

Global Journalist: GJ Talks Lessons Learned By Foreign Journalists at MU Journalism Program

Abstract: This May 15, 2003 program featured guest host Byron Scott speaking with three international journalists who spent the last year learning about American media at the Missouri School of Journalism through the Humphrey Fellowship Program.

Host: Byron Scott

Guests:

- Rosia Cattell (ph?)
- [Milena diMitrova](#)
- Rashid Hadar (ph?)

Producers: Jeff Stone

Directors: Mary Fornesa,

Mentioned: Media, Nepal, Journalism, Corruption, government, University of Missouri, feminism

Runtime: 28:25

Byron Scott 00:07

Hello, and welcome to Global Journalist. This is Byron Scott sitting in for Stuart Loory again. And I hope that you've had a good week. This evening, we're going to be talking about something a little different. Every year, the United States government brings to our country dozens of journalists from other countries to work in United States media outlets, to study at American schools of journalism. Here at the Missouri School of Journalism, we have about 12 to 15 of these individuals every year, and for the cost of something considerably less than a cruise missile, for example, we have the opportunity to learn from them and they have the opportunity to learn from us. This evening, we have with us on Global Journalist three of those journalists whose spent the last year at the Missouri School of Journalism and at American media outlets, and we're going to talk to them about the lessons learned and the lessons we might learn from them. Our guests this evening are Milena Dimitrova, from 168 Hours Weekly in Sofia, Bulgaria. Rashid Hadar from Damascus Syria, anchorman and news editor for Syrian Radio and Television, the foreign channel. And Rosia Cattell who is going in from Washington. A news reporter, producer, editor for Nepal, Nepalese television, in TV in her native Nepal. Hello to all of you.

Everyone 01:45

Hi.

Byron Scott 01:46

Rosie, let's start with you. And tell us first of all what you're doing in Washington right now and, and also, what you're going to be doing when you go back.

Rosia Cattell 02:00

Well, thank you for giving me this opportunity. Right now I'm working with the Feminist Majority organization, it's Feminist Majority foundation. And working with the Global Voices and this news and doing a lot of stuff on feminist news. Regarding what I'm going to do back home is that, this year provided me a tremendous opportunity to learn about American media. To learn about how they perceive these trends of the issue, the gravity of the issue. And I'm going back with a lot of knowledge on developing journalism for a new century. And I'm putting it into practice at my home country where we have very limited access to resources, we have very limited access to news information, and then... that's really going to be helpful for me.

Byron Scott 02:51

And I want to get back to that in a moment -- and particularly your interest in applying that to the interests of women and children in Nepal -- but let's go to Milena, Milena Dimitrova. Getting ready to leave, to go back to one of my favorite countries in the whole world, if not my, my complete favorite, Bulgaria.

Milena Dimitrova 03:15

Thanks for being here. I was following a program called professional development here sponsored by the Voice of America. And I am very proud that I was able and I did it. Actually what I learned through this academic year, I would say I've learned at least three things. First was the notion that different doesn't mean wrong. Second was that, it was how media could be more useful to the society. Doesn't matter where it is located. And the third one, I'm proud to say, I'm very happy to say as well, that I've learned much about the four corners of the world doing here a project just... I'm just done with. It's called media against corruption all over the world in the 21st century.

Byron Scott 04:05

I'd like to talk a little more about that, particularly in a moment. But let's hear first from Rashid. Rashid, you've, you've been down south just recently, as we say here in the United States.

Rashid Hadar 04:16

Yeah, that's right. In fact, of course, I've -- as you probably know, that's part of our program, which is half the program is supposed to have some sort of a six weeks affiliation with one of those media outlets, exactly as you said, Professor Scott. And I was supposed to have this back and actually in April, the IPI it's called, which is the International Professional Program. However, because of the war in Iraq, in fact, that has been cancelled, actually. They were supposed to host about 15 people. At the same time, the responsible for that program, which is (Taven Usor?) she is the -- she's the chief of the World Report.

Byron Scott 04:56

This is on CNN.

Rashid Hadar 04:57

This was on CNN, that's exactly that's... So she said, why don't why don't you come over, we'll have something for you. But at the same time, we will help us with the translation. So that's exactly how it happened. So I was there, thrown in the middle of the war and the coverage of war. And I was doing the translation at the same time monitoring the Arab channels.

Byron Scott 05:16

Embedded as it were. CNN, Atlanta, okay. Very good. And well, I think all three of you have brought a great deal to us here on campus. And, and I might, I might say that we've made great use of you in our classes, both as participants and lecturers, as co-authors on papers, as co-presenters. And, and I think you've all had, you've all taught us something here. And and I'd like to really, really dwell on that for just a moment. Rosie. What, what... if you had to leave a few lessons with us here in the, in the School of Journalism or even here in mid Missouri generally: what kinds of things should pop out to you? What kinds of things should we be thinking about?

Rosia Cattell 06:13

Oh, well, I was so impressed. You know, like, there too, is like, what I learned from there is very much important, and I did find some like loopholes kind of thing. But the important thing is that, I learned that, you know, I learned to learn by doing you know, how the students at the graduate school are trained to be a journalist right from their classes, which is very unusual in our part of the world. One thing is that and the other thing is that how we deal with issues, the freedom of using the issues, the freedom of dealing the issues is very much important for me. And a part of our fellowship program, Humphrey Fellowship Program, is to learn those things also. And you know, like media, when I talk about broadcast media, it's very sensitive institution in Nepal. And what I found is sometimes I felt that American media, I mean, are a little bit less aware of the other side of the world. I mean, that's not like when the issue is concerned directly to themselves, yes, of course. They are aware, like yes they are aware of Iraq, they're aware of Afghanistan. But when it comes to other countries, they're a little bit indifferent. I found that and I think, I hope that that gap would be narrowed in the future.

Byron Scott 07:28

I think that that is a that is a good lesson. And yours may be a very small country, but it's a very critical country in the, in the future of the world and the security of South Asia. We had seven Humphrey Fellows here this year under a program sponsored by the Institute for International Education in Washington, DC and funded by the US Department of State. And, and I think as I said, they all, they all taught us lessons. Rashid, did you find while you were here that that people knew a great deal about about your own country, about Syria or not?

Rashid Hadar 08:09

Actually not very much. No, in fact, and I hope that I could, I did help in that regard because I wanted to actually to be some sort of a good ambassador for my country. Apart of the fact that I'm coming here as a journalist, you know. But they know a little actually, by nature. I mean, I've learned that the American people actually, well, maybe not lately, but before, they didn't know much about other countries, but maybe after what happened, and the events of the world have made those people and the American people I mean realize that there are some events going

on. So I hope I can, I did have actually, some some information to get to, to give to the American people. At the same time of course, I've I've learned a lot from the American people, of course. The way they think, the respect of the other opinion, and that a lot of times that what we're not -- it's not necessarily that what the American government is pursuing that means that the American people do approve. I mean all those already have learned, have learned something.

Byron Scott 09:08

We think a great deal about our, our freedom and particularly at this time of -- this time in our history, I think free speech means a particular amount to many of us who may disagree with what what is occurring. Milena, what about you?

Milena Dimitrova 09:25

What about me? What exactly would you like to listen for? Speaking about the first semester I spent here at the University of Missouri, Columbia, I was very proud to observe the election campaign. And I'm proud that I've done small research called "TV Commercials: Whether and How They're Perceived by a Young Audience." That allowed me by doing, know much more about the habits in American society, and how campaigns following, prepared finished cost analyzed as well.

Byron Scott 10:04

Are political campaigns here a bit differently -- different than they are in Bulgaria?

Milena Dimitrova 10:09

I would say (???)

Byron Scott 10:11

Uh huh. Let's, let's talk a little bit about what kinds of things you're going to take back into your own reporting, into your own writing in Bulgaria. Do you have any particular projects in mind or anything that, that you're going to -- are you, for example, going to continue to work with this anti corruption project?

Milena Dimitrova 10:34

Exactly. I'm very proud that the University of Missouri allowed me to host, to continue hosting this project because I think it could be developed. It could become much more useful for the society. Because after having two dozen real cases about corruption in different in many countries from Europe, Africa, Asia, North and Central America, have discovered that there are five similar models of corruption. And knowing about that, probably it would be much easier for media to cope with corruption because only speaking, only writing, only showing these cases of corruption, society could protect -- imagine all victims of corruption are citizens, the same leadership of the media.

Byron Scott 11:24

I agree. I agree. And I think we are not immune to corruption here in the United States as well. And certainly not even in our media as a couple of recent scandals, including that with Jeremy Blair of The New York Times point out.

Milena Dimitrova 11:40

Yes, exactly. In the new millennium, this issue becomes more and more important than ever. If you still remember about and around in Watergate.

Byron Scott 11:49

Yes. You've been here to witness our own scandals as well as -- no country is immune.

Milena Dimitrova 12:00

No country has immunity against corruption.

Byron Scott 12:03

Exactly. Exactly. Tell us a, tell us more about what you're going to take back and and maybe what some projects you that you have in mind for the future. I particularly know that you are concerned with gender issues and with women's and children's rights.

Rosia Cattell 12:22

Yeah, I'm really -- I'm in, at this moment I'm really working with the Feminist Majority and then to go with, like, they are, you know that Nepal has already passed the abortion law. And Nepal is now in such a situation that, you know, there's no elected government right now, you know. So I mean, in this situation to talk about women's issues is more sensitive right now. But what I'm going back is I'm going back to the project where I could be a platform for those who wish to speak for their rights. Not only for women and children, but overall like democratic movement. Because we have learned democratic movement in our country again, again, and then it -- it's so hard that, you know, like political parties are not getting... are not allowed to demonstrate and they are being, you know, like, beaten, they are being arrested by the authorities. So what other -- what lessons I learned from here will be very important for me to take it back home. And one of the very important thing which I'm going to do is, I'm in close contact with the victims of the terrorist attacks in different parts of the country. And I've already started a kind of fundraising from here, basically, for those women whose husbands are killed by the authorities or whose husbands were killed during the skirmishes. So we will be selecting those women and their children and we'll be bringing those children to the capital city, and we'll be educating them to at least two high schools. I'm working on that project.

Byron Scott 13:54

Very good. Very good. And I think that'll be making some worthwhile news in the very near future. We're going to take a short break right now. And we'll be right back. We're back. This is Byron Scott sitting in for Stuart Loory and this is Global Journalist. Want to remind you that if you want to listen in to this show again on the World Wide Web, you can get to it at www.globaljournalist.org and also through the KBIA website at kbia.org. Rashid, let's, let's go

back to you and talk about what kinds of challenges remain for you both here in the United States and a perspective about what's going on in Syria if we can.

Rashid Hadar 14:44

Right okay, actually, to be honest with you. I've been impressed by the way that journalism is told in the United States. That's something we don't have that in Syria yet. For example, I mean, the joining between the University of Missouri and the KOMU and KBIA effect where students can go there and actually learn the profession. This is something quite professional for me, quite nice. I've seen how they make the stories out of nothing, in fact, because you see if you -- back home, not not on myself even my colleagues, we deal with international news, news with events with crisis with something like that. But you see here, you have got only local news. And to make a story out of locals is not that easy at all. So I can, I can, I can, really appreciate the the hardship that the people, the students and the faculty of both KBIA and KOMU was doing to come out of such story. So this is something quite good, is a good fact to go back to Damascus, to Syria in fact and and try that, that, that new approach of... I like that. At the same time, definitely... I've learned a lot in fact, in terms of technological terms of approaching the news, the stories, so that I hope I can also -- the idea was to go back and really make some sort of a change for the better of journalism in my country, especially, especially in my field, which is broadcast journalism. I hope I can do that. Those things usually take time, but, but it will go there because the whole world is changing, as we all know. And I hope that also media is part of that world. And so I hope I can do that.

Byron Scott 16:22

Exactly. So it's it's been said by the way that, in order to live in Columbia, Missouri, one of your rights as a citizen is to be interviewed repeatedly by student journalists.

Rashid Hadar 16:32

Exactly.

Byron Scott 16:36

And, which is a little different than most other cities in the United States and of course, most other nations, nations of the world. Also feel that all three of you going back are not, not only not going to have our our technological advantages, but you're going to face a series of challenges to, to improve journalism in your countries that that would that would really prove daunting for most American journalists and we greatly admire you for that. Milena, talk to us a little bit about what some of the challenges are in Bulgarian journalism for example.

Milena Dimitrova 17:20

Oh, there are many. But let me tell you that having the opportunity to compare media on the west and on the east side of Europe, I became convinced that strong media often means weak government and vice versa. Weak media means strong government. I would like you not to ask me for examples because that to take the entire evening in the next two weeks.

Byron Scott 17:48

I think we could, we could probably all sit here and and trade trade examples. But I think what I would like to to really to really hear about more is to get back to how you're going to try to... to spread interest in reporting of corruption and with -- through your project that you started here.

Milena Dimitrova 18:17

Well very important is to know whom you are defending. For whom you write these things, which point of view you are defending, like citizens like victims of corruption I mean. Second is to, to use the media as a protective mechanism against corruption because no one with media could cope with this, this problem. This global problem. And imagine that in the new millennium, we discovered new kinds of enemies. We don't have any most enemies like counterparts but we have new enemies as SARS for instance, and as wars sometimes. And corruption -- I'm sorry to say that, but that still exists all over the world.

Byron Scott 19:06

I'm, I'm headed off for the next two weeks myself to the Republic of Montenegro in, in the new nation of Serbia and Montenegro to teach investigative reporting for two weeks to journalists in a, in a nation that's no bigger than our state of Vermont. And I'm looking looking forward to that. And I'm probably going to be pointing them to your website, among other things. For our listeners, perhaps you could give us that URL.

Milena Dimitrova 19:34

Yes, it's www.anticorruption.missouri.edu

Byron Scott 19:40

www.anticorruption.missouri.edu. Good. And Rosie, let's get back to, let's get back to your project that you mentioned just before the break. I think our listeners would like to hear a little more about that and about what your other plans are. For Nepal, and for its journalists.

Rosia Cattell 20:01

The first thing is that I should mention that our media... I'm mean right now there's only one national media that is Nepal television where I work. We are going to start from scratch. Actually when I came here, I used to write news with carbon paper, with pen and paper, you know, like our newsroom was not computerized. And it is not computerized yet. It means that it makes a lot of difference getting access to prompt information and all. So we will be doing that first because if you have advanced equipment, you can really get these people quickly. And moreover, television is very important because I really, I'm really focusing carrying out gender issues in television because 60% of our population are illiterate. So television is the best media to reach them. So that is what I'm doing. And then I'm working on some of the jingles on educating girl child. And then I'm working on some jingles for Reproductive Rights and all. That is one part which I'm going to do from television. It's the second part is, with the help of the Nepalese Association of Houston and some Nepalese is residing in Washington area and then Florida and all. We are kind of raising a fund to educate the children of -- their children, those who are victims of the terrorist attacks in different parts of the country, those children whose mothers are in jail because of the abortion, because of the abortion due to you know, like rape and all those

things. So I think that's going to be very important because I can, I, I would like to repair that. I come from the country where, you know, like, I cannot think of big digitized program or something, but I have to start from the scratch. And the scratch right now is to have access to the resources, have... make sure that people get education so that you know, they can come forward, they can talk about their problems, and we can be the bridge between the government and the people. That's what my plan is.

Byron Scott 22:01

And I think that that last phrase, a bridge between the government and the people is a very important one for all journalists, particularly in, in transitional societies. Rashid, would you like to talk a little about that in regards to Syria?

Rashid Hadar 22:18

Well, Syria, as I just had my guidelines for civilian, for international reporters effect, Syria is on the in the, on the road actually of, of open economy and effects. It has made some real, real strides in that field. We held that we will be going into that world free economy and we're doing that. We're doing what we can. We are opening for investments and so in the in the in this field, everything is being done. In fact, we have a very... in fact, open minded and the president's, new president (???) for two years now more. He has gotten new ideas, he is with the, with the youth to take positions. He has been in fact encouraging the new ideas for the country. So I think we will get there but just needs time, you know, because it's moving from one one system to another. It takes time and...

Byron Scott 23:28

And is TV also the most powerful medium there as well?

Rashid Hadar 23:32

It is in fact, yes, TV is -- as everybody and as every part of the world. In fact, it is quite a good means of communication for the people. And the media is that part as well. Yes. This is all I mean, the improvement is in all areas, especially in the media.

Byron Scott 23:53

It strikes me that what all three of your nations have, have in common is that in the, in the recent past you have all been on the edge of the world's focus because of conflicts and neighboring nations. And that puts a great challenge on, on journalists. We seem in many cases to be so isolated from world conflict here. But when it's right next door, the journalist also has to be a patriot, it seems to me. It also has to, has to, to be a citizen of that of that country in a in a much more imminent and delicate way than perhaps we have had even here in the United States with the war in Iraq. Rosie, what, what... what's your view of that? The Nepalese journalist as a citizen of Nepal.

Rosia Cattell 24:49

It's a very complicated question. Because, as far as, you know, like, yeah, I mean, in terms of like getting focused, I feel that Nepal has not given much focus because even today, the conflict

is going on now between the Democratic parties and the government. I mean, the (revived?) King right now. But working with the government media is like you like you are, you are some person with professional ethic and at the same time, you are a citizen, and you are working with the government media. So it's really, you know, like, you will have conflict within yourself. And I feel that how much we talk about not -- (opportunity?) cannot be a fair journalist or whatever. The thing is, the whole thing which dominates your profession is yes, sometimes being a citizen of that particular country. But, you know, this this was more prominent during this war, and then I used to think that, oh, we are the ones we used to think and I used to feel that I should not be that much patriotic to kill my professional ethic. But when I like, watch American media and listen to the American radios, I found it you know, like, if that's realistic human nature that yeah, they are like that. But I think that will be corrected in the future. Because journalists, we are supposed to be free, fair, and balanced and that that has not been properly exercised in a country like this. So our country is far away from that. And I think in the future, we'll be able to get rid of those kind of incremental problems.

Byron Scott 26:21

Good. Thank you, Rosie Cattell from Nepal. It's my genius to bring up a complicated question right at the end of the show. We have about two minutes left. Perhaps if we could have a just a quick minute on that a soundbite on that from Rashid Haidar from Syria.

Rashid Hadar 26:37

Exactly what...

Byron Scott 26:39

On the, about the role of journalists as citizens?

Rashid Hadar 26:42

Well, actually the role of journalists, we all -- exactly as Rosie said -- we balance to get the truth in the first place, in fact, but you see, when you're talking about conflicts and areas of conflict like Palestine and all that stuff. You have to be -- there's a stand that we cannot overlook. There's a stand. We, the Syrian people have been with the Palestinians, with the Arab brothers. So uh -- you tell the truth, at the same time you have to take a stand. It cannot be that just like I mean... so.

Byron Scott 27:13

I think it puts great professional challenges that we can only imagine. Finally, Milena Dimitrova from Bulgaria,

Milena Dimitrova 27:23

In brief, I would say that TV and online media became much more and more important in the global world. But in all of our countries, print media still have very strong position. And I would say doesn't matter in for which and with which media do you work. The most important is to keep the journalism laws forever, even when sometimes ethics seems, seem different in your opinion.

Byron Scott 27:53

I want to thank all three of our guests and wish them safe travels home and success in the professional futures. And to thank also Stuart Loory for letting me sit in again. He'll be back with you next week. He's still off in London and I'll be off in Montenegro. This is Byron Scott. For Mary Fornesa, our technical director. Jeff Stone, our producer. Good night to the listeners of Global Journalist.