

The Responsibility to Report: a New Journalistic Paradigm

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Hands rose up from the grave to grasp each coffin, as if the dead were welcoming the remains of the genocide victims. The simple wooden boxes contained bones recovered from mass graves and pit latrines so that they could be re-interred during ceremonies marking the tenth anniversary of the Rwanda genocide. It was 7 April 2004 in Kigali, and a gaggle of television crews, reporters and photographers jostled for space around a concrete tomb where victims of the 1994 genocide were finally being given a dignified burial. Earlier, pall bearers had descended into the crypt, climbing down a ladder so they could be in place to receive the coffins. The boxes were gingerly passed one by one into their final resting place at Rwanda's national memorial to the 1994 slaughter.

Ten years after the genocide, Rwanda was still burying its dead and representatives of the international media were there, watching. Heading the dignitaries assembled to take part in the ceremony was Paul Kagame, president of Rwanda and in 1994, leader of the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front, which ended the genocide and took over the country. Retired Canadian General Roméo Dallaire, who led the ill-fated United Nations mission to Rwanda during the catastrophe, joined Kagame at the ceremony.

Both Kagame and Dallaire could have been forgiven for asking a pointed question as they regarded the international media throng gathered for the ceremonies: where were the world's media a decade earlier when a campaign to exterminate the Tutsi minority and Hutu moderates resulted in the massacre of more than 800,000 innocents?

In hindsight, the media shorthand for the Rwanda genocide goes something like this: the world community failed to intervene and abandoned Rwanda while dead bodies clogged the rivers and piled up on roadsides. These events were reported by the news media, but not very prominently. When the media finally descended on the story, it was to cover the cholera epidemic in refugee camps across the border in Zaire, camps populated by Hutu who fled Rwanda at the tail end of the genocide.

Looking back, it is easy to see what the news media did wrong, both inside Rwanda and without. Many journalists within Rwanda were implicated in the killing. Hate media were instrumental in the extermination campaign. International news media misconstrued or downplayed the Rwanda story.

Political figures, such as US President Bill Clinton (1998), later claimed that they did not have enough information to fully grasp what was going on in Rwanda. More likely, because the public was not very engaged by the Rwanda story, there was little pressure for leaders to do anything.

This collection of papers set out to examine the role of the news media in the 1994 catastrophe, inside and outside Rwanda. More than a decade later, are we any wiser? What has changed and what have we learned from what went wrong? In part, the answer lies in Darfur, the region in western Sudan widely acknowledged in early 2006 to be a humanitarian and human rights tragedy of the first order. By some accounts, as many as 5,000 people continued to die each month in a deteriorating situation of massive atrocities against civilians, blamed primarily on the government and its allied Janjaweed militias.

In the face of reliable accounts of what is at best ethnic cleansing and at worst genocide – a situation that some have described as Rwanda in slow motion – the world community did little. By most accounts, North American media have drastically underplayed the situation in western Sudan, just as they did in Rwanda, despite evidence of massive violations of human rights and a government supporting forces wreaking havoc on innocent civilians. Perhaps, just perhaps, content analysis would demonstrate that Darfur has registered on the media radar screen to a greater degree than did Rwanda. But it has not become a mega-story, or a media sensation. It has not captured our imaginations. And that signals, once again, a media failure.

For what it's worth, the international community has shown a measure of contrition with regard to the events of 1994. Rwanda is now a synonym for the world community's failure to intervene in the face of gross violations of human rights, a genocide. Rwanda is invoked repeatedly, often in sentences that contain the phrase 'never again.' Key figures in the Rwandan drama have apologized, or at least expressed regret, for their failure to act to the best of their abilities.¹ And in large part because of Rwanda, a new paradigm emerged and eventually won formal recognition on the world stage. The Canadian-inspired doctrine called *The Responsibility to Protect* (ICISS 2001) was formally adopted by the United Nations in September 2005. (Whether it is ever put into force is another matter.) The doctrine was set out in the December 2001 report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. It overturns the notion of absolute national sovereignty when it comes to massive violations of human rights and genocide, marking the first time that state sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs have been qualified. In effect, the UN declaration enshrines in international law the notion that the world community has a right to intervene – a responsibility to protect – to stop a government from massive violation of the human rights of its citizens.

But the document is virtually silent on the role of the news media, and there is little discussion of the part journalists and news organizations could or should play in the face of the kind of atrocities witnessed in Rwanda. All these years later, we don't yet seem to have figured out that part of the puzzle. Perhaps it is time to advance a new paradigm for journalists: the responsibility to report. If we cannot adequately address the kind of structural constraints that handicapped

the media in the case of Rwanda, at least we can deal with the behavioural aspects of the media – the way individual journalists conduct themselves.

In the years since 1994, Rwanda has become a case study in hate media, a textbook example of how journalism and particularly the broadcast media can be perverted in the name of hate. And, since Rwanda, considerable attention has been devoted to defining how monitoring the media in zones of actual or potential conflict can help policymakers to grasp more accurately what is going on and to use that information to frame responses with the best chance of preventing or mitigating violence. In Britain, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and BBC Monitoring (BBCM) have established a specialized ‘tension and hate speech monitoring’ project. BBCM aims to track the world’s media for its clients (four main stakeholders: the BBC World Service, the FCO, the Ministry of Defence and the Cabinet Office). BBCM also has a 50-year old partnership with the Foreign Broadcast Information Service in the United States. In August 2002, BBCM began intensively monitoring media in 15 countries of interest, then providing monthly transcripts. A small-scale project, begun in September 2003, involved a focus on media and hate speech and incitement in the former Soviet Union, Israel–Palestine, Kosovo, Albania and Côte d’Ivoire.²

Clearly, media monitoring for hate speech has taken on a high profile because of Rwanda. As one observer quipped, we are all now well prepared to stop the Rwanda genocide – ten years too late.³ And yet, what are the chances of once again coming across such a textbook example of hate media and incitement as Rwanda? We should probably be focused on media interventions that come much earlier in the trajectory that culminates in hate media. In fact, rather than using monitoring reports to try and shut down media outlets, a more useful exercise would be to use the material to design programmes to improve media standards, conduct media training and develop codes of conduct for journalists – behavioural rather than structural solutions.

More than a decade after the genocide, the media sector in Rwanda is still in need of this kind of assistance with training and development. There was no school of journalism in Rwanda until the late 1990s. Before the genocide, Rwanda’s journalists were either professionally trained outside the country or trained ‘on the job’, in some cases with seminars and workshops to improve their skills. The School of Journalism and Communication was founded in 1996 at the National University of Rwanda in Butare. In early 2006, Carleton University’s School of Journalism and Communication launched a collaborative effort with its counterpart in Butare to work together on staffing and curriculum development through a project called The Rwanda Initiative.

But efforts to foster a more professional media sector in Rwanda come at a time when respect for human rights and press freedom in the country is a genuine cause for concern. Major human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have been highly critical of the Kagame government’s treatment of human rights organizations and the news media. The government has been accused of an intimidation campaign that prompted Rwanda’s primary human rights organization, LIPRODHOR,

to close its doors in early 2005 (AI 2005). Amnesty International accused the Rwandan government of ‘inappropriately manipulating the concept of genocide to silence not only organizations and individuals critical of the government but organizations who have a close relationship with the Rwandese people and whose loyalty the government questions’ (AI 2004a). And in November 2004, Amnesty International urged the government of Rwanda to do its utmost to foster the independence of the press and to refrain from using the law to repress journalistic activities (AI 2004b). Reporters Without Borders went so far as to label President Kagame an enemy of press freedom. More than a decade after a genocide that deeply implicated the news media, there are still lessons to be learned in Rwanda.

What lessons have the international media drawn from the debacle of Rwanda? Like other international actors, the news media have been slow to acknowledge their failures during the genocide. Journalists tend to look forward, not back. For that reason, it took nearly 60 years for *The New York Times* to come to terms with the impact of its coverage of the Nazi Holocaust. In a 14 November 2001 feature headed ‘Turning Away From the Holocaust,’ former *Times* executive editor Max Frankel described the influential newspaper’s ‘staggering, stunning failure’ to properly depict Hitler’s methodical extermination of the Jews of Europe. Frankel noted that only six times in nearly six years did the front page of the *Times* mention Jews as Hitler’s unique target for total annihilation. Sound familiar? The belated media mea culpa about coverage of the Holocaust has not been replicated when it comes to Rwanda, despite all the evidence of an abysmal media failure.

Instead, history continues to repeat itself. Stories like Rwanda continue to be downplayed. Year after year, the international news media devote less and less attention to foreign affairs, with the exception of the ‘big’ stories, such as the war in Iraq, the war on terror or the disaster *du jour*. Claude Moisy, former chairman and general manager of Agence France-Presse, described an inescapable paradox that ‘the amazing increase in the capacity to produce and distribute news from distant lands has been met by an obvious decrease in its consumption’ (Moisy 1997). Writing in the late 1990s, Moisy described a clear pattern: with the exception of a surge of international coverage in 1990 and 1991 due to the first Gulf War, the number and length of foreign topics covered in the evening news had declined far below Cold War levels. In early 2006, chances are that a rigorous content analysis would show, pound for pound, a significant up-tick in media coverage of foreign affairs. But factor out the overwhelming focus on Iraq and we are almost certainly looking at a continuation of the trend away from media coverage of international affairs.

Once again, journalists and critics cite a number of factors affecting the limited coverage of Darfur: the difficulty of getting into the region, tight budgets, the news focus on the war in Iraq and the presumed lack of audience interest in Africa (Ricchiardi 2005). For example, one researcher calculated that the nightly newscasts of ABC, CBS and NBC devote a total of roughly 24,900 minutes to news each year – an average of 20 minutes of news in each of these newscasts every night. In 2004, all three networks combined aired a total

of only 26 minutes on fighting in Sudan, which has been described by some as genocide. (ABC devoted 18 minutes to Darfur coverage, NBC 5 and CBS only 3.) By contrast, houseware maven Martha Stewart's legal woes garnered 130 minutes of nightly news coverage (Tyndall Report 2004). More recently, a quantitative monitoring of all news segments aired in June 2005 on ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, FoxNews and MSNBC demonstrated that coverage of Darfur was overshadowed by reporting on the so-called 'runaway bride' (the Georgia woman who drove across the country and concocted a fake kidnapping to escape her wedding in April 2005), the Michael Jackson trial and Tom Cruise's new movie and relationship with actress Katie Holmes.⁴

The shocking thing about these findings is that they no longer shock us. They haven't shocked us for a long time. In fact, we now take this kind of media coverage for granted. There is a vast academic literature on media coverage of international affairs and more specifically, coverage of Africa and the developing world. Some go at this empirically, with an eye to figuring out what the news media are actually doing. Others take a normative approach, prescribing what the media and journalists should do. We need more of both lines of enquiry.

But the problem with media prescriptions is that they are often so general that they are beyond implementation. In essence, the prescriptions end up being variants on the symptoms: news organizations should devote more resources to coverage of Africa and the developing world; the media should train more professionals in coverage of conflict and development issues; news from the developing world should be given more prominence on news pages and in broadcasts; news organizations should deploy more full-time foreign correspondents; rather than just covering wars, the media should pay more attention *before* a conflict erupts and after the fact, examine efforts at conflict resolution and ways the news media could actually support reconciliation and peace (for examples of this prescriptive approach, see Carnegie Commission 1997: 121–3 and Manoff 1997).

All of these prescriptions are really just reworded descriptions of the problem. Clearly, we need more information and more first-hand, eyewitness reporting from places like Darfur. We need to hear more and different voices. But how can we make that happen? Who moves the media? And what is 'the media' anyway? How can we talk coherently about such a disparate, diverse group of commercial and state enterprises that differ vastly across continents? Media organizations are populated by individual journalists, editors, media executives and others. More broadly speaking, 'the media' includes anyone who can apply some code of professional standards and disseminate news and information. So is it even realistic to look for discernible patterns of coverage in the media with an eye to recommending a different course of action?

And yet, some simple truths seem to be borne out by the evidence, and one of those truths is that media coverage does matter. There is a vast literature on how media coverage influences or is interwoven with foreign policy decisions: either directly through the provision of information that ignites public opinion (the so-called 'CNN effect') or indirectly through what Bernard Cohen (1963) described as the media's remarkable agenda-setting power to instruct people

as to what they should be thinking about. Others have suggested that media influence is most likely to occur when policy is uncertain and media coverage is critically framed and empathizes with suffering people. But when policymakers have made up their minds and a policy track has been chosen, the news media can have much less influence (Robinson 2000: 614). We probably can't resolve the debate over whether media reports prod decision-makers into action or simply manufacture consent, but there can be no disagreement about the fact that more coverage of an issue or a region is more likely to generate policy action than less coverage (for more on this, consult Robinson 2002 and Wanta et al. 2004).

Media coverage, or lack of it, also matters in the inverse. The media glare of the big story casts a deep shadow on its fringes. Some argue that rather than seeking to measure the impact of media coverage, we should pay more attention to the 'nether world of absence of news' (Sonwalkar 2004: 207) and what happens when the news media methodically downplay or ignore a story.

The crux of the Rwanda piece is that more extensive media coverage might have made a difference, might have pushed international actors to do something in the spring of 1994. Roméo Dallaire argues that media coverage of Rwanda never gained momentum during the genocide, never reached the kind of critical mass needed to move leaders. That momentum only emerged in July 1994, when media descended in droves to cover the plight of those living in the refugee camps in Goma and sparked an international response.

We keep asking ourselves, why did the news media clamber to cover Biafra in 1968, Ethiopia in 1984, Somalia in 1992–93, but not the Rwanda genocide? And why have news media systematically downplayed events in Sudan for the past two decades and virtually ignored other locales (Livingston 1996)?

Could the answer be that 'the media', writ large, the 'cyclops' as some have called it (Bierbauer 1994), can only focus its gaze on one major story at a time? And in choosing such stories, are journalists more likely to seize on a simple, dramatic storyline, featuring good and evil, without the complexities of ethnicity and power politics to clutter the narrative?

According to analysis of 200 English-language newspapers worldwide, the 2004 tsunami in South East Asia generated more column inches in six weeks than the world's top ten 'forgotten' emergencies combined over the previous year (IFRC 2005). The media blitz prompted unprecedented generosity. By February 2005, the international community had donated US\$ 500 for every person affected by the tsunami, compared with just 50 cents for each person affected by Uganda's 18-year war (IFRC 2005). Why did the tsunami and the subsequent relief efforts generate so many headlines? There was a simple storyline – a natural disaster. There were no complex political relationships to explain. And even though events were unfolding on the other side of the world, the tsunami met some 'proximity' criteria for Western news editors because many Western tourists were involved.

In *World Disasters Report 2005*, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies put it bluntly: 'Editors sort stories by death tolls. Disasters that are unusual yet explicable, and that cause considerable death or

destruction in accessible places which the audience is believed to care about, get covered. Baffling stories get less attention' (IFRC 2005). Rwanda was a baffling story, as is Darfur. As the Red Cross points out, news can be driven by ratings and circulation. So TV news is part news and part entertainment. No surprise then that 'sudden, dramatic disasters like volcanoes or tsunamis are intensely newsworthy, whereas long-drawn-out crises (difficult to describe, let alone film) are not.' By that score, the estimated 3.8 million deaths in the Democratic Republic of Congo since 1998 from war, disease and malnutrition have generated scant media coverage. But the dramatic eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano near Goma in early 2002 sparked an influx of journalists, even though it killed fewer than 100 people.

But when the cyclops turns its 'monocular gaze', the news media can become a major humanitarian actor, particularly, as Piers Robinson (2000) points out, when decision-makers are uncertain how to proceed. But that media role is very ill-defined and hard to predict with any degree of certainty. That is in part because the media are no less complex as an institution than government or humanitarian organizations. And yet, most studies treat the news media as a monolithic actor (Minear et al. 1994: 31). As Minear and colleagues suggest, rather than seeing the media as an actor with a purpose, it is probably more instructive to see the media as an institution with a process. And that process is inclined toward gatekeeping principles regarding what is news and what is not, what warrants the cost of news coverage and is likely to garner the interest of the audience (Chang and Lee 1992). And often, media attention to one emergency comes at the expense of another. The devastating earthquake in Pakistan in the autumn of 2005 overshadowed coverage of the hurricane and mudslides in Guatemala, just as, in some ways, Michael Jackson overshadowed Darfur.

And ironically, the 24-hour news cycle, rather than leading to more in-depth, comprehensive reporting, has arguably driven coverage in the other direction – toward fleeting, episodic encounters with events outside our daily lives. That makes the news media a bad early warning system. As journalists, we seem to be best at recording and reporting conflict once it has reached a certain pitch, by acting as witnesses to genocide and other atrocities. The economics of the news business is a key factor here. Although it would seem to make sense to go where the news is about to happen, to get ahead of the story, we are more likely to go where the news is happening, where conflict has broken out. It is a sure bet; you're not going to buy a plane ticket and end up with no story. Not much preventive value there. Journalists react to the same impulses as political decision-makers, and conflicts often show up on journalists' radar screen at about the same time as that of the decision-makers and diplomats – or more likely much later.

Not surprisingly, journalists largely reflect the societies in which they live and share the same ambivalence toward what is going on outside their borders, the same focus on domestic issues and selected international issues that are deemed to be relevant. In my view, it is up to individual journalists to crawl outside their skin, to get beyond that domestic focus and to exercise their role fully. Just as nation states have begrudgingly acknowledged the *Responsibility to Protect*

– driven by the simple realization that we have a responsibility to others – I think journalists, as individuals, must accept the responsibility to report.

I suppose my simple point is that we've been lamenting for three decades how 'the media' fail to cover stories like Rwanda and Darfur. I echo the lament, which is backed up by a stream of qualitative and quantitative research. But normative prescriptions for what 'the media' should be doing differently have little application. Could it be that everyone is going about it the wrong way, looking top-down at the media, which is an amorphous, disparate beast anyway, when they should be looking from the ground up, at individual journalists and the role they can play?

British journalist-cum-politician Martin Bell (1998) has spoken about the 'journalism of attachment', a call for empathy with humanity among journalists, something that some regard as an affront to the classical notion of journalistic objectivity and neutrality. But surely journalists can talk about an ethic of responsibility, a responsibility to report on people, places and events that have been excluded from the agenda of news organizations for a myriad of reasons. Surely individual journalists can try to make a difference, even if news organizations and the media are unable or unwilling to fully exercise their role.

Journalists such as Nicholas Kristof of *The New York Times* and Sudarsan Raghavan – now with the *Washington Post* and formerly Africa correspondent for Knight Ridder – have made it their mission to keep the Darfur story on the world's radar screen. They have demonstrated that individual journalists can make a difference. Canadian journalist Stephanie Nolen, Africa correspondent for the *Globe and Mail* newspaper, has single-handedly kept the issue of HIV/AIDS on the Canadian agenda through dogged, persistent reporting on a scourge that is decimating Africa in its own kind of genocide. In my own way, during 17 years as a reporter with the *Toronto Star* – Canada's largest circulation daily newspaper – I made every effort to use my position to interest the newspaper's powerful editors in stories that were not immediately on their radar screen, stories that took me on assignment to such places as Rwanda, Somalia, Sierra Leone and Kazakhstan. My personal interest and sense of responsibility as a journalist were shaped by a seminal experience in the early 1990s, when a development organization saw fit to invest in me and financed a media internship that took me to Africa for an extended period.

Since then, at every opportunity I have urged development assistance agencies, government and nongovernmental organizations, and advocates interested in media coverage of the developing world to invest in individual journalists – those new to the profession and also veterans – by endowing research grants, fellowships and awards that make it possible for journalists to visit the developing world or to explore areas that otherwise fall into that nether world of media absence. In my experience, journalists exposed to the developing world want to go back again and again. And their reporting can make a difference.⁵

In the carnage in Rwanda in 1994, individual journalists tried to fulfil their mandate, even though they were constrained by the chaos and the world's

indifference. Thomas Kamilindi, who quit his job at Radio Rwanda on the eve of the genocide, wrote in this collection of his attempts to reach the outside world from his hiding place in the Milles Collines Hotel. Kamilindi kept trying the phone lines until he could get on the air and describe what was happening on the streets of Kigali. One of the attempts on Kamilindi's life came after he managed to get through to radio colleagues in France and describe the atrocities in Rwanda. Imagine the impact if journalists of good conscience, like Kamilindi, had been able to publish blogs in 1994, to circumvent the media inertia of budgets, racism and competing news interests.

Another Rwandan journalist, whose identity remains unknown, managed to capture on videotape some of the atrocities in the streets of Kigali. The journalist, believed to have been a camera operator with Rwandan television at the time, travelled with a group of *Interahamwe* through the streets of Kigali at some point in April 1994. According to one report, the camera operator had apparently befriended members of the death squads, even though he was opposed to the killing. As a journalist, he took considerable risk to gain permission to ride with the death squads through the streets of Kigali, filming some of the scenes and capturing rare footage that has become the mainstay of later documentary accounts of the genocide and a key part of the historical record (Hughes 1998). The world needs more journalists like Kamilindi and the unknown Rwandan TV camera operator.

The concept of media intervention to foster a more highly professional cadre of journalists in the developing world flourished in the decade after the Rwanda genocide. In 2003, Ross Howard, an associate at the Vancouver-based Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society (IMPACS) estimated that in the previous ten years, US\$ 1 billion had been invested in media-related interventions in conflict-stressed societies. Howard (2003) pointed to the emerging belief that news media may well be the most effective means of preventing war and conflict. Such media interventions abound. The Washington-based Search for Common Ground and its European counterpart operate radio studios in Burundi, Liberia and Sierra Leone, producing news, features, drama, music and speciality soap operas for social change as well as television productions. The organization also supports media training workshops in Africa, the Middle East and the Aegean region. The Panos network of organizations works to stimulate debate around key development issues, in part through a media programme. The network includes offices in the Caribbean, Eastern Africa, London, Paris, South Asia, Southern Africa, Washington DC and West Africa, with a combined staff of well over 100 people. Vancouver-based IMPACS supports programmes to foster free, responsible, independent media in emerging democracies by enhancing the contribution of the media to democratic development, good governance and public sector accountability. The Soros Foundation's Open Society Institute, the London-based Institute for War and Peace Reporting and others are also active in vital media training.

We need more voices, more first-hand accounts of events from journalists in the North and the South. Technology makes the arguments about newsroom budgets increasingly less relevant. Simply put, it is much, much cheaper to travel

to the developing world and do journalism than it used to be. And why not use more locally based correspondents as well? Isn't it about time that Western news organizations re-examined their assumption that visiting foreign correspondents are of more value than locally based journalists?

One need look no further than the body of work of journalists like Sorious Samura, the documentary film-maker originally from Sierra Leone who has made it his mission to tell African stories. Samura's very personal and engaged form of journalism has resulted in documentaries broadcast widely in North America and Europe on such topics as the atrocities of Sierra Leone's civil war, the real stories of people living with hunger in Ethiopia, the plight of refugees in Darfur, the exodus of migrants through North Africa and the scourge of HIV/AIDS in a country like Zambia. Samura's work is powerful and emotional stuff. But it also far exceeds the professional threshold for broadcast to an international audience. Surely he is not the only journalist in Africa capable of producing top-quality material for a Northern audience.

And Africans don't just need to tell their stories to the outside world. They need to tell them to each other. For decades, London-based Gemini News Service pioneered the notion of South-South journalism, maintaining a network of journalists in the developing world. These local correspondents filed their copy to Gemini's London office, where it was edited, packaged and transmitted through Gemini to be published elsewhere in the developing world. Gemini broke the cycle of dependence that previously forced many Southern news outlets to see themselves through stories written by reporters from the North. And in turn, Gemini News Service provided some news organizations in the developed world – such as *The Toronto Star* and Southam News Service in Canada – with a steady stream of quality news features written by authors based in the developing world. One of Gemini's most innovative projects was a village reporting exercise that saw more than 15 reporters from such countries as India, Sri Lanka, Fiji and Lesotho head off to spend two months living in a village to report on daily life.

Gemini was truly a pioneer in recruiting and cultivating homegrown journalists and using them as correspondents to report on matters of interest to developing countries. Gemini's founder, former *Daily Mail* journalist Derek Ingram, always objected to the notion that he was running an alternative news agency. He wanted Gemini to be regarded as a mainstream source of copy that would also appeal to newspapers in the developed world (for an excellent history of Gemini News Service, see Bourne 1995). Along the way, Gemini served as a springboard for legions of promising young journalists from the developing world as well as a generation of young Canadians who worked at the news agency through fellowships funded by the International Development Research Centre.⁶ Sadly, Gemini struggled for years to be financially viable and finally closed its doors in 2003 after nearly 30 years in operation. Perhaps it is time for an agency like Gemini News Service to be reborn.

Other individual journalists are joining forces to try to make innovative use of new technology and web-based information platforms to bring the stories of the developing world to a wider audience. Early in this century, news consumers were

introduced to the 'blog', short for weblog. These online journals by individual writers usually consist of frequently updated commentaries, posted to a World Wide Web address. Now, millions of bloggers are sharing their opinions with a global audience in postings that combine content drawn from mainstream media and the web. As Daniel Drezner and Henry Farrell (2004) suggest in a recent paper, 'What began as a hobby is evolving into a new medium that is changing the landscape for journalists and policymakers alike.'

Drezner and Farrell argue that blogs are gaining more influence over the content of international media coverage, primarily through their agenda-setting function and by focusing on new or neglected issues. 'Increasingly, journalists and pundits take their cues about "what matters" in the world from weblogs. For salient topics in global affairs, the blogosphere functions as a rare combination of distributed expertise, real-time collective response to breaking news, and public-opinion barometer,' they write.

And television networks, with their notoriously top-heavy news operations, have begun to deploy 'video journalists', or VJs, individual journalists who carry small hand-held cameras and shoot and edit their own material. The work of some of these VJs is akin to a televised blog, with a mainstream connection. In Canada, the national broadcaster, CBC-Television, has deployed video journalist Saša Petricic in this way. Another such effort is the International Reporting Project at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (see the International Reporting Project website at <www.journalismfellowships.org/>). The group proposes a new programme concept for international news, an approach designed to bypass current distribution systems and build a new audience. The project aims to produce a new international news series using small teams of video journalists to explore an array of political, economic, health and cultural issues in a given country each month. The plan is to produce content for multiple platforms – including television, the Internet, DVDs, print and radio – and to promote it aggressively. For its part, Carleton University has expanded its Rwanda Initiative to include a media internship programme for Canadian journalism students who want to do work terms with a news organization in Africa. The initiative is also helping student journalists in Rwanda to produce freelance material for an outside audience.

It is difficult to fashion a strategy to deal with the structural flaws in the news media that resulted in the failure to provide adequate coverage of the Rwanda genocide or the crisis in Darfur. But surely that difficulty should not prevent us from trying to change the structure one small piece at a time, through the work of individual journalists. This is a rallying cry to those who call themselves journalists, who practise this profession. Rwandan journalist Thomas Kamilindi recounts an encounter he had in Côte d'Ivoire with a group of young reporters who wondered how to avoid being drawn into the hate media in their country. Kamilindi's admonition was simple: stand up and be reporters, do your job. He is echoed by Roméo Dallaire, who reminds journalists that they can be powerful individually and collectively and must stay dynamic in the search for truth. As Maxwell McCombs notes in a recent review of the literature on media agenda-

setting, the space on the media agenda and public attention to that agenda are both rare commodities. 'Setting the agenda is an awesome responsibility,' McCombs (2005: 556) concludes. 'Arguably the most fundamental, overarching ethical question for journalists concerns their stewardship of these resources.'

This collection of papers ends on a simple note, a plea to journalists: do your job, use the power that this profession affords and take up your responsibilities, starting with the responsibility to report.

NOTES

1. United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan used remarks to a 26 March 2004 memorial conference on the genocide, held at the UN headquarters in New York, to declare that he personally should have done more to 'sound the alarm and rally support', for Rwanda; Bill Clinton used the 25 March 1998 speech in Kigali to acknowledge that the international community must bear its share of responsibility for the genocide, didn't act quickly enough and did not call the crimes by their rightful name: genocide; Roméo Dallaire has stated on numerous occasions since 1994 that he feels he failed personally to fulfil his mission in Rwanda.
2. The author took part in a 25 May 2004 roundtable discussion in London, conducted under Chatham House rules of non-attribution, during which the BBCM tension and hate speech project was described in detail. The roundtable – Hate speech, incitement and conflict: can media monitoring help prevent violence? – was organized by Oxford University's Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy.
3. The remark was made by one of the participants in the May 2004, London roundtable.
4. Research compiled by the American Progress Action Fund, which operates the BeAWitness.org website. Research for the June 2005 analysis was conducted using the TVEyes media tracking service <www.TVEyes.com>.
5. For example, the author made this argument in testimony before the Senate Standing Committee on Transport and Communications on 1 December 2004, in the context of the committee's examination of the current state of the news media in Canada (Senate 2004).
6. The author took up one of IDRC's Gemini internships in 1990–91 and worked as a copy-editor and writer at Gemini for eight months in addition to making a five-month field trip to North Africa to examine the fledgling Arab Maghreb Union. The time at Gemini was a formative experience.

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