



Overseas Press Club
of America

Weekly Bulletin: April 30, 2020

Greetings!

We hope you enjoy this week's digital newsletter, which includes:

- A recap of the OPC's online discussion with Dexter "Tiff" Roberts on "[COVID-19 and China's Future](#)"
- A reminder about the May 6 application deadline for OPC [microgrants for freelance journalists](#)
- A look at China epidemic coverage from this year's Hal Boyle Citation for Excellence winner, [Gerry Shih](#)
- Updates on OPC member coverage of COVID-19
- [Resources](#) and webinars for journalists covering COVID-19
- Recent [People](#) items
- [Press Freedom Updates](#)

Scroll down for more content, summaries and links to items online.

Tiff Roberts Discusses China's Uncertain Future in the Wake of COVID-19

by Chad Bouchard

During the OPC's first post-

quarantine panel online last week, author and club member Dexter “Tiff” Roberts said during a Zoom discussion that fallout from China’s COVID-19 outbreak will likely threaten the country’s ability to transform its economy and worsen an already precarious rural-urban divide.



On April 23, Roberts discussed how the pandemic might shape the country’s future, as well as a host of issues raised in his new book “The Myth of Chinese Capitalism,” which was published on March 10 just as the U.S. was starting its lockdown.

He said China is undergoing its biggest economic transition in decades, from a global manufacturing powerhouse that relies on cheap labor from hundreds of millions of people in rural areas, to a service-driven economy driven by domestic consumption.

“The future of their success in making this transition is really up in the air. They will not be able to do it unless they overcome the wealth gap,” he said, “and find a way to better integrate migrants and their relatives in rural China, which together is about half of China’s population, into the economy. Otherwise they will not successfully make this transition.”

[You can purchase a copy of Roberts’ book here >>](#)

[Read More](#)





Apply by May 6 for the OPC's COVID-19 Freelance Journalism Microgrants

Please note that the deadline is May 6 for freelance OPC members to apply for \$750 microgrants. The OPC is offering this assistance for freelance journalism, regardless of medium or coverage area. The term "microgrant" has been used a lot recently. We are describing it as one-time assistance to pursue your freelance journalism.

The deadline for applications is **Wednesday, May 6, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time**. We anticipate awarding 25 microgrants and letting grantees know by Sunday, May 17, by email. **Click the button below to read more and apply.**

Apply

OPC Citation Winner Gerry Shih Chronicles China Outbreak Before Expulsion

by Chad Bouchard

In March, China expelled more than a dozen U.S. journalists in retaliation against tightened controls on Chinese journalists imposed in the month before. Among them was Gerry Shih of The Washington Post, the recipient of the OPC's Citation for Excellence in the Hal Boyle category this year. Shih had served as China correspondent for the Post since September 2018, most recently following the coronavirus outbreak from the



beginning of the crisis.

On February 18, the State Department classified five Chinese state media organizations as foreign missions, citing concerns about a growing “propaganda” campaign from Beijing. China answered on March 18 with an effective ban on US journalists working for the New York Times, Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal, demanding journalists to turn in press credentials up for renewal this year within 10 days.

Hal Boyle head judge Farnaz Fassihi said the panel found Shih’s work for the Post covering China in 2019 to be “indispensable and extraordinarily eye opening.”

[Read More](#)

Image above right: An employee guides a discharged COVID-19 patient as they leave Wuchang Fang Cang makeshift hospital on March 10, 2020 in Wuhan, Hubei province, China. Photo: Stringer/Getty Images

COVID-19 Coverage from OPC Members

OPC Treasurer **Liam Stack** [landed](#) a front-page story for The New York Times. The piece covered challenges and political fallout connected to crowding during a Hasidic funeral in Brooklyn for Rabbi Chaim Mertz, who died of coronavirus on April 28. About 2,500 mourners had gathered in the street in violation of social distancing guidelines. Mayor Bill de Blasio lashed out on Twitter in a tweet addressed to “the Jewish community, and all communities,” saying police would arrest those who gather in large groups. Stack wrote that the incident put de Blasio on defense and highlighted challenges officials face in addressing social distancing in Hasidic neighborhoods around the New York.

OPC Governor **Derek Kravitz**, a data journalist at Columbia University’s Brown Institute for Media Innovation, [contributed](#) to an April 30 report for The New York Times on U.S. coastal states and resistance to beach closures during the pandemic. Kravitz and colleagues added reporting from New York with lead reporting on Miami, Sacramento and San Francisco from Patricia Mazzei, Shawn Hubler and Thomas Fuller.

OPC member **Gloria Dickie** has been covering the pandemic in India, most recently with an April 24 [article](#) on how the government is handling the coronavirus threat to a fragile population of tigers. She reported that wildlife managers started noticing tigers with symptoms of fever in early April, and are monitoring for a potential epidemic among the country’s 2,967 wild tigers. The concerns follow confirmation of COVID-19 cases in tigers such as the one reported at the Bronx Zoo in New York.

The Foreign Press Association (FPA-USA) [hosted](#) an online interview Martin Lee, Hong Kong’s leading democracy advocate, with questions from OPC

Past President William J. Holstein and FPA President and OPC member Ian Williams. Lee was arrested and at the age of 82 faces imprisonment in Hong Kong. During the interview, Holstein said Lee's arrest serves as a sort of canary in the coal mine, saying "if the methane gas kills the canary, everyone else is in serious trouble." Williams said China is using the pandemic as an opportunity to crackdown on Hong Kong democracy fighters. Lee said that while trials against members of the movement in Hong Kong remain transparent, "judges are under a lot of pressure from Beijing, no doubt about it. An they are worried that in the very near future things may change drastically."



Please send us your personal anecdotes, photos, and links to published pieces related to COVID-19 to info@opcofamerica.org , and we will publish them on our website and share with members. You can also share those stories directly with members on our [OPC Connect group on Facebook](#), or tweet us [@opcofamerica](https://twitter.com/opcofamerica) .

New Resources for Covering COVID-19

The **Fund for Investigative Journalism** is [offering](#) emergency grants to U.S.-based freelance investigative journalists working on stories on the coronavirus that "break new ground and expose wrongdoing in the public or private sector." The small grants will be available over the next few months on a rolling basis of up to \$10,000 for freelance investigative projects that have a strong U.S. angle involving American citizens, government or business. Stories must be published in English and have a media outlet in the United States.

Everyday Projects, a group dedicated to combating media-driven stereotypes, has [published](#) a page of general tips for visual journalists covering COVID-19. Tips include practical advice and reminders like avoiding unnecessary travel, being wary of official infection numbers and restricting exposure, as well as detailed steps for how to sanitize camera gear.

The **GroundTruth Project** [published](#) an interview with photojournalists about their best practices while covering the pandemic. OPC member Max Becherer, photo editor at The Times-Picayune and The New Orleans Advocate, talked about working with subjects and maintaining transparency to prevent risks.

National Geographic is [offering](#) rolling grants ranging from \$1,000 to \$8,000 for local coverage of "the preparation, response, and impact of this global pandemic as seen through evidence-based reporting." The organization is especially

interested in reporting that covers social, emotional, economic, and equity issues.

More Resources

- The group A Culture of Safety (ACOS) [assembled](#) a substantial list of COVID-19 resources for journalists, including links to practical safety advice, funding opportunities, hardship and emergency funds, and reporting resources such as guides for fact checking.
- ICFJ [launched](#) a page for COVID-19 resources for journalists.
- Rory Peck Trust has a [resource page](#) for pandemic coverage. It includes safety guidelines, funding sources, job opportunities and online training videos.
- The Freelance Audio Fund is [providing](#) emergency relief to the professional audio community impacted by COVID-19.

The OPC has added these links to a special COVID-19 section on the member-only [Resources](#) page available to members who have logged in. Watch that page as we share more. Click the button below to go directly, or find it in your Member Dashboard under "Resources."

If you have any issues accessing the resources page, please contact Chad Bouchard at chad@opcofamerica.org for credentials.

[OPC Resources Page](#)

People by Chad Bouchard

SCHOLARS

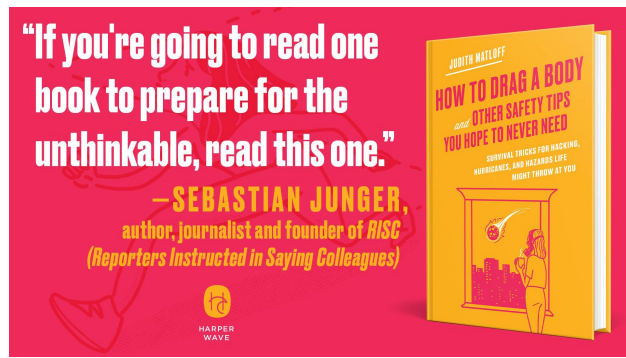
Eli Binder, the 2019 Fritz Beebe Fellowship winner, landed the cover story for the inaugural issue of the online magazine The Wire China, which Nieman Lab [reported](#) would publish a small collection of articles anchored by a 3,000-5,000-word cover story. The project was launched by David Barboza, the former Shanghai bureau chief for the New York Times, who was a judge on the OPC's Malcolm Forbes Award this year. Binder had an OPC Foundation fellowship with WSJ in Hong Kong and Singapore.



UPDATES

OPC member **Judith Matloff** is set to [publish](#) a new book on May 19 that covers personal security and risk management for journalists

operating in crisis zones. The book, titled *How to Drag a Body and Other Safety Tips You Hope to Never Need*, mixes amusing anecdotes from the field with serious and practical advice, including “how to remain upright in stampedes, avoid bank fraud, prevent sexual assault, stay clean in a shelter, and even be emotionally prepared for loss.” Matloff is a veteran war correspondent, Columbia University professor, and safety consultant.



OPC Governor **Jim Laurie** has been [sharing](#) remembrances and photos of his coverage of Vietnam in 1975 via Twitter under the tag #onthisday, which follow current calendar days of past years. Laurie covered Saigon for NBC News starting in 1972, covering wars in Vietnam and Cambodia, and in 1975, along with cameraman Neil Davis, he covered the fall of Saigon starting on April 30, reporting for 26 days in the newly renamed Ho Chi Minh City.

Press Freedom Update by Chad Bouchard

The **Washington Post Press Freedom Partnership** has been [rolling](#) out a week-long advertising campaign to highlight journalists around the world who are detained or persecuted for their work. The ads will run through Sunday, May 3 on Press Freedom Day. The campaign has covered Austin Tice, Claudia Duque of Colombia, Azimjon Askarov of Kyrgyzstan, Solafa Magdy of Egypt and Iwacu journalists of Burundi. “The journalists spotlighted in this ad campaign are facing murder threats, detention and lifetime prison sentences simply for doing their jobs – reporting the truth and holding the powerful to account,” said Frederick J. Ryan Jr., publisher and CEO of The Post. “In a time when freedom of information is more important than ever, we must ensure that journalists can freely report the news without fear of persecution.”

The **Committee to Protect Journalists** (CPJ) and 73 other media, press freedom,

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

Four journalists from one of Burundi's last-standing independent news outlets, Iwacu, were arrested while interviewing locals about clashes between security personnel and gunmen who had crossed over from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In a chilling message to Burundi journalists, Christine Kamukazi, Agnès Ndirubusa, Eglide Harerimana and Térance Mpozenzi were convicted of an attempt to undermine state security and sentenced to 2.5 years in prison.

This World Press Freedom Day, demand justice for the Iwacu Journalists.

The Washington Post
PRESS FREEDOM PARTNERSHIP
www.wapo.st/pressfreedom
@wppressfreedom

and human rights groups [sent a letter](#) urging governments across Asia to release jailed journalists amid the dangers of COVID-19 in incarceration. The CPJ's most recent annual prison census conducted on Dec. 1 last year showed that at least 63 journalists were imprisoned in Asia, including 48 in China, 12 in Vietnam, two in India, and one in Myanmar. Five more have been arrested since then, including Sovann Rithy in Cambodia, Chen Jiaping in China, Gautam Navlakha in India, Mir Shakil-ur-Rahman in Pakistan, and Frenchiema Cumpio in the Philippines. "We urge you to release every jailed journalist in your respective countries and to protect the free press and the free flow of information at this crucial time," the letter read. "Journalism must not carry a death sentence."

Journalists covering the COVID-19 epidemic in Kazakhstan have been subjected to interrogation, prosecution and violation of the confidentiality of their sources in connection with their reporting, according to a [report](#) from Reporters Without Borders (RWB). Victims include **Zaure Mirzakhodjayeveva**, a journalist and blogger in the southern city of Shymkent, who was summoned and questioned by the police for seven hours on April 23 over a Facebook post. He is now under investigation for spreading false information, a common charge used by repressive regimes to quash sensitive reporting.

Police in Sierra Leone arrested and [charged](#) journalist Fayia Amara Fayia for assault after a group of at least 10 soldiers attacked Fayia, who works for the Standard Times newspaper, on April hitting him with guns and kicking him, according to the journalist, who spoke to the CPJ, as well as a statement by the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists.

Germany [started](#) a trial on April 23 for **Anwar Raslan**, a former Syrian general intelligence officer who had a key role in President Bashar al-Assad's jailing and torturing of thousands of people, including journalists. Raslan is accused of crimes against humanity between March 2011 and September 2012, when he was in charge of investigations at the Al-Khateeb general intelligence detention centre in Damascus, also known as "Branch 251." Plaintiffs against him include two journalists: Amer Matar and Hussein Ghrer. Matar was arrested twice in 2011 in connection with his work, Matar was tortured during interrogation and was accused of "spreading false news" and "undermining the nation's morale." Ghrer was arrested in 2012 while at the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) in Damascus and was jailed for nine months in solitary confinement.



Read more Press Freedom news coverage, including this week's Press Freedom Update, on the OPC website via the link below.

[Press Freedom News](#)

