



The Project for Under-Told Stories

The Project for Under-Told Stories (UTS) is a collaborative project involving international journalism and teaching.



Saint John's
UNIVERSITY

Dear Friends,

For me, it was a year that saw growing concern about the planet's climate and environment—provoked by huge natural disasters. We visited the aftermath of catastrophic storms in the Caribbean and the Bay of Bengal. Food security was a second major story in 2008 as shortages and price spikes provoked riots in many nations.

In 2009, we will collaborate with the Washington D.C.-based Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting on an exhaustive global series about food, with reports on PBS' The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, public radio's The World, participating newspapers and a major web portal that will tie together students, teachers and journalists.

Most satisfying of all has been the ability to bring our reporting material "home" to a learning community, to engage the issues in our twice-yearly UTS Forums and in our classrooms, where our students vicariously live the lives of journalists covering some key global issues. We will soon have an upgraded website to enhance the broadcast after-life of our work and, especially, to engage students.

At a time of severe economic stress, it is gratifying to continue delivering the kind of under-reported stories that often are early victims of cost cutting in newsrooms. With our enduring contract with the NewsHour and commissions from NPR, PBS' Religion and Ethics Newsweekly and others, we are able to continue the work that we love. We are deeply grateful to C. Robert Binger for his support of UTS.

I am also deeply indebted to—and energized by—the two closest colleagues with whom I've breathed through the dust of 30-plus countries: producer and teaching colleague Nikki See and Tom Adair, whose astounding pictures are a pleasure to write words to. Skip Davis, our tape editor extraordinaire has faithfully polished our work for export. For helping integrate this work into campus and curriculum, my thanks go to John Taylor, Associate Vice President for Institutional Advancement and my partner in many an international adventure, Nick Hayes, University Chair in Critical Thinking.

Fred de Sam Lazaro
Director, Project for Under-Told Stories

The Year in Review

We began 2008 with a visit to **Bangladesh** after yet another massive cyclone, which claimed 3000 lives. So it goes in the world's most ecologically vulnerable nation. As we've found in so many bleak settings, there are innovative social enterprises: a school system floating on 40 specially designed solar-powered boats, for example. Or an initiative involving 80,000 housewives that could eradicate tuberculosis from the country in a decade.

From another wounded nation, we reported on the grain surpluses in a resurgent **Cambodia**, even as shortages and price hikes threatened the social order in many other developing countries.

Food security emerged as a major concern this year and so did the aid policies of rich countries. Critics of the U.S. policy—including the charity CARE—say it breeds dependence and foils the creation of market-driven agriculture. We reported on this story from

Malawi.

Also from that southern African nation, we told of an attempt to redress the trade imbalance in *skilled people*. There are more Malawian doctors practicing in Scotland than Malawi. We profiled a highly successful effort by Baylor College of Medicine's Dr. Mark Kline to establish a peace corps for young American doctors.

From **India**, we produced a series on that nation's growing impact on the world's economy and environment. It is the fastest growing car market, for example.

"The Western countries have driven millions of cars for dozens of years" said one commentator. "Now it's our turn to have some fun."

Fun is what **Coca Cola's** ads display across India. But Coke's welcome has been less than effervescent. The controversy has helped highlight one of India's gravest threats: lax, almost non-existent policies that imperil this country's ground water supply and ultimately its food supply.

Almost as an antidote, we profiled an extraordinary example of sustainable development. The **Barefoot College**, in rural Rajasthan, trains mostly illiterate rural women from across the developing world to become solar engineers.



Filming solar engineering students at the Barefoot College in Rajasthan, India



The UTS Forum welcomed is Sister Cyril Mooney in October. Her pioneering ideas in education and her work with street children in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta, India) will be the subject of an upcoming report on PBS' NewsHour... produced by UTS of course! We hope Sr. Cyril's visit whetted the appetite for service learning among CSB/SJU students, a number of whom have already visited Sr. Cyril's Loreto Day school.



Aimee Haag, Gwen Ifill and David Rice at the Republican National Convention in St. Paul, MN.

In the Fall, we traveled to **Haiti**, to report on relief efforts in the aftermath of four hurricanes. Haitians struggle to survive but not, it seems, to hope. That applied to numerous relief workers, many with the charity Doctors without Borders.

Also in Haiti, we linked up with Minnesota retiree, **Richard Proudfit**, who designed a nutritious children's meal and devised a way to serve 40 million of them to hungry kids across 38 countries.

And finally, at home in Minnesota, where the Project serves an upper-Midwest bureau for the NewsHour, we reported on the I-35 bridge collapse and rebuilding. We also did a fun feature on Worlds Away, an exhibit at Minneapolis' Walker Arts Center about the American suburb through the ages.

The big national story from this region, of course, was the

Republican National Convention in St Paul, for which the UTS team provided day-to-day reports from various state delegations. We were proud to watch six of CSB/SJU's students in their role of Desk Assistants for the NewsHour—a chance to work with what we firmly believe is the best political team on television, led by Jim Lehrer, Judy Woodruff and Gwen Ifill.

We were honored this year with a Cine Golden Eagle and an Angel Award for our reporting on Prajwala, an anti-trafficking organization in Hyderabad, India.

Please visit our website at www.csbju.edu/undertoldstories



Coming up: Nigeria

Watch and listen for reports in coming weeks from Nigeria.

Despite—in fact ever since—the discovery of vast oil reserves this West African nation has struggled to feed her fast-growing population. Public health services have similarly deteriorated. Nigeria is one of last places on earth where polio remains a threat.

Our reports examine efforts to emerge from the toxic litany of political instability, economic mismanagement and religious tension in a land that straddles Africa's divide between its Muslim north and a south dominated by Christian and traditional belief systems. Only in Nigeria can one find a thriving congregation that subscribes to "Chrislam" and amalgam of Christian and Islamic beliefs and practices.

We'll have a feature report from the "Chrislam Church" in Lagos, in addition to major segments on food security challenges and the effort to eradicate polio from Nigeria.

Board of Advisors

A number of eminent journalists and scholars have agreed to serve in an advisory capacity to the Project. They include:

Joseph DesJardins Associate Provost and Academic Dean; professor of philosophy, St John's University and College of St Benedict

Charles Eisendrath Director of the Knight Wallace Fellows at the University of Michigan and former bureau chief for Time magazine

Elizabeth Farnsworth Special Correspondent, The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, with an extensive record of reporting from Africa, the Middle East and Latin America

Bill Kovach Chair, Committee of Concerned Journalists, former curator of the Nieman Foundation at Harvard and former Washington bureau chief of the New York Times

Jim Russell Consultant, journalist and creator of numerous award-winning programs, including such public radio staples as Marketplace and All Things Considered

Brenda Wilson Correspondent, Science Desk, National Public Radio, whose special emphasis is on issues in global and public health across the U.S., Africa and India



Br. Dietrich Reinhart, OSB 1949-2008

"Something wondrous is afoot. I just can't see it yet." Thus wrote SJU President Emeritus Br. Dietrich Reinhart, OSB in one of his last messages to friends, characteristically putting his oncologic ordeal, his "terrible prognosis" into context.

They are words of a man far more curious than afraid of the unknown, a man who encouraged you to "massage your imagination," a man who encouraged you. Period.

The Project for Under-Told Stories is the brainchild of this extraordinary thinker.

We are committed ever more firmly to his vision of making life in distant lands relevant in the lives of our students, to making foreign news less foreign.