groups, and other events in dozens of cities in more than 10 countries in support of the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement. She is the founder of NY4HK (New Yorkers for Hong Kong).

To start off, Engardio asked how much support the “pro-independence agenda” has in Hong Kong, which led to a discussion about the goals of the protests. “What we’re really talking about is just reform of the system of Hong Kong,” said Bowring. The hope is that Hong Kong “is not underminded by the one-country emphasis that has been pushed by the Carrie Lam government.” Yeung-Chung had a similar view. “There are the things that we promised a long time ago,” she said.

The world is moving in a slightly new direction than what we have been accustomed to,” said Bowring. He briefly outlined the events leading up to the current protests, starting with the desire for increased Hong Kong autonomy by locals in the 2016 Legislative Council elections. Some young people were elected to office, but they were removed by government officials for reasons like “not taking oaths properly, making them not allowed to run for office at all. “Later on, they just say no, you don’t obey the Basic Law,” said Yeung-Chung.

Engardio asked, in light of escalating violence from some protestors such as use of Molotov cocktails and occupation of an airport, if police violence is in any way justified or unprompted. “To the best of my knowledge,” said Bowring, “not a single policeman has suffered any severe injury at all, but many protestors have been beaten or hospitalized as a result of rubber bullets and tear gas canisters.” He added that Molotov cocktails burn spectacularly but have not caused much damage. And there is no evidence they have injured police.

Yeung-Chung also stressed that most of the violence is not being carried out by protestors, but by police. “People see a lot of violent things that look really scary,” she said, “but in reality, it’s police brutality.” She talked about the young people coordinating today’s protests, and the ways they organize on messaging apps like Telegram.

She said protestors also use a Hong Kong-based social media platform, LIHRG, to launch spontaneous protests or meetings. Like Reddit, the platform allows “subverters” and “downvoters” for people to quickly weigh in on proposals anonymously and democratically. “This mobilization is a key point of this movement, which no one is the head of, and it is amazing.”

“How can you see a way out of the situation?” Engardio asked. Yeung-Chung and Bowring both agreed that Carrie Lam, the chief executive of Hong Kong, has to go. “There is no leadership, there is no prospect while she is there, because she has no clue,” said Bowring. Lam resigning would force Beijing to search for other people, he explained, and make people realize that things actually can change in Hong Kong. “Carrie Lam was very arrogant in the beginning,” said Yeung-Chung.

Ultimately, Bowring and Yeung-Chung said they believe that the extradition bill opened a floodgate that can’t be easily stopped. “Although she said ‘let’s withdraw the bill now,’” Yeung-Chung said, “the public is saying it’s a little too late, I want the other four demands.” Aside from withdrawing the bill, protestors are calling for Carrie Lam to step down, an airport, if police violence is in any way justified or unprompted. “To the best of my knowledge,” said Bowring, “not a single policeman has suffered any severe injury at all, but many protestors have been beaten or hospitalized as a result of rubber bullets and tear gas canisters.” He added that Molotov cocktails burn spectacularly but have not caused much damage. And there is no evidence they have injured police.

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By Danielle Keeton-Olsen

The mastheads of Cambodia’s two storied English news outlets look the same as they did when I arrived in the country, but for those of us working covering the swiftly developing Southeast Asian country, the last two years have been a sea change.

I came to Cambodia at the start of 2017 to learn from a Phnom Penh news outlet that weathered constant batters from political and business interests yet still maintained its forceful attitude. When my internship at the Cambodia Daily ended, I enthusiastically accepted a job, thrilled to learn about the country I had come to love from veteran local and foreign journalists. By September, the government had taxed the Daily to its death, as well as a slew of independent radio shows that broadcast to rural provinces. Eight hours before we were supposed to show up for our final day in the newsroom, the government arrested the leader of the primary opposition party, and we all reported as if we would have jobs the next day.

Our front page was meant to carry a tribute to the newspaper’s 24-year life, but instead bore the dramatic headline, “Descent into Oligarch Dictatorship.”

From there, attacks on media have become more slippery. The last remaining independent newspaper and friendly rival, the Phnom Penh Post, was sold to a Malaysian investor behind a PR company that has been hired to serve the unchallenged ruling party. Another English newspaper, the Khmer Times, is deeply connected to the prime minister’s family and the capital’s largest casino. The newspapers have lost a huge degree of independence, and it’s particularly grim for Cambodian reporters, whether they write in English or Khmer, who reach term limits can run in a future election again after a year hiatus if they choose.

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Journalist Tells a Tale of Two Mastheads in Cambodia

BY DANIELLE KEETON-OLSEN

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Winners, including the launch of the first Richard Pyle Scholarship, which went to A.J. Nadaf, a student at Davidson College with reporting experience in the Middle East, North Africa and Kosovo. Twelve of the winners won fellowships that sent them to news bureaus around the world.

The foundation is working on a new scholarship for 2020 in the name of Deborah Amos of NPR, who currently serves as the OPC’s First Vice President, and her husband Rick Davis, a former Middle East correspondent for NBC who died in January this year.

Foundation President William J. Holstein chimed in to share some news about the ACOS (A Culture of Safety) Alliance, which is finalizing details of a short-term insurance system for freelance journalists working abroad. Holstein said he expects the program to roll out over the coming months. The OPC Foundation serves as fiscal sponsor for the ACOS Alliance.

Newly elected Active members for the OPC board are J. David Ake of The Associated Press, Farnaz Fassihi, a freelancing and contributor to The New York Times, Hendrik Hinzel of VICE News, Derek Kravitz of ProPublica, and Ishan Thorar of The Washington Post. Those who were reelected are Linda Fausto, an independent reporter for NPR, Josh Fins of HBO’s Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel, Charles Graeber, freelance longform feature writer, Azmat Khan of The New York Times, and Rod Nordland, alumnus of the Times. The club also elected or reelected Associate members Brian Byrd of the NYS Health Foundation and Bill Collins, a communications consultant. Board members still serving out their terms are listed in the masthead on the back page of the Bulletin.

Bernacoci thanked outgoing governors who are leaving due to term limits: David Ariosto of GZERO Media, Molly Birgham of OrblMedia, David Fasulo, an independent reporter for NPR, Josh Fine of HBO’s Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel, Charles Graeber, freelance longform feature writer, Azmat Khan of The New York Times, and Rod Nordland, alumnus of the Times. The club also elected or reelected Associate members Brian Byrd of the NYS Health Foundation and Bill Collins, a communications consultant. Board members still serving out their terms are listed in the masthead on the back page of the Bulletin.

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Kabir Reilly, left, and Jane Reilly

OPC Governors Alix Freedman, left, and Kem Knapp Sawyer.
Carolyn Van Houten stands next to a display of her work at Columbia University. Her photographs covering the migrant crisis won this award.

For me it was important to hear just one voice of one of these people she’s covering, “and nothing that we experience covers the migrants faced. “I come from a place of privilege and comfort,” she said. “It’s no comparison. Because we get to go home.”

The moderator, Nina Berman, who is director of the photography program at Columbia, asked the panelists to talk about conditions that prompt migrants to leave their homes and join a caravan.

Van Houten had traveled in Central America with U.S. Department of Homeland Security officials as they sought answers to that question. “And I think we came away from that with no answers,” she said. She heard stories ranging from extortion, gang violence, and poverty to food insecurity and severe drought in rural areas of Guatemala.

Both journalists said that they struggled to find a balance in their reporting. The Supreme Court on Sept. 11 allowed the Trump administration to continue blocking asylum seekers from entering the United States while a legal battle about a new rule is still underway. The rule bars asylum applications from migrants who traveled through another country on their way to the United States without first applying and being denied asylum in those countries. The American Civil Liberties Union has challenged the rule, and the case will likely find its way back to the Supreme Court in the coming months.

“The essential Mexico is now acting as an extension of the U.S.-Mexico border,” Gonzalez said, adding that Mexico agreed to become a buffer border after caving to Trump’s threat of tariffs. She said she saw thousands of migrants and asylum seekers stuck in Guatemala a month ago from countries like Cameroon, Uganda, Central African Republic and Bangladesh, as well as Central America.

OPC SCHOLARS

Eli Binder, the 2019 winner of the Fritz Beebe Fellowship, has been covering Hong Kong’s political protests with The Wall Street Journal. Binder, a recent graduate of the University of Chicago, has also written about international politics for the Brown Daily Herald. Binder’s fellowship took him to Hong Kong with the Journal. He submitted work about Chinese entrepreneurs working in Sri Lanka for his OPC Foundation application.

Rebecca Reddelmeier, 2019 David B. Schwebel Memorial Scholar- ship winner, was named a digital engagement associate for the Committee to Protect Journalists. She will work as part of the CPJ digital team that promotes press freedom through its digital channels – its social platforms and email newsletters.

Leticia Duarte, the winner of the 2019 Harper’s Magazine Scholarship in memory of J.F. Stone, was named among the Columbia Journalism School Postgraduate Reporting Fellow- lows this academic year. She is one of three women on a Global Migrat- ion Project team that will spend six months investigating stories at the intersec- tions of gender and issues surrounding forced migration. They will work as a team on data projects and multimedia work, as well as individual long-form stories. Her team mates are Cristina Baussan and Ottavia Spigojari.

Micah Danney, the 2018 Theo Wilson Scholarship winner, is now a regular contributor for Arizona’s John Peter Zenger Journalism Foundation. He submitted work about the death of a nongovernmental organization worker in South Sudan, a cover story for Harper’s Magazine, and a piece on the New York Police Department’s surveillance tactics.

Sarah Daddoch, 2017 winner of the Emanuel R. Freedman Scholarship, has been named Beirut cor- respondent for The Washington Post. She joined the Post from the Reuters bureau in Istanbul, where she has worked since her OPC Foundation fellowship year in 2017. During her award-winning two years at Reuters, she also reported from Beirut and Iraq.

Patricia Roy Mallén, the winner of the 2019 Theo Wilson Scholarship, is working as a producer at Al Jazeera in Doha, Qatar. She previously worked as a freelance journalist in Mexico City and bylines in Quartz, RWORDS and Immigration, and Univision, among others. She also worked for Interna- tional Business Times.

Nizar Manek, winner of the 2012 Harper’s Magazine Scholarship in memory of J.F. Stone, was named among the Columbia Journal- ism School Postgraduate Reporting Fellows this academic year. He is one of three women on a Global Migration Project team that will spend six months investigating stories at the intersec- tions of gender and issues surrounding forced migration. They will work as a team on data projects and multimedia work, as well as individual long-form stories. Her team mates are Cristina Baussan and Ottavia Spigojari.

Longtime OPC winner Christiane Amanpour accepted the University of Arizona’s John Peter Zenger Journalism Award in Tucson on Sept. 20, catch- ing a dawn flight from New York and then blasting back on a redeye for the U.N. General Assembly opening. Her red carpet is emblazoned with her new watchwords: “The truth be- low the surface.”

Mort Rosenblum, also a long-time OPC winner who periodically covers re- porting on migration, has been a recent OPC winner.

People

OPC SCHOLARS

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in Rain,” El-Mofty won this year’s Olliver Rebbet Award for his photos of conflict in Yemen, and was part of an AP team that won Citations for Excellence in both the Hal Boyle and Roy Rowan Awards.

Wa Lone, Kyaw Soe Oo and Reuter’s colleagues won first place in the “online investigative reporting” category for the National Headline Awards. That team also won this year’s Bob Comline Award for reporting on abuses against Rohingya in Myanmar, for reporting which the two were jailed. Ed Ou, another winner of the 2017 David A. Andelman and Pamela Trife Award along with Aurora Almenral of NBC, won first place with Da vid Scott Holloway for an NBC News video exploring white nationalist extremism and radicalization in the U.S. The National Headliner Awards were founded in 1934 by the Press Club of Atlantic City.

UPDATES

Rod Nordland, OPC Governor and international correspondent—large for The New York Times, wrote about his diagnosis with a brain tumor while covering monsoons in India. In July, just as a monsoon began to hit, a stranger found Nordland on the ground in the midst of a seizure. Then on Sept. 26,Mur ray participated in a debate on the side lines of the General Assembly in New York to discuss issues surrounding the war. Other participants included Abdullah Rahman Alageli of Chatham House and Jalil Harchaoui of the Clinton Global Institute. The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime sponsored the discussion.

OPC member and outgoing board member Vivienne Walt scored another cover story for TIME magazine’s Europe edition in late September with a story about French President Emmanuel Macron. She chronicles the former Economy Minister’s grassroots uprising and path to presidency, which started in May 2017. Walt spoke to Macron for the story and followed up on reporting from two years ago, re marking that he seemed relaxed and informal “in his shurtles, he leaned back and reflected at length on his tumultuous time in office and what might lie ahead.”

OPC Governor Miriam Eldor has returned to reporting after a stint as world editor for BuzzFeed News. Now based in New York, she formerly served as The Guardian’s Moscow-based correspondent. She has been with Buzzfeed since 2013.

OPC member Ilana Ozermy is now the Global Head of Communications at Bloomberg Media. She had previously worked at News Corp, where she was the Vice President and Deputy Head of Communications.

Abraham Lustgarten, winner of this year’s Whitman Bassow Award, filed a story in July for ProPublica about US munitions burning site that has garnered some attention. In it, Lustgarten investigated the town of Colfax, Indi ana, whose residents have to deal with the effects of the U.S. military burning thousands of pounds of explosives just miles away from their homes. Lustgarten won the Bassow Award for a report linking U.S. biofuel policy and corruption in Indonesia.

Maggie Steber, recipient of the OPC President’s Award in April this year, served as judge for the inaugural Leica Women Foto Project Award. The award, which will be awarded to three young female photographers, comes with $10,000, a one-year loan of a Leica Q2 camera, and a free replacement camera at the end of the loan period. Reuters announced on Aug. 9 that Par Hesh Banskul, Reuters journalist who was part of a team that won the 2017 ‘Cambodia’ Continued From Page 2

So I’ve taken the plunge and become a freelance journalist, and two years later I’m still floating. I was uncomfortable with the idea of becoming a freelance journalist so early in my career, but I was not ready to abandon all that I had learned of Cambodia to start. I frantically took any writing job I could find in the beginning, but I’ve started to understand pitching and I am now focusing on the subjects – environment, business and human rights – that I intended to cover when I first accepted a job here.

America may have always had an internal gate, but I understand how challenging it is to reach this audience. That frustration has morphed into a conviction: as important as I believe it is to support journalism at home, America must maintain its interest in the rest of the world, because our country has – both willingly and unwittingly – tied itself too deep into global affairs. I decided to stay because I’ve heard so many important stories that should reach out beyond Cambodia, and I’m slowly figuring out how to bridge between Cambodia and the countries that are tied to it.

Unfortunately, I’m one of the few foreign reporters still in Cambodia. And if I’m being honest, I’m probably not qualified or prepared to tell Cambodia’s stories, at least not alone. But I never thought I’d be still here, and I hope with given time and energy, more stubborn reporters emerge to reestablish a new scene of media work where the Post and Daily once stood.

Danielle Keeton-Olsen is a freelance re porter based in Phnom Penh who covers economics, society and environmental issues. She interned and worked for the Cambodia Daily for just nine months before it was closed and stubbornly stuck it out in the country’s capital. She is also an engagement editor for the investigative news startup Tarbell.
PRESS FREEDOM UPDATE

by Emily Brown and Chad Bouchard

New York Times publisher A.G. Sulzberger wrote in an op-ed on Sep. 23 that blocking a reputable news agency from covering the case about a reporter based in Egypt named Declan Walsh. A US government official informed him that he was in danger of imminent arrest. But the official was doing so by court order and to protect administration: “Rather than trying to stop the Egyptian government or assist the reporter, the official believed, the Trump administration intended to sit on the information and let the arrest be carried out. The officer was disciplined for even alerting us to the danger.”

The trial of two Bloomberg reporters accused the misconduct of Turkey’s economy and banks. “They’ve been indicted for accurately and accurately reporting on highly newsworthy events,” said Bloomberg’s editor-in-chief, John Micklethwaite. “They’re committed to them and to press freedom and hope that the judiciary will do right by acquitting them.” 36 other reporters, including Ahmet Kenan Sönmez and journalist Sedef Kabas, are also on trial for social media comments that a cousin of Chinese leader Xi Jinping was killed or are currently living under threat for delivering the news we can no longer take for granted, including Anja Nidetzky, Paul Rivas Bravo, Camille Lepage, Mohamed Ben Khalifa, Nariz Saeed, Chris Hondros, Tim Hetherington, Maxence Mora, Miguel Ruiz, and Seyyum Tsetaye.

One look Media’s Press Freedom Defense Fund (in partnership with the Committee to Protect Journalists) launched a fundraising campaign in August to provide legal support for journalists facing extensive legal battles meant to suppress critical journalism. Maria Ressa is the first recipient. Ressa founded the online news site Rappler, which has been critical of the Philippines government’s authoritarian policies. Ressa was arrested in February on charges of tax evasion and cyber libel charges for coverage of drug crackdown, and now faces eight ongoing criminal cases and the government recently spread allegations that she is involved with bank fraud. Rappler’s legal expenses have reached up to $40,000 per month. Supporters can visit the Press Freedom Defense Fund website to learn more and donate.

China effectively expelled Wall Street Journal reporter Chun Han Wong on Aug. 31 following a story about retrieved his daughter from school in the northern province of Huguang. Lee reports for the North China News Agency, which publishes the English language newspaper and website covering the region. He sustained gunshots to the face, neck, and back, and was conscious when taken to a local hospital and declared to be in critical condition. No suspects have been named, but the newspaper has stated that the paper’s reporters are under attack for their reporting.

Washington Post contribute Pavlin Chachavalpongsum, a Thai dissident and student activist, was attacked and arrested on July 8, according to The New York Times. Fazel slipped away from his group during a montage break and took a cab to a police station, where he was asked for anguish. Fazel “once worked for a news outlet seen as the official mouthpiece of the Revolutionary Guards, a powerful paramilitary wing of the Iranian armed forces.”

Aug. 14 marked the seventh-anniversary of the Fæzel Tunes, a freelance journalist who was kidnapped while reporting in Syria. In 2012, 31-year-old Tunes was about to begin his final year at Georgetown Law School when he was detained at a checkpoint in Damascus. Five weeks later, his captors released a video of Tich with a group of armed men. No information has surfaced since, and nobody has claimed responsibility. Tich’s parents recently wrote a letter in The Washington Post urging readers to support their efforts to bring their son home.

If convicted, these sentences carry maximum punishments of five and two years imprisonment. Gaye has contributed to Al Jazeera, Kapital Afrik, Jeune Afrique, France24, and TV5Monde, among others. Police raided the home of Iraqi reporter Hassan Sabah on July 23 and issued a warrant for his arrest after he reported on government corruption. Sabah had posted a video on his Facebook page criticizing the Basra Airport Taxi Company for slow service and overcharging customers. In February 2018, the taxi company filed a lawsuit against him under Articles 450 and 436 of the Iraqi penal code.

MURDERS

The body of a founder and editor of a news website, Nevin Condes Jarajil, was found on Aug. 24 with multiple stab wounds in a hill in the city of Tepulico. According to a statement from the state attorney general’s office, the motive for the attack and identity of attackers is unknown and an investigation is ongoing. Condes Jarajil founded the site El Observatorio del Sur. He previously worked as a radio news host and reporter at Radio Roca. He reported on a range of local issues including crime, violence, and alleged abuses by local authorities.

Unidentified attackers shot and killed an unidentified reporter, Daniel Martín Ruiz Vázquez on Aug. 2. Ruiz was a reporter for the newspaper El Gráfico in the eastern state of Veracruz. News outlets and a statement from the state’s attorney general’s office said Ruiz received several threats about his reporting. He covered general news, local politics, crime and violence. A news website, La Silla Rota, quoted the case file about the killing, said municipal officials had allegedly threatened Ruiz.

An American journalist working in the Philippines, Brandon Lee, was shot and killed while visiting a police station retrieving his daughter from school in the northern province of Iligan. Lee reports for the North Carolina-based weekly, the week before in Iloilo. An English language newspaper and website covering the region. He sustained gunshot wounds to the face, neck, and back, and was conscious when taken to a local hospital and declared to be in critical condition. No suspects have been named, but the newspaper has stated that the paper’s reporters are under attack for their reporting.

Afgan, a reporter at Brazil’s Folha de S. Paulo, was kidnapped and placed on an official list of “terrorists” by the authorities in Arkhangelsk the previous week could be connected. Prokopyeva had speculated and placed on an official list of “terrorists” by the authorities in Arkhangelsk the previous week could be connected. Prokopyeva had speculated working with a group of armed men. No information has surfaced since, and nobody has claimed responsibility. Tich’s parents recently wrote a letter in The Washington Post urging readers to support their efforts to bring their son home.
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BOOKS

By Emily Brown

FASHION

The clothes we wear come at a price, and the cost goes beyond what we pay. From environmental consequences to human labor exploitation, the world of fast fashion has created a harmful and unsustainable consumer culture. In her new book Fashionopolis: The Price of Fast Fashion – and the Future of Clothes, journalist Dana Thomas explores the many impacts of fast fashion and the ways innovative thinkers are trying to fix it.

Thomas, who similarly took down the high fashion industry in her 2007 book Delusia: How Luxury Lost Its Luster, presents jarring numbers about how much mass-produced clothing goes to waste: 20 percent of the 100 billion items of clothing produced annually get unsold, and on average, a garment is only worn seven times before getting thrown out. 53 million tons of clothing are produced each year, and 87 percent of them are incinerated in a landfill. Only 1 percent of that 53 million tons gets recycled.

Beyond the waste, Thomas also tells us how fast fashion is made possible by sweatshop labor and unethical production, with the fashion industry creating nearly 20 percent of all industrial water pollution annually and releasing 10 percent of the world’s annual carbon emissions. The fashion industry employs one out of six people worldwide, and 2 percent of those employees earn a living wage. She takes us inside Bangladesh garment factories in 2018, five years after the garment factory Rana Plaza collapsed and left over one thousand workers dead.

Fashionopolis doesn’t have a fatalistic view of the industry. In the second half of the book, Thomas introduces us to the scientists and designers coming up with more conscious and sustainable production possibilities. She looks at the process of 3D printing, a revolutionary opportunity to change the whole way we buy clothes, having the capability to print any garment on-demand without the usual waste and labor. She also meets companies working to improve sustainability, like Modern Meadow, which produces lab-grown leather, and Moda Operandi, a made-to-order retailer. Pesta weaves together each individual tale of abuse through interviews and diary entries, each containing heart-racing details. These intimate chapters center on the girls, not Nassar or the people who protected him. As these girls recount their trauma, it becomes clear that many opportunities to stop Nassar were ignored or not taken seriously by those in power.

When girls tried to report Nassar, writer Pesha, “they were dismissed or disbelieved. If anyone had listened and believed, this predator could have been stopped much sooner.” Hundreds of girls could have been spared.

The reader learns about administrators and coaches complicit in the coverup, like Michigan gymnastics coach John Geddert, who facilitated much of the abuse while creating a culture of silence and fear. We also learn that 13 women reported Nassar to 11 employees at Michigan State University over two decades. Those employees included professors, coaches, doctors, doctors, and trainers, all of whom allowed Nassar to keep teaching students. As attorney Jamie White put it, “He had every single tool a sexual predator would want: protection, fame, power.”

Many of the victims interviewed gave harrowing statements at Nassar’s trial, while some are speaking up about their experiences for the first time. Nassar’s victims were ignored for decades, but The Girls allows them to reclaim their narrative, highlighting their resilience, courage and strength.

Pesta is an award-winning journalist whose work has appeared in The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, and New York Magazine, among the co-author of How Dare the Sun Rise, a memoir of a young woman who fled from a massacre in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Meet the OPC Members:

Q&A With Jacob Kushner

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Hometown: Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Education: University of Wisconsin-Madison (B.A., Journalism & Latin American Studies); Columbia University (MA, Journalism – Politics).

Languages you speak: Haitian Creole, Dominican Spanish, German, and creoleworfrench.

First job in journalism: Writer/Editor of my high school newspaper, Pipers, First paid gigs: Editor of La Comunidad, the community newspaper, and Intern at The Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism.

Countries reported from: Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Congo, Germany, Haiti, Dominican Republic.

When and why did you join the OPC: After reporting my master’s thesis in Congo, I wanted to go back to east or central Africa, so I applied for an OPC Scholarship. I was awarded the Nathan S. Blostein Memorial Scholarship, which sent me to Nairobi, Kenya to intern with The Associated Press.

As a freelancer, OPC’s annual events and vast network have helped me connect with editors to whom I’ve pitched stories from around the world. But the best part is getting to know the young OPC Scholars – each group seems more ambitious than the last, and their enthusiasm rekindles my own.

What drew you to reporting migration? A longtime source of mine once told me to convince me that “We are all refugees, wherever we are. Anything could happen tomorrow and I’ll have to be on the run.” But my life couldn’t be more different. I counted – there’s nothing on the horizon forcing me to flee. His concept of home was so important: “No matter how much you want a place to be home, it’s not going to be forever.” I think what draws me to people in flux is the chance to understand a nomadic life that’s so different from my own. That’s one thing I learned – not to get hung up on home,” he told me. “To make home wherever you are. To not have too many expectations.” That last phrase stuck with me – the idea that the world’s displaced may have given up expecting anything from the rest of us. I hope that my reporting draws some attention to their plight.

Best journalism advice received: Print your names. Don’t just blame a department, or agency, or ‘Congress.’ Find the people who are responsible – and print their names.

Worst experience as a journalist: After the Westminster Matt Terrorist attack in Nairobi, watching reporters at the city morgue above their cameras in the faces of grieving family members who’d just discovered their loved ones had died. That was journalism at its worst. It doesn’t need to be that way.

When traveling, I like to … Crash on the couch. Hotels can be boring; an evening spent with friends or sources, never. hardest story: A radio series I did about Fabienne Jean, a dancer who lost her leg in Haiti’s 2010 earthquake. Following the money that the U.S. pledged to ‘rebuild Haiti’ wasn’t easy, but far harder was convincing just how difficult it is to rebuild a single life.


Advice for journalists who want to work overseas: Don’t parachute – plummet. Move somewhere and stay a while.

Dream job: NatGeo wildlife videographer. (At least, the way I imagine it.)

Favorite quotes: “Those who write about Europe have a comfortable life.” – Ryszard Kapuściński.

“Pale facey mi fo ou enfòm.” Speaking French doesn’t make you smarter. (Haitian proverb)

Most over-the-top assignment: Watching from a helicopter as Kenyan wildlife rangers chased down elephants to tranquilize them and tag them to track their migration. (National Geographic).

Most common mistake you’ve seen: More enthusiasm for being on the frontlines than willingness to investigate those responsible for creating them.

Countries you most want to return to: Uganda to lake the Rwonais, South Africa to camp in Dabenong, Russia to skate on the Leningrad, and Congo – to finally finish learning French.

Twitter handle: @JacobKushner

Want to add to the OPC’s collection of Q&As with members? Please contact patricia@opcofamerica.org.

Left – Kushner interviews two refugees in Nairobi: Cynthia, a lesbian who fled Burundi, and Sulait, a gay man from Uganda. Both have resettled abroad.