

MIZZOU

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Alumni Profile

Covering chaos

Rebecca Fox thought she had retired from the life of a TV reporter after seven years in the business, trading in her television scripts for academic research in 2010. It turns out that Fox couldn't shake her attraction to chasing down the story, especially when a big one was breaking right outside her window.

Fox, BJ '03, is a graduate student at The American University in Cairo — the city that erupted in revolution against former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak early in 2011.



When Rebecca Fox, BJ '03, moved to Cairo for graduate studies, she didn't anticipate that a revolution would break out — and that she'd report on the international story firsthand.

“One of the draws to studying in Cairo was its stability,” says the Doniphan, Mo., native. “No one saw this coming. We even joked that nothing would happen here.”

Equipped with a video camera, curiosity and Egyptian friends, Fox ventured into the mobs of protestors and captured their reactions. She saw the rebellion unfold behind the lens of a camera, including government forces cracking down on demonstrators and entrepreneurial Egyptians setting up snack stands near Tahrir Square, the epicenter of the democratic demonstrations.

The work was sometimes risky. Fox lived through nights of fear, especially when government-hired “thugs” randomly raided Cairo neighborhoods.

“One night we had to barricade our apartment door with dressers,” Fox says. “We stuffed towels under the door, turned out all the lights and armed ourselves with kitchen knives.”

Tahrir Square, February 11, 2011 from Rebecca Fox on Vimeo.

My flatmate Hossam and I hopped on his motorcycle and headed down to Tahrir. The mood was electric and I feel that's an understatement. The crowd was getting a little too rowdy for me in some parts... so we headed back after a bit. I am very fortunate to witness all of this.

But she never thought of leaving, despite the pleas of her parents and a mandatory evacuation order for U.S. citizens from the State Department.




“This was a once-in-a-lifetime chance to document people taking back control of their government,” Fox says. “If I left, I couldn’t call myself a journalist anymore.”

Fox freelanced for U.S. media outlets, including the syndicated *Thom Hartman Show* and the Fox affiliate in Kansas City, Mo. She even sent her work back to her old stations, including ABC 33/40 in Birmingham, Ala., and WPDE Newschannel 15 in Myrtle Beach, S.C.

The next step for Egypt is to hold a constitutional convention, and Fox plans to focus her graduate research on how the revolution happened, including any role social media had in fanning the flames.

“People need to remember we experienced a total Internet blackout for five key days of the protest ... there wasn’t access to Twitter,” Fox says. “This was a revolution by Egyptians in the streets, not Egyptians on their computers.” — *David Earl*

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