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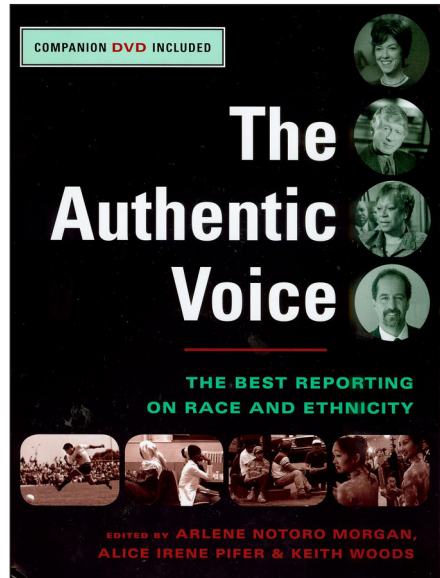
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Storytelling and race – doing it better

The Authentic Voice: The Best Reporting of race and ethnicity, edited by Arlene Morgan, Alice Pifer and Keith Woods. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006. 353pp. ISBN 0231132883.

WRITING in this journal in the previous edition, Pacific Islands Media Association (PIMA) chair John Utanga (2007) mused about better coverage of Pacific Islanders and their aspirations in New Zealand’s mainstream media:

As a community, [we] must make sure [our] side of the story is told in the digital era. Or face further marginalisation in New Zealand. What better way is there than to tell our stories and provide our side of the debate? (p. 28)



Storytelling. Pasifika stories told with context, complexity and completeness. Just another side to the theme of this book on better reporting of race and ethnicity—*The Authentic Voice*. Co-editor Arlene Morgan, associate dean of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, visited New Zealand earlier this year to talk about successful diversity strategies in her series of ‘Let’s do it better’ workshops.

She spoke at a national seminar on diversity organised by the Journalists Training Organisation (JTO), spoke at journalism schools around the country and joined a powhiri and two-day media hui at Hoani Waititi urban marae with some 70

journalism students and staff from AUT University's School of Communication Studies.

Morgan's message was that quality reporting of race and ethnicity shared the mark of excellence that applied to stories on all topics: 'They should offer a compelling tale that flows from deep reporting. They should be packed with relevance, rich in detail, flush with meaningful facts.'

But not only this. Other traits include the sort of context that 'enhances understanding and increases accuracy'.

One of the lessons she and her co-editors have discovered through their workshops in the US is that the most successful race and ethnicity reporting 'delivered solid, fundamental journalism and fused voice, context and complexity into one authentic piece'.

This book offers 17 examples of excellent reportage in print, radio and television versions and treats them as case studies grouped in four sections—the search for identity, the search for equality, telling the untold story and cultural competence—combined with resources and contextual discussion points. A DVD also offers supporting resources.

The 'Best of friends, worlds apart' story by Cuban 'boat lift'

migrant reporter Mirta Ojito was one of the first episodes of the *New York Times*'s Pulitzer-winning series *How Race is Lived in America*. She reports on her evolving friendship with Joel Ruiz, who is black, and his white friend, Achmed Valdés (p. 51).

Former ABC *Nightline* anchor Ted Koppel's 'The colour line and the bus line' investigates problems faced by low-income black people in Buffalo through the hook of a teenage Afro-American mother hit and killed by a motorist while jaywalking across a seven-lane highway (p. 105).

Missoulian reporter Jodi Rave's explores in 'Broken Trust' a complex story about Indian land rights, federal bureaucracy and allegations that billions of dollars have been lost through mismanagement by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (p. 131). The *Land of Confusion* series is also a lesson in history and provides plenty of context for journalists trying to gain insights into First Nation sovereignty issues.

In 'The Death of LCpl Gutierrez', CBS News reporter Bob Simon probes the martyrdom of Jose Antonio Gutierrez, a Guatemalan man who slipped into the US illegally, lied about his age and joined the Marines. He became one of the first American soldiers killed in Iraq in 2003.

In death, Gutierrez won citizenship and instant status as a hero. Some

38,000 Americans in uniform are not American citizens and at least ten who died in Iraq were not citizens, reports Simon (p. 231).

Some New Zealand and Pacific stories could fit comfortably alongside these pieces.

And while all these examples of storytelling offer excellent yardsticks, there are also occasional flaws. And this is the beauty of such a book—the talking points provide wisdom for those seriously wanting to do it better.

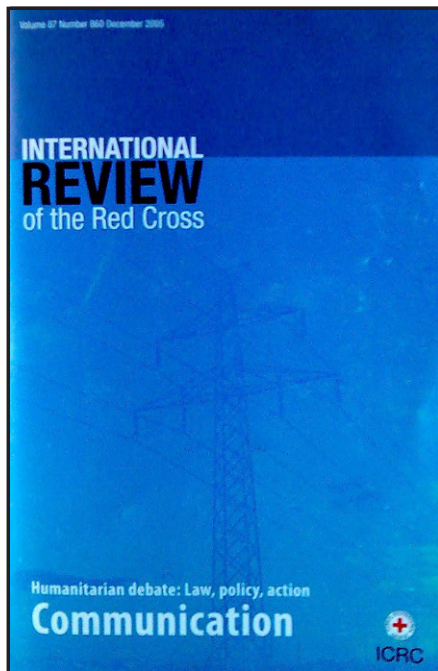
Reference

Utanga, J. (2007). Pasifika people in the digital age. *Pacific Journalism Review*, 13(1), 19-28.

A communication eye opener

International Review of the Red Cross: Humanitarian debate: Law, policy action, communication. Quarterly published by the International Red Cross (ICRC) and Cambridge University Press. www.icrc.org/eng/review

AMONG my forgettable journalism memories was being sent to interview a Red Cross official. The result was predictable. I got cold facts about providing food, blankets and support for hurricane victims. The word ‘neutrality’ occurs when we talk about the Red Cross. It often means a ‘no comment’. But



this journal on ‘communication’ is an eye opener and full of interesting comments.

Its editorial notes that in a time of conflict, the sender’s message is printed as information and that of the opponent as propaganda. It could be expressed as ‘the first casualty when war comes is truth.’”

The first article is a Q and A with Fergal Keane, a special correspondent for the BBC who has reported from numerous conflict zones. ICRC goes into verbal battle and asks if journalism also has principles of impartiality and neutralism. Keane explains and

comes back with his view about not suppressing information: ‘If the truth gives offence, so be it. I mean take it on the chin’

Authors Dennis Dijkzeul and Markus Moke, examine communication strategies of large humanitarian NGOs and UN organisations. Did you know that Oxfam America has an advocacy staff of more than 70 staff members?

The two authors also touch on that awkward topic about American NGOs and government. President George.W. Bush told NGO leaders that they were in fact an arm of the American government and they had an important job supporting US interests in Afghanistan and Iraq. Ouch!

Another article examines the relationship between war, media, the ‘embedded’ journalist and ‘pool systems’.

Almost a third of the journal deals with humanitarian law. This is a drier read, but essential to the theme.

You cannot buy this journal. But articles from Volume 87, Number 860 (and many other editions) are available free from www.icrc.org/eng/review —PAT CRADDOCK, *University of the South Pacific*

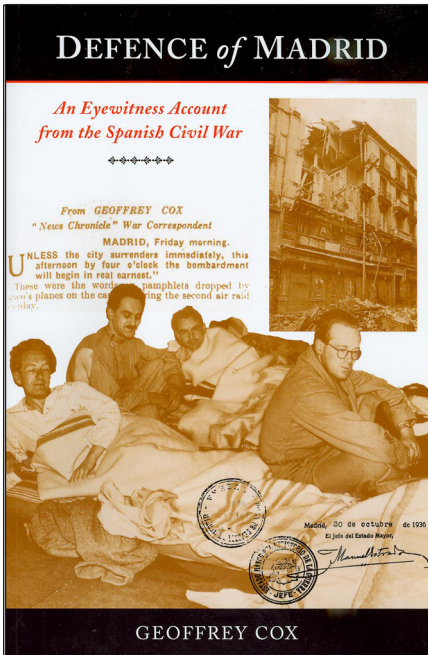
Spanish Civil War classic

Defence of Madrid: An Eyewitness Account from the Spanish Civil War, by Geoffrey Cox. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2006. 213pp. ISBN 1877372382.

THE Spanish Civil War and the Battle of Madrid, one of the first modern urban conflicts, ushered in a dangerous phase for journalism. Five journalists were killed during the three-year war—including a New Zealander—and many were wounded. Foreign correspondents covering both sides of the conflict risked being shot by snipers, or being bombed or strafed by warplanes.

The Fascist rebels expelled some 30 journalists from their zone; the Republicans tossed out just one. General Franco’s forces arrested at least 12 journalists, grilling and jailing them—some of them being locked up for several months and threatened with execution.

When young New Zealand journalist Geoffrey Cox was dispatched into the Madrid maelstrom by a British newspaper, he arrived in the Spanish capital on 29 October 1936 amid an expectation the city would fall within days. Cox, 26, was sent by the pro-Republican *News Chronicle* to replace Denis Weaver who had been captured by the Fascists. Instead, the



city's defenders fought valiantly for the next six weeks and with international interventions on both sides the conflict rapidly escalated.

His many front-page stories and dramatic eyewitness accounts of the bitter battles for democracy and survival in the doomed city are a living example of the journalism maxim 'first draft of history'. His vivid reportage provided the foundation for this classic account of one of the critical periods of the war, *Defence of Madrid*. The book was written in a two-month period after the Republicans' successful defence of the city.

Originally published by the leftwing London publisher Victor Gollancz, the inspirational work has been published in New Zealand to mark the 70th anniversary of the battle.

A Rhodes scholar, Cox had embarked on a journalism career in Europe and reported from Berlin on the establishment of the Nazi regime. This assignment also led to a book, *Eyewitness: A Memoir of Europe in the 1930s*.

In the introduction to *Defence of Madrid*, Michael O'Shaughnessy wrote that the next posting to Madrid was a 'poisoned chalice' for Cox. Instead, his reporting and his book have become regarded as exemplars of war correspondence. Among his scoops were reporting the arrival of the first International Brigades that arrived to help defend the Republican lines. It cemented his media career and Cox later founded ITV's *News at Ten*. – DAVID ROBIE, director of the Pacific Media Centre.