



Overseas Press Club
of America

Weekly Bulletin: Oct. 29, 2020

Greetings!

Last week, I ventured into the Bloomberg office in midtown Manhattan for the first time in almost eight months. I was impressed by all the changes the company had made to protect its workers; socially distant workstations, hands-free elevator buttons, antiseptic wipes and hand sanitizer stations throughout the newsroom were the least of it. It made me think how lucky I am to work for a company that has my back – and how many journalists working abroad don't have that luxury. Whether they are employed fulltime by a media company or working as a freelancer (and these days, many are) being out in the field often means being your own office manager, photographer, interpreter, security guard, driver, cook, computer expert and diplomat. Not to mention getting the big story and filing it under difficult conditions on deadline.



I mention this because people often ask me: What does the Overseas Press Club do? The answer is that, as much as possible, we are here to promote your journalism and protect journalists abroad – past, present and future. We can help train you to stay safe in conflict zones. We connect you with a community of like-minded working journalists with Zoom programs, a weekly Bulletin and a dedicated Facebook group. We celebrate your best work with our annual awards program. We provide emergency grants to those who lost much of their income because of COVID-19. We offer press IDs to help get you past government barriers that prevent you from doing your job. We have a foundation that offers scholarships and in-the-field internships to new graduates who aspire to be foreign correspondents. We advocate for press

freedoms and fight against the imposition of restrictions, at home and abroad, that stop us from gathering information and telling the truth to the world. Soon we will have a digital directory of members so you can network with ease.

None of this happens for free. Like many trade groups, the OPC runs on a tight budget but still has bills to pay. If you know people who agree with our purpose, won't you recruit them to join us? If you haven't yet paid your dues, won't you do so now? Here are links to our [dues structure](#), [how to apply](#), and the [benefits of membership](#).

In this week's Bulletin, you will find a recap and video clips from an online discussion with this year's Malcolm Forbes Award winners, Nick Kostov and Sean McLain. Their Wall Street Journal series about the arrest and escape of Nissan executive Carlos Ghosn was riveting.

On Nov. 10 we'll have a digital discussion with Cornelius Ryan Award winner Katherine Eban about her book exposing fraud and FDA fumbling of the generic drug boom, *Bottle of Lies*.

And on Nov. 12 we'll have an evening of cocktails and conversation via Zoom with OPC member Jim Laurie, whose new memoir is all about covering the Vietnam War (*The Last Helicopter: Two Lives in Indochina*), complete with video clips from the era. I hope you'll join us and reflect on your own experiences as a foreign correspondent.

We also wish to give a note of thanks to those who sent in comments about proposed "I" visa rule changes to the Federal Register, with updates on other organizations that weighed in.

In this issue, we also provide valuable detail about online courses available to journalists, awards programs you might want to submit your work to, and major developments in the lives of OPC members. Here are two I want to highlight: A former Taliban commander accused in the 2008 kidnapping of David Rohde, the former New York Times correspondent now at the New Yorker, was arrested and transferred to the U.S. to face charges. And OPC member and Foundation scholar Krithika Varagur won the 2020 Marie Colvin Award for Foreign Correspondence from the Newswomen's Club of New York. Congratulations, Krithika!

Happy reading,
Paula Dwyer
OPC President



Malcolm Forbes Award Winners Retrace Sleuthing
on the Mystery of Carlos Ghosn

By Chad Bouchard

In November 2018, the sudden arrest of Brazilian-born business executive Carlos Ghosn rocked the international business community and left journalists scratching their heads. Ghosn had been serving as chairman and CEO of an alliance he forged among automakers Renault, Nissan and Mitsubishi when Japanese prosecutors arrested him on unknown charges, and Nissan soon deposed him as chairman. He spent the next 13 months in jail and house arrest. Then in December 2019, he escaped Japan, was smuggled out of the country in a box, fled via a Turkish airliner, and ultimately turned up in Lebanon.

Nick Kostov and Sean McLain of The Wall Street Journal spent months chasing the story and unraveling events leading to his arrest. Their series of articles following the Ghosn saga won this year's Malcolm Forbes Award for best international business news reporting in newspapers, news services, magazines or digital.

On Oct. 28, the duo retraced their reporting for an OPC program in honor of the award. The session was moderated by Tim Ferguson, business journalist and former editor of Forbes Asia, who served as head judge for the Malcolm Forbes Award jury.

[Read the Full Recap Here](#)

Click the window below to watch a video of the program on our YouTube channel, or [click here to watch a playlist of clips](#).

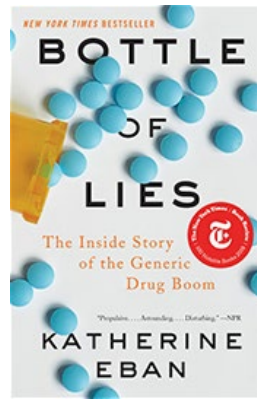


Upcoming OPC Events

Nov. 10: OPC Award Winners Share Their Stories
The Cornelius Ryan Award

Time: Nov. 10 at 6:00 p.m.
Eastern Time

Please RSVP to join an online program with **Katherine Eban**, author of *Bottle of Lies: The Inside Story of the Generic Drug Boom*, which won this year's Cornelius Ryan Award for best non-fiction book on international affairs.



Moderating the panel will be **Dan Hertzberg**, freelance journalist and former senior deputy managing editor and later deputy managing editor for international news at The Wall Street Journal, who served as head judge for the Cornelius Ryan Award jury.

RSVPs are essential. We will send Zoom links to those who register about an hour before each program. Please register early!

Judges for the award said:

"Generic drugs are critical to the U.S. health system, making up 60 per cent of the country's drug supply—and 40 per cent of those generics are manufactured in India. In a shocking and masterful work of global investigative reporting, Katherine Eban documents the massive fraud by which Indian drug makers have evaded a fumbling U.S. FDA to sell billions of dollars in unsafe and ineffective drugs to the U.S. Eban turns it into a page turner, focusing on key figures like the courageous Indian executive turned whistleblower at the big Indian drug maker Ranbaxy and a dogged FDA inspector in India who rips aside the curtain of fraud."

[RSVP Now](#)



Nov. 12: War, Love and Survival in the 1970s, an OPC Chat with Jim Laurie

Join the OPC for cocktails and conversation with OPC member and past award winner Jim Laurie to discuss his new book, *The Last Helicopter: Two Lives in Indochina*, a memoir of his early days in Indochina. The program will include an opportunity for attendees to share experiences covering the Vietnam War, to reflect on how media coverage of Asia has changed over the past fifty years, and to watch some remarkable video from the period.

The book, published by FocusAsia Productions Ltd. in



September, explores the war in Indochina, the communist victories five years later in Phnom Penh and Saigon and the survival story of a young woman he knew trapped behind in the killing fields of Cambodia – through the eyes of a 22 year old in 1970.

[Laurie's book is available from Amazon.com here >>](#)

RSVPs are essential. Please register now to receive a Zoom link via email about an hour before the program.

RSVP Now

A Note of Thanks for 'I' Visa Comments

The OPC is grateful to the dozens of members and supporters who responded to our joint call along with the Foreign Press Association (FPA) for comments on the proposed Department of Homeland Security rule changes to restrict the freedom of foreign journalists to work in the United States by requiring 'I' visa renewal every 240 days.

The proposed measure, for which an official comment period passed on Monday, has received widespread attention from media and press freedom organizations.

Dozens of media outlets and press freedom supporters including The Associated Press, Agence France-Presse and Reuters, [sent a group letter](#) to the DHS, saying it would "seriously impact the work of the foreign media in covering the news in the US."

The [International Press Institute \(IPI\)](#), whose special representative for journalist safety is OPC member John Daniszewski, released a joint statement with the IPI North America Committee calling for the U.S. government to avoid the rule changes, which could "seriously impact the work of the foreign media in covering vital U.S. news for overseas audiences." In an email appeal to colleagues to join the chorus of those opposing the rule, Daniszewski credited the OPC and FPA for calling attention to the issue.

In addition, on Monday a coalition comprised of the [Reporters Committee for](#)

[Freedom of the Press \(RCFP\)](#), the [Committee to Protect Journalists \(CPJ\)](#), and 36 other media organizations submitted a joint statement voicing concern about the changes. In a CPJ statement, executive director Robert Mahoney said "the implications of changing the validity of visas and the review process are chilling."

Welcome New Member

Kate Englund

Global Picture Desk Director
Getty Images
New York
Active Resident

OPC Members Covering COVID-19

OPC member **Keith Bradsher** wrote for The New York Times [on Oct. 18](#) about China's surging economy as the country reins in its COVID-19 infection rates with almost no local transmission. He reported that the Chinese economy "surged 4.9 percent in the July-to-September quarter compared with the same months last year," according to the country's statistics bureau. That restores growth to nearly the same rate it had before the pandemic, which was 6 percent. He said the country's recovery would not ripple out to the rest of the world as much as it has in the past because imports have not increased as much as exports, and the recovery is linked to huge domestic infrastructure investments.



OPC member **Chriss Swaney** continues to cover worker's rights and infringement in the era of COVID-19, with a piece for WorkersCompensation.com [on Oct. 23](#) about the families of employees at a meat processing plant in Greeley, Colorado owned by JBS USA, who are fighting for worker's compensation following the deaths of several plant employees who fell ill during the course of their work. According to the Food and Environment Report Network, which has been tracking outbreaks, more than 44,000 meatpacking workers have tested positive for the virus, and more than 200 have died.



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](#).

People by Chad Bouchard

SCHOLARS

Krithika Varagur, the Sally Jacobsen Fellowship winner in 2019, won the [2020 Marie Colvin Award for Foreign Correspondence](#) from the Newswomen's Club of New York. Varagur had an OPC Foundation fellowship in the New Delhi bureau of The Associated Press. In an email to the foundation, she credited her award “in part to the stories I got to write at the AP in New Delhi as an OPC fellow. (It's for a body of work over the past year.) Thank you for making it possible!” An OPC member, Varagur spoke at a club program in May about her new book, *The Call: Inside the Global Saudi Religious Project*, with former OPC Second Vice President Christopher Dickey, who died in Paris in July.



Micah Danney, the Theo Wilson Scholarship winner in 2018, won an award for a video he shot for ReligionUnplugged.com on “[Guns and God: Why American Church Goers are Packing Heat](#).” The video won a 2020 Eppy for Best News or Event Feature Video with under 1 million unique monthly visitors. Now a freelance reporter for Alabama Political Reporter, Micah had an OPC Foundation fellowship with The GroundTruth Project in Jerusalem.



UPDATES

A former Taliban commander accused in the November 2008 kidnapping of three people, including OPC member and award winner **David Rohde**, has been [arrested and transferred](#) to the United States to face six federal charges including kidnapping, hostage taking, conspiracy and using a machine gun in furtherance of violent crimes. A federal indictment against the former commander, Haji Najibullah, was unsealed on Oct. 28. He faces life sentences for each of the six charges if convicted. Rohde, who was working for The New York Times at the time, was abducted at gunpoint in Afghanistan along with Afghan journalist Tahir Ludin and Asadullah Mangal, their driver, and held for more than seven months. Rohde and Ludin escaped from a Taliban compound in June 2009. Mangal fled five weeks later. Rohde, who is now serving as the online news director for The New Yorker, won the OPC's 1995 Hal Boyle Award for reporting on the Srebrenica Massacre for the Christian Science Monitor, shared the 2015 Joe and Laurie Dine Award along with Charles Levinson for reporting on the U.S. Guantanamo Bay detention facility for Reuters, and also received the OPC's President's Award in 2015. He also received an OPC Citation for Excellence in 2009 for writing about his ordeal in Afghanistan.



OPC member **Steve Herman** got [a name check](#) in one of the week's most shared and trending news stories, as he asked President Trump on Air Force One about security breaches connected to the new Sacha Baron Cohen documentary, *Borat Subsequent Moviefilm*. The film includes a scene involving Trump attorney and former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani in a



hotel room with an actress pretending to be a Russian journalist. The actress was later shown interviewing Donald Trump Jr. at the White House. Herman asked Trump if he was worried about security breaches, to which he responded “I don’t know what happened, but years ago, you know, [Baron Cohen] tried to scam me and I was the only one who said no way. That’s a phony guy and I don’t find him funny,” according to Herman’s recounts on Twitter, which were widely quoted in articles from the Los Angeles Times to Hollywood Reporter.

OPC member **Sima Diab’s** photographs documenting people living in Egypt’s Nile Delta accompanied [an Oct. 15](#) story for The Washington Post, part of which was written by OPC member **Sudarsan Raghavan**, about the massive Renaissance Dam project in Ethiopia. The story, which Raghavan co-wrote with colleague Max Bearak, said while the project could set Egypt on a path to lift millions out of poverty, “downstream in Egypt, where the Nile meets the sea, a starkly different picture emerges: The dam is a giant, menacing barrier that could be used to hold back the source of nearly all the country’s water.” Several of Diab’s images accompanied the long-form story, depicting farmers in a village about 60 miles north of Cairo who fear the project will hamstring irrigation for their crops.



OPC member **Alice Driver** contributed to a CBC radio story [on Oct. 26](#) about Harrison, Arkansas and its struggle to escape a reputation as “the most racist town in America.” Driver contributed tape and photos for the sound-rich feature story. The town has a long history of white supremacy, and still has billboards promoting racist websites. The Ku Klux Klan headquarters is about 15 miles away in Zinc. Harrison drew attention over the summer with a viral video of residents shouting hostilities at a person holding a Black Lives Matter sign.



People Column October 2020

New Resources

RESOURCES

The **Poynter Center** posts a daily briefing of story ideas about the coronavirus

and other timely topics for journalists, written by senior faculty Al Tompkins. Recent newsletter posts have covered the rationing of health care resources in Utah, lockdowns in Texas, the closure of rural hospitals, mid-size cities across the country that have lost air service, and more. [Read the “Covering COVID-19” briefings and sign up for an email newsletter here.](#)

The **Thompson Foundation**, working with several partner organizations under its **Journalism Now** series of programs, is offering a series of free online courses for journalists on safety, verification and content. The courses are self-paced, and have been translated into several languages. [Read more and enroll here.](#)

Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) is offering access to several of its webinar archives to members and non-member journalists and educators on coverage of COVID-19. The webinars are provided through a sponsorship of the **Inasmuch Foundation** (formerly known as Excellence and Ethics in Journalism). Recent topics include the importance of self-care, investigative angles on education stories, investigating stimulus money, political influence on coronavirus data, and more. [Browse the archives here.](#)

TRAINING AND PROGRAMS

From Nov. 16 to Dec. 13, the **International Women’s Media Foundation (IWMF)** and the **Knight Center at University of Texas in Austin** will host an online course to help women journalists and their allies sharpen digital safety skills. The course, titled “Online Harassment: Strategies for Journalists’ Defense,” will be led by a team of global instructors including Arzu Geybulla, Catherine Gicheru, Ela Stapley and Myra Abdallah, and is offered for free. [Read more and register here.](#)

The **Magnum Foundation** is calling for applicants for its Photography and Social Justice Program with an application deadline of Dec. 1. The program supports a diverse, international group of fellows who are “passionate about challenging injustice, pursuing social equality, and advancing human rights through photography.” Participants will attend a seminar that begins with three informal gatherings in April and May and meets biweekly in June, with additional workshops from March to June and a mentored project from July to October. [Read more and apply here.](#)

More Resources

- **First Draft** has been hosting a series of presentations on COVID-19 for journalists, and you can [browse the archives here.](#)
- **Columbia University’s Brown Institute for Media Innovation** has compiled a large repository of documents on COVID-19 via FOIA requests. [Explore the database here.](#)
- **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

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

Press Freedom Update

by Chad Bouchard

[Michael Peck](#), the newly appointed head of the agency that oversees **Voice of America** and other government broadcasters, removed a key regulation [on Oct. 26](#) that keeps an editorial "firewall" between VOA and the U.S. government. The rescinded provision has long protected VOA reporters from political interference in their work. Peck said that he was eliminating policies "harmful to the agency and the U.S. national interest," and interfered with his goal to support U.S. foreign policy. Anonymous current employees expressed dismay, and former VOA director Amanda Bennett told NPR that the revoked rule "removes the one thing that makes Voice of America distinct from broadcasters of repressive regimes."

China's foreign ministry asked **six U.S. media outlets** [on Oct. 26](#) to report on staff, finance, operations and real estate for news operations in China in retaliation for the U.S. imposing "foreign mission" designations on six additional China-based media companies. A ministry statement listed ABC, the Los Angeles Times, Newsweek, Feature Story News, the Bureau of National Affairs and Minnesota Public Radio.

Oct. 30 [marks](#) 3,000 days since journalist **Austin Tice** was detained in Syria. The Washington Post Press Freedom Partnership is calling for supporters to change their Twitter profile photo to an image that displays the #FreeAustinTice tag. Meanwhile, his mother **Debra Tice** has accused Secretary of State Mike Pompeo of "undermining" [White House efforts to negotiate his release](#). [In a Post article](#) on Oct. 26, Debra Tice said that "unfortunately for Austin, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is undermining the President's crucial outreach, refusing any form of direct diplomatic engagement with the Syrian government."

